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RICHARD BAXTER.

ἄλημα τοῦ κυρίου ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ μὴ ἑτοιμάσας,  
ἄλημα αὐτοῦ, θαρήσεται πολλάς.

LUKE xii. 47

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GILDAS SALVIANUS.

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# THE REFORMED PASTOR:

SHEWING

## THE NATURE OF THE PASTORAL WORK;

ESPECIALLY IN PRIVATE INSTRUCTION AND CATECHISING:

WITH AN OPEN CONFESSION OF OUR TOO OPEN SINS.

PREPARED FOR

A DAY OF HUMILIATION KEPT AT WORCESTER,  
DECEMBER 4, 1655, BY THE MINISTERS OF THAT COUNTY, WHO SUBSCRIBED  
THE AGREEMENT FOR CATECHISING AND PERSONAL INSTRUCTION,  
AT THEIR ENTRANCE UPON THAT WORK.

BY

THE REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

Ἐκεῖνος δὲ ὁ δούλος ὁ ἡμῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ μὴ ἐτοιμάσας,  
μηδὲ ποιήσας πρὸς τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ, δαρήσεται πολλάς.

LUKE xii. 47.

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*“If, without impropriety, I may refer here, as I believe I have done elsewhere, to the service which, during fifty-four years, I have been allowed to render to our great Master, I may declare my thankfulness in being able, in some small degree, to rejoice that the conversion of sinners has been my aim. I have made, next to the Bible, Baxter’s “Reformed Pastor” my rule as regards the object of my ministry. It were well if that volume were often read by all our pastors,—a study which I now earnestly recommend to them.”*

REV. J. ANGELL JAMES, in “Knill’s Memoir,” written a few hours before he died.

I have been thinking of you very much lately  
and wondering how you are getting on  
I hope you are well and happy  
I have not heard from you for some time  
and I am sure you are doing well  
I have been very busy lately  
but I will try to write to you soon  
I love you very much  
Your affectionate mother  
Mrs. [Name]

Dear Mother  
I received your letter of the 10th  
and was very glad to hear from you  
I am well and hope these few lines  
will find you the same  
I have not much news to write  
at present  
I will write again soon  
I love you  
Your affectionate daughter  
Miss [Name]



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## THE PREFACE.

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TO MY REVEREND AND DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN, THE FAITHFUL  
MINISTERS OF CHRIST, IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, GRACE  
AND PEACE IN JESUS CHRIST BE INCREASED.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

The subject of this treatise so nearly concerneth yourselves and the churches committed to your care, that it persuadeth and emboldeneth me to this address, notwithstanding the imperfections in the manner of handling it, and the consciousness of my great unworthiness to be your monitor.

Before I come to my principal errand, I shall give you that account which I suppose I owe you, of the reasons of the following work, and of the freedom of speech which to some may be displeasing.

When the Lord had awakened His ministers in this county, and some neighbouring parts, to a sense of their duty in the work of catechising, and private instruction of all in their parishes that would not obstinately refuse their help, and when they had subscribed an agreement, containing their resolutions for the future performance of it, they judged it unmeet to enter upon the work without a solemn humbling of their souls before the Lord, for their long neglect of so great and necessary a duty; and therefore they agreed to meet together at Worcester, December 4, 1655, and there to join in such humiliation, and in earnest prayer to God

for the pardon of their neglects, and for His special assistance in the work that they had undertaken, and for the success of it with the people whom they were engaged to instruct: at which time, among others, I was desired by them to preach. In answer to their desires, I prepared the following discourse; which, though it proved longer than could be delivered in one or two sermons, yet I intended to have entered upon it at that time, and to have delivered that which was most pertinent to the occasion, and reserved the rest to another season. But before the meeting, by the increase of my ordinary pain and weakness, I was disabled from going thither. To recompense which unwilling omission, I easily yielded to the requests of divers of the brethren, forthwith to publish the things which I had prepared, that they might *see* that which they could not *hear*. If now it be objected, that "I should not have spoken so plainly or sharply against the sins of the ministry, or that I should not have published it to the view of the world; or at least that I should have done it in another tongue, and not in the ears of the vulgar, especially at such a time when Quakers and Papists are endeavouring to bring the ministry into contempt, and the people are too prone to hearken to their suggestions:" I confess I thought the objection very considerable; but that it prevailed not to alter my resolutions is to be ascribed to the following reasons:—1. It was a purposed solemn humiliation that we were agreed on, and that this was prepared and intended for. And how should we be humbled without a plain confession of our sins?—2. It was principally our *own* sins that the confession did concern; and who can be offended with us for confessing our own, and

taking the blame and shame to ourselves, which our consciences told us we ought to do?—3. I have excepted in our confessions those that are not guilty; and therefore hope that I have injured none.—4. Having necessarily prepared it in the English tongue, I had no spare time to translate it.—5. Where the sin is open in the sight of the world, it is in vain to attempt to hide it.—6. And such attempts will but aggravate it, and increase our shame.—7. A free confession is a condition of a full remission; and when the sin is public, the confession must be public. If the ministers of England had sinned only in Latin, I would have made shift to admonish them in Latin, or else have said nothing to them. But if they will sin in English, they must hear of it in English. Unpardoned sin will never let us rest or prosper, though we be at never so much care and cost to cover it; our sin will surely find us out, though we find not it. The work of confession is purposely to make known our sin, and freely to take the shame to ourselves: and if he that confesseth and forsaketh be the man that shall have mercy, no wonder then if he that covereth it, prosper not. (Prov. xxviii. 13.) If we be so tender of ourselves, and so loath to confess, God will be less tender of us, and will indite our confessions for us. He will either force our consciences to confession, or His judgments shall proclaim our iniquities to the world. Know we not how many malicious adversaries are day and night at work against us? Some openly revile us, and some in secret are laying the designs, and contriving that which others execute, and are in expectation of a fuller stroke at us, which may subvert us at once. What is it but our sins that is the strength of all these enemies? Is not this evil

from the ordering of the Lord? Till we are reconciled to Him we are never safe: He will never want a rod to scourge us by. The tongues of Quakers and Papists, and many other sorts, are all at work to proclaim our sins, because we will not confess them ourselves; because we will not speak the truth, they will speak much more than the truth. Yet if we had man only to plead our cause with, perhaps we might do much to make it good; but while God accuseth us, how shall we be justified? and who shall hide our sins, when He will have them brought to light? And God is our accuser till we accuse ourselves; but if we would judge ourselves, He would not judge us.—8. The fire is already kindled which revealeth our sin: judgment is begun at the house of God. Hath the ministry suffered nothing in England, Scotland, and Ireland? and have there been no attempts for its overthrow? Hath it not been put to the vote of an assembly that some called a Parliament of England, Whether the whole frame of the established ministry, and its legal maintenance, should be taken down? And were we not put to plead our title to that maintenance, as if we had been falling into the hands of Turks, that had thirsted for our subversion, as resolved enemies to the Christian cause? And who knows not how many of these men are yet alive; and how high the same spirit yet is, and busily contriving the accomplishment of the same design? Shall we think that they have ceased their enterprise, because they are working more subtly in the dark? What are the swarms of railers at the ministry sent abroad the land for, but to delude, exasperate, and disaffect the people; and turn the hearts of the children from their fathers, that they may



be ready to promote the main design? And is it not, then, our wisest course to see that God be our friend, and to do that which tendeth most to engage Him in our defence? I think it is no time now to stand upon our credit, so far as to neglect our duty and befriend our sins, and so provoke the Lord against us. It rather beseems us to fall down at the feet of our offended Lord, and to justify Him in His judgments, and freely and penitently to confess our transgressions, and to resolve upon a speedy and thorough reformation, before wrath break out upon us, which will leave us no remedy. It is time to make up all breaches between us and Heaven, when we stand in such necessity of the Divine protection! For how can an impenitent, unreformed people, expect to be sheltered by Holiness itself? It is a stubborn child, that under the rod will refuse to confess his faults; when it is not the least use of the rod to extort confession. We feel much, we fear more, and all is for sin; and yet are we so hardly drawn to a confession?—9. The world already knows that we are *sinner*s; as none suppose us perfect, so our particular sins are too apparent to the world; and is it not meet, then, that they should see that we are *penitent* sinners? It is surely a greater credit to us to be penitent sinners, than impenitent sinners; and one of the two we shall be while we are on earth. Certainly as repentance is necessary to the recovery of our peace with God, so it is also to the reparation of our credit with wise and godly men: it is befriending and excusing our sin that is our shame indeed, and leadeth towards everlasting shame; which the shame of penitent confession would prevent.—10. Our penitent confession and speedy reformation are the means that

must silence the approaching adversaries. He is imprudently inhuman, that will reproach men with their sins that bewail and penitently charge them upon themselves. Such men have a promise of pardon from God; and shall men take us by the throat when God forgiveth us? Who dare condemn us, when God justifies us? Who shall lay that to our charge which God hath declared that He will not charge us with? When sin is truly repented of by gospel-indulgence, it ceaseth to be ours. What readier way, then, can we imagine to free us from the shame of it, than to shame ourselves for it in penitent confessions, and to break off from it by speedy reformation?—11. The leaders of the flock must be exemplary to the rest; and therefore in this duty as well as in any other. It is not our part only to teach them repentance, but to go before them in the exercise of it ourselves. As far as we excel them in knowledge and other gifts, so far should we also excel them in this and other graces.—12. Too many that have set their hand to this sacred work do so obstinately proceed in self-seeking, negligence, pride, division, and other sins, that it is become our necessary duty to admonish them. If we could see that such would reform without reproof, we could gladly forbear the publishing of their faults. But when reproofs themselves do prove so ineffectual that they are more offended at the reproof than at the sin, and had rather that we should cease reproving than themselves should cease sinning, I think it is time to sharpen the remedy. For what else should we do? To give up our brethren as incurable were cruelty, as long as there are further means to be used. We must not hate them, but plainly rebuke them, and not suffer sin upon them. (Lev. xix.

17.) And to bear with the vices of the ministers, is to promote the ruin of the Church. For what speedier way is there for the depraving and undoing of the people, than the depravity of their guides? And how can we more effectually further a reformation (which we are so much obliged to do) than by endeavouring the reforming of the leaders of the Church? Surely, brethren, if it be our duty to endeavour to cast out those ministers that are negligent, scandalous, and unfit for the work, and if we think this so necessary to the reformation of the Church, (as no doubt it is,) it must needs be our duty to endeavour to heal the sins of others, and to use a much more gentle remedy to them that are guilty of a less degree of sin. If other men's sin deserve an ejection, surely ours deserve and require plain reproof. For my part, I have done as I would be done by; and it is for God and the safety of the Church, and in tender love to the brethren, whom I do adventure to reprehend: not (as others) to make them contemptible and odious, but to heal the evils that would make them so; that so no enemy may find this matter of reproach among us. But especially because our faithful endeavours are of so great necessity to the welfare of the Church, and the saving of men's souls, that it will not consist with a love to either (in a predominant sort) to be negligent ourselves, or silently to connive at, and comply with the negligent. If thousands of you were in a leaky ship, and those that should pump out the water and stop the leaks should be sporting or asleep, yea, or but favour themselves in their labours, to the hazarding of you all, would you not awake them to their work, and call out on them to labour for your lives? and if you used some sharpness

and importunity with the slothful, would you think that man were well in his wits that would take it ill of you, and accuse you of pride, self-conceitedness, or unmannerliness, to presume to talk so saucily to your fellow-workmen, or should tell you that you wrong them by diminishing their reputation? Would you not say, "The work must be done, or we are all dead men: is the ship ready to sink, and do you talk of reputation? or had you rather hazard yourself and us, than hear of your slothfulness?" This is our case, brethren! The work of God must needs be done: souls must not perish while you mind your worldly business, or observe the tide and times, and take your ease, or quarrel with your brethren: nor must we be silent while men are hastened by you to perdition, and the Church to greater danger and confusion, for fear of seeming too uncivil and unmannerly with you, or displeasing your impatient souls. Would you be but as impatient with your sins as with reproofs, you should hear no more from us, but we should be all agreed! But neither God nor good men will let you alone in such sins. Yet if you had betaken yourselves to another calling, and would sin to yourselves only, and would perish alone, we should not have so much necessity of molesting you, as now we have; but if you will enter into the office which is for the necessary preservation of us all, so that by letting you alone in your sins, we must give up the Church to apparent loss and hazard; blame us not if we talk to you more freely than you would have us do. If your own body be sick, and you will despise the remedy; or if your own house be on fire, and you will be singing or quarrelling in the streets; I can possibly bear it, and let you alone,

(which yet in charity I should not easily do.) But if you will undertake to be the physician of an hospital, or to all the town that is infected with the plague; or will undertake to quench all the fires that shall be kindled in the town, there is no bearing with your remissness, how much soever it may displease you. Take it how you will, you must be told of it; and if that will not serve, you must get more closely told of it; and if that will not serve, if you be rejected as well as reprehended, you must thank yourselves. I speak all this to none but the guilty.—And thus I have given you those reasons which forced me, even in plain English, to publish so much of the sins of the ministry, as in the following treatise I have done. And I suppose the more penitent and humble any are, and the more desirous of the truest reformation of the Church, the more easily and fully will they approve such free confessions and reprehensions.

The second sort of objections against this free confession of sin, I expect to hear from the several parties whose sins are here confessed. Most of them can be willing that others be blamed, so they might be justified themselves. I can truly say, that what I have here spoken hath been as impartially as I could, and not as a party, nor as siding with any, but as owning the common Christian cause, and as somewhat sensible of the apparent wrongs that have been offered to common truth and godliness, and the hindrances of men's salvation, and of the happiness of the Church. But I find it impossible to avoid the offending of guilty men; for there is no way of avoiding it, but by our silence, or their patience: and silent we cannot be, because of God's commands; and patient they cannot be, because

of their guilt and partiality, and the interest that their sin hath got in their affections. I still except those humble men that are willing to know the worst of themselves, and love the light that their deeds may be made manifest, and long to know their sins that they may forsake them, and their duty that they may perform it.

Some, it is likely, will be offended with me, that I blame them so much for the neglect of that discipline, which they have disputed for so long. But what remedy? If discipline were not of God, or if it were unnecessary to the Church, or if it were enough to dispute for duty, while we deliberately refuse to perform it, then would I have given these brethren no offence.

Some, it is likely, will be offended that I mention, with disallowance, the Separatists or Anabaptists; as I understand some are much offended that I so mentioned them in an epistle before the Quakers' Catechism, as if they opened the door to the apostasy of these times; and they say, that by this it appeareth, that while I pretend so much zeal for the unity of the Church, I intend and endeavour the contrary. To which I answer: 1. Is it indeed a sign that a man loveth not the unity of the saints, because he loveth not their disunion and division? Who can escape the censure of such men, but he that can unite the saints by dividing them? 2. I never intended, in urging the peace and unity of the saints, to approve of anything which I judged to be a sin; nor to tie my own tongue or other men's from seasonable contradicting it. Is there no way to peace but by participating of men's sin? The thing I desire is this: (1.) That we might all consider how far we may hold communion together

even in the same congregations, notwithstanding, our different opinions; and to agree not to withdraw where it may possibly be avoided. (2.) But where it cannot, that yet we may consult how far we may hold communion in distinct congregations; and to avoid that no further than is of mere necessity. And (3.), and principally, to consult and agree upon certain rules for the management of our differences, in such manner as may be least to the disadvantage of the common Christian truths which are acknowledged by us all. Thus far would I seek peace with Arminians, Antinomians, Anabaptists, or any that hold the foundation. Yea, and in the two last, I would not refuse to consult an accommodation with moderate Papists themselves, if their principles were not against such consultations and accommodations; and I should judge it a course which God will better approve of, than to proceed by carnal contrivances to undermine their adversaries, or by cruel murders to root them out, which are their ordinary courses. I remember that godly, orthodox, peaceable man, Bishop Ussher, (lately deceased,) tells us in his sermon at Wansted, for the unity of the Church, that he made a motion to the Papist priests in Ireland; that, because it was ignorance of the common principles that was likely to be the undoing of the common people, more than the holding of the points which we differ in, therefore both parties should agree to teach them some Catechism containing those common principles of religion which are acknowledged by us all. But jealousies and carnal counsels would not permit them to hearken to this motion.

3. And as concerning that epistle before my paper

to the Quakers, I further answer, that by *Separatists* there I plainly mean church-dividers ; even all that make unnecessary divisions in or from the churches of Christ, whom the apostle so earnestly beseecheth us to mark and avoid, (Rom. xvi. 17,) and which he calleth them carnal for, and so earnestly contendeth against, 1 Cor. i., ii., iii., and in many other places in his epistles. And if this be a tolerable sin, then the unity of the Church is not a necessary thing ; and then the apostles would never have condemned this sin as they have done. Do we all so sensibly smart by the effects of these sins, and is the Church of Christ among us brought into such a torn and endangered condition by them, so that we are in no small danger of falling all into the hands of the common adversaries ? Is so hopeful and chargeable a reformation so far frustrated by these men, and yet must we not open our mouths to tell them of it ? May we not tell them of it, when we are bleeding by their hands ? Is it tolerable in them to cut and wound, and let out our blood, and is it unpeaceableness in us to tell them that we suffer by them, and to beseech them to repent and to have compassion on the Church of Christ ? Must we be patient to be ruined by them, and have they not the patience to hear of it ? What remedy ? Let them be silent that dare ; for I profess I dare not. I must tell them that this height of pride hath been in their ancestors a concomitant of schism. A poor drunkard or swearer will more patiently hear of his sin, than many that we hope are godly will of theirs, when once they are tainted with this sin. But godliness was never made to be the credit of men's sins ; nor is sin to be let alone, or well thought of, when it can but get into a



godly man. Shall we hate them most whom we are bound to love best? and shall we shew it by forbearing our plain rebuke, and suffering their sin upon them? It must not be; however they take it in their sick distemper, it must not be. No man that erreth doth think that he erreth; these men are confident themselves that they are in the right. But the sober, prudent servants of Christ, that have escaped their disease, do see their error; and England feeleth it, and that at the very heart. What! must we die by their hand, and our very heart-blood be let out, and the gospel delivered up to the adversaries, before they will believe that they have done us wrong? or before they will endure to hear us tell them of it? If the ages to come do not say more against the ways of these mistaken men than I have done in that epistle, and if either mercy or judgment do not bring them one day to think or speak more sharply of themselves, then I must confess myself quite out in my prognostics.

Another sort that will be offended with me, are some of the divines of the prelatical way, whom I had no mind to offend, nor to dishonour; but if necessary duty will do it, what remedy? If they cannot bear with just admonition, I must bear with their impatience. But I must tell them that I spoke not by hearsay, but from sight and feeling. It is more tolerable in an Englishman to speak such things, that hath seen the sad work that was made in England, the silencing of most godly, able men, the persecution even of the peaceable, the discountenance of godliness, and the insulting scorn of the profanest in the land, than for a foreigner that hath known of this but by hearsay. When we remember what sort of ministers

the land abounded with, while the ablest and most diligent men were cast out, (of which matters we cannot be ignorant, if there were no records remaining of their attested accusations,) we must needs take leave to tell the world that the souls of men, and the welfare of the Church, were not so contemptible in our eyes, as that we should have no sense of these things, or should manifest no dislike of them, nor once invite the guilty to repent. And if you think my language harsh, I will transcribe some words of a far wiser man, and leave it to your consideration how far they concern the present case, or justify my free and plain expressions.

Gildas de Excid. Britan. edit. Polid. Virgil. sub fine. "Quid plura? Fertur vobis in medium Matthiæ in confusionem vestram, exemplum, sanctorum quoq; apostolorum electione, vel judicio Christi, non propria voluntate sortiti, ad quod cæci effecti non videtis, quia longè à meritis ejus distatis, dum in morem et affectum Judæ traditoris sponte corruitis. Apparet ergò eum qui vos sacerdotes sciens ex corde, dicit non esse eximium Christianum. Sanè quod sentio proferam. Posset quidem lenior fieri increpatio, sed quid prodest vulnus manu tantum palpare, unguentove ungerere quod tumore jam vel fœtore sibi horrescens cauterio, et publico ignis medicamine eget? Si tamen ullo modo sanari possit, ægro nequaquam medelam quærente et ob hoc medico longius recedente. O inimici Dei, et non sacerdotes; ô licitatores malorum, et non pontifices; traditores, et non sanctorum apostolorum successores; impugnatores, et non Christi ministri. Auscultâstis quidem secundæ lectionis apostoli Pauli verborum sonum, sed nullo modo mōnita virtu-

temque servâstis, et simulachrorum more, quæ non vident, neque audiunt, eodem die alteri astitistis, licet ille tunc et quotidie vobis intonaret. Fratres, fidelis sermo est, et omni acceptione dignus. Ille dixit, fidelem, et dignum, vos ut infidelem et indignum sprevistis. Si quis episcopatum cupit, bonum opus cupit. Episcopatum magnoperè avaritiæ gratiâ, non spiritualis profectus obtentu, cupitis, et bonum opus illi condignum nequaquam habetis. Oportet ergo hujusmodi irreprehensibilem esse : In hoc namque sermone lachrymis magis, quam verbis opus est, ac si dixisset apostolus eum esse omnibus irreprehensibiliorum debere. Unius uxoris virum. Quid ita apud nos, quoque contemnitur, quasi non audiretur vel idem dicere. Et virum uxoris sobrium, prudentem ? Quis etiam ex vobis hoc aliquando inesse sibi saltem optavit. Hospitalem ? Id forte casu evenerit, popularis auræ potius, quam præcepti gratiâ factum. Non prodest, Domino salvatore ita dicente. Amen dico vobis, receperunt meredem suam. Ornatum, non vinolentum, non percussorem, sed modestum, non litigiosum, non cupidum ? O feralis immutatio, ô horrenda præceptorum cœlestium conculcatio ; nonne infatigabiliter ad hæc expugnanda, vel potius obruenda actuum verborumque arma corripitis, pro quibus conservandis, atque firmandis, si necesse fuisset, et pœna ultrò subeunda, et vita ponendo erat ? sed videamus et sequentia. Domum suam (inquit) benè regentem, filios habentem, subditos in omni castitate. Ergo imperfecta est patrum castitas, si non item et filiorum accumulatur ? Sed quid erit, ubi nec pater, nec filius, mali genitoris exemplo privatus, conspicitur castus ? Si quis autem domui suæ præesse nescit, quomodo ecclesiæ Dei dili-

gentiam adhibebit? Hæc sunt verba quæ indubitatis affectibus approbantur. Diaconos similiter pudicos, non bilingues, non vino multo deditos, non turpe lucrum sectantes, habentes ministerium fidei, in conscientia pura. Hi autem probentur primum, et sic ministrent nullum crimen habentes. His nimirum horrescens diu immorari, unum veridice possum dicere. Quin hæc omnia in contrarios actus mutantur, ita ut clerici quod non absque dolore cordis, fateor, impudici, bilingues, ebrii, turpis lucri cupidi, habentes fidem, et ut verius dicam, infidelitatem, in conscientia impura non probati in bono, sed in malo præsciti ministrantes, et innumera crimina habentes, sacro ministerio adsciscantur. Audistis etiam illo die, quo multo dignius, multoque rectius erat, ut ad carcerem vel catastam pœnalem quam ad sacerdotium traheremini domino scitante, quem se esse putarunt discipuli, Petrum respondisse. Tu es Christus filius Dei, eique dominum pro tali confessione, dixisse. Beatus es Simon Barjona, quia caro et sanguis non revelavit tibi, sed pater meus, qui in coelis est. Ergo Petrus à Deo Patre doctus rectè Christum confitetur. Vos autem moniti à patre vestro diabolo iniquè, salvatorem malis actibus denegatis. Verò sacerdoti dicitur: Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram, ædificabo ecclesiam meam. Vos quidem assimilamini viro stulto, qui ædificavit domum suam, super arenam. Notandum verò est, quòd insipientibus in ædificanda domo, arunarum pendulæ mobilitati Dominus non co-operatur, secundum illud. Fecerunt sibi reges; et non per me. Itidemque quod sequitur eadem sonat dicendo. Et portæ inferi non prævalebunt, ejusque peccata intelliguntur. De vestra quidem exitiabili factura pronunciantur. Venerunt flumina, flaverunt venti, et impe-

gerunt in domum illam, et cecidit, et fuit ruina ejus magna. Petro ejusque successoribus dicit Dominus, et tibi dabo clavīs regni cœlorum. Vobis verò; non novi vos, discedite à me, operarii iniquitatis, ut seperati sinistrae partis hoedi eatis in ignem æternum. Itemque omni sancto sacerdoti promittitur: Et quæcunque solveris super terram, erunt soluta et in cœlis; et quæcunque ligaveris super terram, erunt ligata et in cœlis. Sed quomodo vos aliquid solvetis, ut sit solutum, et in cœlis, à cœlo ob scelera adempti, et immanium peccatorum funibus compediti? Ut Solomon quoque ait, funiculis peccatorum suorum unusquisque constringitur. Qua ratione aliquid in terra ligabitis, quod supra mundum etiam ligetur, propter vosmetipsos, qui ita ligati iniquitatibus, in hoc mundo tenemini, ut in cœlis nequaquam ascendatis, sed in infausta tartari ergastula non conversi in hac vita ad dominum, decidatis. Nec sibi quisquam sacerdotum de corporis mundi solum conscientia supplaudat, cum eorum quibus præest, si propter ejus imperitiam, seu desidiam, seu adultationem, perierint in die judicii de ejusdem manibus veluti interfectoris animæ exquirantur. Quia nec dulcior mors, quam quæ infertur ab unoquoque homineque malo, alioquin non dixisset Apostolus velut paternum legatum suis successoribus derelinquens. Mundus ego sum ab omnium sanguine, non enim subterfugi, quo minus annuntiarem vobis omne ministerium Dei. Multum namque usu ac frequentia peccatorum inebriati, et incessanter irruentibus vobis scelerum cumulatorum, ac si undis quassati unum veluti post naufragium, in qua ad vivorum terram evadatis, pœnitentiæ tabulam toto animi nisu exquirite, ut avertatur furor Domini à vobis, misericorditer dicentis, Nolo mortem peccatoris, sed ut

convertatur et vivat. Ipse omnipotens Deus totius consolationis et misericordiæ paucissimos bonos pastores conservet ab omni malo, et municipes faciat civitatis Hierusalem cœlestis, hoc est, sanctorum omnium congregationis, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus, cui sit honor, et gloria in secula seculorum. Amen.”

If the English translation of this book (for translated it is long ago) do fall into the hands of the vulgar, they will see what language the British clergy received from one that was neither a censorious railer, nor schismatically self-opinionated.

Perhaps some will say, “That the matter is not much amended, when in former times we were almost all of a mind; and now we have so many religions that we know not well whether we have any at all.”

*Ans.* 1. Every different opinion is not another religion. 2. This is the common Popish argument against reformation, as if it were better that men believed nothing “fide divina,” than inquire after truth, for fear of misbelief: and as if they would have all ungodly, that they might be all of a mind. I am sure that the most of the people in England, wherever I came, did make religion, and the reading of the Scripture, or speaking of the way to heaven, the matter of their bitter scorn and reproach. And would you have us all of that mind again, for fear of differences? a charitable wish! 3. If others run into the other extreme, will that be any excuse to you? Christ’s Church hath always suffered between profane unbelievers and heretical dividers, as He suffered Himself on the cross between two thieves. And will the sin of one excuse the other? 4. And yet I must say, (lest I be impiously blind and ungrateful,) that,

through the great mercy of God, the matter is so far amended, that many hundred drunken, swearing, ignorant, negligent, scandalous ministers are cast out; and we have many humble, godly, painful teachers in a county for a few that we had before. This is so visibly true, that when the godly are feasted, who formerly were almost famished, and beaten for going abroad to beg their bread, you can hardly, by all your arguments or rhetoric, persuade them that the times are no better with them than they were; though men of another nation may possibly believe you in such reports. I bless God for the change that I see in this county; and among the people, even in my own charge, which is such as will not permit me to believe that the case is as bad with them as formerly it hath been. I say, with Minutius Fœlix, p. 401, (mihi,) “*Quid ingrati sumus? quid nobis invidemus? Si veritas divinitatis nostri temporis ætate maturuit. Fruamur nostro bono: Et recti sententiam temperemus: cohibeatur superstitio: impietas expietur: religio servetur.*” It is the sinful unhappiness of some men’s minds, that they can hardly think well of the best words or ways of those whom they disaffect; and they usually disaffect those that cross them in their corrupt proceedings, and plainly tell them of their faults. They are ready to judge of the reprovèr’s spirit by their own, and to think that all such sharp reproofs proceed from some disaffection to their persons, or partial opposition to the opinions which they hold; and therefore they will seldom regard the reproofs of any but those of their own party, who will seldom deal plainly with them, because they are of their party. But plain-dealers are always approved

in the end ; and the time is at hand when you shall confess that those were your truest friends. He that will deal plainly against your sins in uprightness and honesty, will deal as plainly for you against the sins of any that would injure you ; for he speaks not against sin because it is *yours*, but because it is *sin*. It is an observable passage that is reported by many, and printed by one, how the late King Charles, who, by the Bishops' instigation, had kept Mr Prynne so long in prison, and twice cropt his ears, for writing against their masks and plays, and the high and hard proceedings of the prelates when he read his notable, voluminous speech for an acceptance of the King's concessions, and an agreement with him thereupon,—did, not long before his death, deliver the book to a friend that stood by him, saying, "Take this book ; I give it thee as a legacy ; and, believe it, this gentleman is the Cato of the age." The time will come when plain dealing will have a better construction than it hath, while prejudice doth turn the heart against it.

I shall stand no longer on the apologetical part : I think, the foregoing objections being answered, there is no great need of more of this. The title of the book itself is apologetical, which, if I tell you not, I may well expect that some of my old ingenuous interpreters should put another sense upon it. I pretend not to the sapience of Gildas, nor to the sanctity of Salvian, as to the degree ; but by their names I offer you an excuse for plain dealing. If it was used in a much greater measure by men so wise and holy as these, why should it in a lower measure be disallowed in another ? At least from hence I have this encouragement, that the plain dealing of Gildas and Salvian



being so much approved by us now they are dead, how much soever they might be despised or hated while they were living by them whom they did reprove, at the worst I may expect some such success in times to come.

But my principal business is yet behind. I must now take the boldness, brethren, to become your monitor, concerning some of the necessary duties of which I have spoken in the ensuing discourse. If any of you should charge me with arrogancy or immodesty, as if hereby I accused you of negligence, or judged myself sufficient to admonish you; I crave your candid interpretation of my boldness, assuring you that I obey not the counsel of my flesh herein, but displease myself as much as some of you; and had rather have the ease and peace of silence, if it would stand with duty and the Church's good. But it is the mere necessity of the souls of men, and my desire of their salvation, and the prosperity of the Church, which force me to this arrogancy and immodesty, if so it must be called. For who that hath a tongue can be silent, when it is for the honour of God, the welfare of His Church, and the everlasting happiness of so many persons?

And the *first* and main matter which I have to propound to you is, whether it be not the unquestionable duty of the generality of ministers, in these three nations, to set themselves presently to the work of catechising and personal instructing all that are to be taught by them, who will be persuaded to submit thereunto? I need not here stand to prove it, having sufficiently done it in the following discourse. Can you think that holy wisdom will gainsay it? Will

zeal for God, will delight in His service, or love to the souls of men gainsay it? (1.) That the people must be taught the principles of religion, and matters of greatest necessity to salvation, is past doubt among us. (2.) And that they must be taught it in the most edifying, advantageous way, I hope we are agreed. (3.) And that personal conference, and examination, and instruction, hath many excellent advantages for their good, is beyond dispute, and afterward manifested. (4.) As also that personal instruction is commended to us by Scripture, and the practices of the servants of Christ, and approved by the godly of all ages, so far as I can find, without contradiction. (5.) It is past all doubt that we should perform this great duty to all the people, or to as many as we can; for our love and care of their souls must extend to all. If there be a thousand or five hundred ignorant people in your parish, it is a poor discharge of your duty now and then occasionally to speak to some few of them, and let the rest alone in their ignorance, if you are able to afford them help. (6.) And it is as certain that so great a work as this is should take up a considerable part of our time. (7.) And as certain is it, that all duties should be done in order, as far as may be, and therefore should have their appointed times. And if we are agreed to practise according to these commonly-acknowledged truths, we need not differ upon any doubtful circumstances.

*Object.* "We teach them in public; and how then are we bound to teach them man by man besides?"

*Ans.* You pray for them in public: must you not also pray for them in private? Paul taught every man, and exhorted every man, and that both publicly

and from house to house, night and day with tears. The necessity and benefits afterward mentioned prove it to be your duty. But what need we add more, when experience speaks so loud? I am daily forced to admire how lamentably ignorant many of our people are, that have seemed diligent hearers of me these ten or twelve years, while I spoke as plainly as I was able to speak! Some know not that each person in the Trinity is God; nor that Christ is God and man; nor that He took His human nature into heaven; nor many the like necessary principles of our faith. Yea, some that come constantly to private meetings are found grossly ignorant; whereas, in one hour's familiar instruction of them in private, they seem to understand more, and better entertain it, than they did in all their lives before.

*Object.* "But what obligation lieth on us to tie ourselves to certain days for the performance of this work?"

*Ans.* This is like the libertines' plea against family prayer. They ask, Where are we bound to pray morning and evening? Doth not the nature and end of the duty plainly tell you that an appointed time conduceth to the orderly successful performance of it? How can people tell when to come, if the time be not made known? You will have a fixed day for a lecture, because people cannot else tell when to come without a particular notice for each day: and it is as necessary here, because this must be a constant duty, as well as that.

*Object.* "But we have many other businesses that sometimes may interrupt the course."

*Ans.* Weightier business may put by our preaching,

even on the Lord's-day, but we must not therefore neglect our constant observance ordinarily of that day: and so it is here. If you have so much greater business, that you cannot ordinarily have time to do the ministerial work, you should not undertake the office: for ministers are men "separated to the gospel of Christ, and must give themselves wholly to these things."

*Object.* "All the parish are not the church, nor do I take the pastoral charge of them, and therefore I am not satisfied that I am bound to take this pains with them."

*Ans.* I will pass by the question, whether all the parish be to be taken for your church; because in some places it is so, and in others not. But let the negative be supposed: Yet, (1.) The common maintenance, which most receive, is for teaching the whole parish; though you be not obliged to take them all for a church. (2.) What need we look for a stronger obligation, than the common bond that lieth on all Christians, to further the work of men's salvation, and the good of the Church, and the honour of God, to the utmost of their power; together with the common bond that is on all ministers to further these ends by ministerial teaching to the utmost of their power? Is it a work so good, and apparently conducing to so great benefits to the souls of men, and yet can you perceive no obligation to the doing of it?

*Object.* "But why may not occasional conference and instructions serve the turn?"

*Ans.* I partly know what occasional conferences are, compared to this duty, having tried both. Will it satisfy you to deal with one person of twenty or

forty, or a hundred, and to pass by all the rest? Occasional conferences fall out seldom, and but with few; and (which is worst of all) are seldom managed so thoroughly as these must be. When I speak to a man that cometh to me purposely on that business, he will better give me leave to examine him, and deal closely with him, than when it falls in on the by: and most occasional conferences fall out before others, where plain dealing will not be taken so well. But so much is said afterward to these and several other objections, that I shall add no more here.

I do now, in the behalf of Christ, and for the sake of His Church and the immortal souls of men, beseech all the faithful ministers of Christ, that they will presently and effectually fall upon this work. Combine for a unanimous performance of it, that it may more easily procure the submission of your people. But if there should be found any so blind or vile as to oppose it, or dissent, God forbid that other ministers should, because of that, forbear their duties. I am far from presuming to prescribe you rules or forms, or so much as to move you to tread in our steps, in any circumstances where a difference is tolerable, or to use the same catechism or exhortation as we do: only fall presently and closely to the work. If there should be any of so proud or malicious a mind as to withdraw from so great a duty because they would not seem to be our followers, or drawn to it by us, as they would have approved it, if it had risen from themselves; I advise such, as they love their everlasting peace, to make out to Christ for a cure of such cankered minds: and let them know that this duty hath its rise neither from them nor us, but from the Lord; and is generally

approved by His Church : and for my part, let them, and spare not, tread me in the dirt, and let me be as vile in their eyes as they please, so they will but hearken to God and reason, and fall upon the work, that our hopes of a more common salvation of men, and of a true reformation of the Church may be revived. I must confess that I find by some experience that this is the work that must reform indeed ; that must expel our common prevailing ignorance ; that must bow the stubborn hearts of men ; that must answer their vain objections, and take off their prejudice ; that must reconcile their hearts to faithful ministers, and help on the success of our public preaching ; and must make true godliness a commoner thing, through the grace of God, which worketh by means. I find that we never took the right course to demolish the kingdom of darkness till now. I wonder at myself, how I was kept off from so clear and excellent a duty so long. But I doubt not but other men's case is as mine was. I was long convinced of it, but my apprehensions of the difficulties were too great, and my apprehensions of the duty too small ; and so I was hindered long from the performance. I thought that the people would but have scorned it, and none but a few that had least need, would have submitted to it. The thing seemed strange, and I stayed till the people were better prepared ; and I thought my strength would never go through with it, having so great burdens on me before ; and thus I was long detained in delays, which I beseech the Lord of mercy to forgive. Whereas, upon trial, I find the difficulties almost nothing, save only through my extraordinary bodily weakness, to that

which I imagined ; and I find the benefits and comforts of the work to be such, as that I profess, I would not wish that I had forborne it for all the riches in the world (as for myself.) We spend Monday and Tuesday from morning to almost night in the work ; besides a chapelry, catechised by another assistant, taking about fifteen or sixteen families in a week, that we may go through the parish, which hath above eight hundred families, in a year ; and I cannot say yet that one family hath refused to come to me, nor but few persons excused themselves and shifted it off. And I find more outward signs of success with most that come, than of all my public preaching to them. If you say, it is not so in most places : I answer, 1. I wish that be not much long of ourselves. 2. If some refuse your help, that will not excuse you for not affording it to them that would accept it. If you ask me what course I take for order and expedition ; I have after told you : In a word, at the delivery of the catechisms, I take a catalogue of the persons of understanding in the parish ; and the clerk goeth a week before to every family to tell them when to come, and at what hour ; (one family at eight o'clock, the next at nine, and the next at ten, &c.) And I am forced by the number to deal with a whole family at once ; but admit not any of another to be present (ordinarily.)

Brethren, do I now invite you to this work without God, without the consent of all antiquity, without the consent of the reformed divines ; or without the conviction of your own consciences ? See what our late Assembly speak occasionally, in the Directory, about the Visitation of the Sick :—“ It is the duty of the

minister, not only to teach the people committed to his charge in public, but *privately* and *particularly* to admonish, exhort, reprove, and comfort them upon all seasonable occasions, so far as his time, strength, and personal safety will permit. He is to admonish them in time of health to prepare for death ; and for that purpose, they are often to confer with their minister about the state of their souls," &c. Read this over again, and consider it. Hearken to God, if you would have peace with God : hearken to conscience, if you would have peace of conscience. I am resolved to deal plainly with you, if I displease you. It is an unlikely thing, that there should be a heart that is sincerely devoted to God in the breast of that man, that after advertisements and exhortations, will not resolve on so clear and great a duty as this is. As it is with our people in hearing the Word, so it is with us in teaching. An upright heart is an effectual persuader of them to attend on God in the use of His ordinances ; and an upright heart will as effectually persuade a minister to his duty : as a good stomach needs no arguments to draw it to a feast, nor will easily by any arguments be taken off : and as a child will love and obey his parents, though he could not answer a sophister that would persuade him to hate them ; so I cannot conceive that he that hath one spark of saving grace, and so hath that love to God, and delight to do His will, which is in all the sanctified, should possibly be drawn to contradict or refuse such a work as this ; except under the power of such a temptation as Peter was when he denied Christ, or when he dissuaded Him from suffering, and heard an half excommunication, " Get thee behind me, Satan,



thou art an offence unto me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matt. xvi. 22, 23.)

You have put your hand to the plough of God ; you are doubly sanctified and devoted to Him, as Christians and pastors ; and dare you after this draw back and refuse His work ? You see the work of reformation at a stand ; and you are engaged by many obligations to promote it ; and dare you now neglect those means by which it must be done ? Will you shew your faces in a Christian congregation, as ministers of the gospel, and there pray for a reformation ; and pray for the conversion and salvation of your hearers, and the prosperity of the Church ; and when you have done, refuse to use means by which it must be done ? I know that carnal wit will never want words and shew of reason to gainsay that truth and duty which it abhors ; it is easier now to cavil against duty than perform it ; but stay the end before you pass your final judgment. Can you possibly make yourselves believe that you should have a comfortable review of these neglects, or make a comfortable account of them unto God ? I dare prognosticate, from the knowledge of the nature of grace, that all the godly ministers in England will make conscience of this duty, and address themselves to it ; except those that by some extraordinary accident are disabled, or those that are under such temptations as aforesaid. I do not hopelessly persuade you to it ; but take it for granted it will be done : and if any lazy, or jealous, or malicious hypocrites do cavil against it, or hold off, the rest will not do so ; but they will take the opportunity, and not resist the warnings of the Lord. And God will uncase the hypocrites ere long, and make them know, to their

sorrow, what it was to play fast and loose with God. Woe to them, when they must be accountable for the blood of souls! The reasons which satisfy them here against duty will then be manifested to be the effects of their folly, and to have proceeded radically from their corrupted wills and carnal interest. And (unless they be desperately blinded and seared to the death) their consciences will not own those reasons at a dying hour which now they seem to own. They shall feel to their sorrow that there is not that comfort to be had for a departing soul, in the review of such neglected duty, as there is to them that have wholly devoted themselves to the service of the Lord. I am sure my arguments for this duty will appear strongest at the last, whatever they do now. And again I say, I hope the time is even at hand, when it shall be as great a shame to a minister to neglect the private instructing and oversight of the flock, as it hath been to be a seldom preacher; for which men are now justly sequestered and ejected. And if God have not so great a quarrel with us as tendeth to a removal of the gospel, or at least to the blasting of its prosperity and success in the desired reformation, I am confident that this will shortly be. And if these lazy, worldly hypocrites were but quickened to their duty by a sequestering committee, you should see them stir more zealously than all arguments fetched from God and Scripture, from the reward or punishment, or from the necessity and benefits of the work can persuade them to do. For even now these wretched men, while they pretend themselves the servants of Christ, are asking, What authority we have for this work? And if we could but shew them a com-

mand from the Lord Protector or Council, it would answer all their scruples, and put the business beyond dispute; as if they had a design to confirm the accusation of the Papists, that their ministry only is Divine, and ours dependeth on the will of men. Well, for those godly, zealous ministers of Christ, that labour in sincerity, and denying their worldly interest and ease, do wholly devote themselves to God; I am confident there needs not much persuasion. There is somewhat within that will presently carry them to the work; and for the rest, let them censure this warning as subtly as they can, they shall not hinder it from rising up against them in judgment, unless it be by true repentance and reformation.

And let me speak one word of this to you that are my dear fellow-labourers in this county, who have engaged yourselves to be faithful in this work. It is your honour to lead in sacred resolutions and agreements; but if any of you should be unfaithful in the performance, it will be your double dishonour. Review your subscribed agreement, and see that you perform it with diligence and constancy. You have begun a happy work; such as will do more to the welfare of the Church than many that the world doth make a greater stir about. God forbid now, that imprudence or negligence should frustrate all. For the generality of you, I do not much fear it; having so much experience of your fidelity in the other parts of your office. And if there should be any found among you that will shuffle over the work, and deal unfaithfully in this and other parts of your office, I take it for no just cause of reproach to us that we accept of your subscription when you offer to join with us. For catechising

is a work not proper only to a minister; and we cannot forbid any to engage themselves to their unquestionable duty: but in our association for discipline we must be somewhat more scrupulous with whom we join. I earnestly beseech you all, in the name of God, and for the sake of your people's souls, that you will not slightly slubber over this work, but do it vigorously and with all your might, and make it your great and serious business: much judgment is required for the managing of it. Study therefore how to do it beforehand, as you study for your sermons. I remember how earnest I was with some of the last parliament to have had them settle catechists in our assemblies; but truly I am not sorry that it took no effect, unless for a few of the larger congregations. For I perceive that all the life of the work, under God, doth lie in the prudent, effectual management of searching men's hearts, and setting home the saving truths; and the ablest minister is weak enough for this, and few of inferior place or parts would be found competent. For I fear nothing more than that many ministers that preach well will be found too unmeet for this work, especially to manage it with old, ignorant, dead-hearted sinners; and, indeed, if the ministers be not revered by the people, they will rather slight them and contest with them than humbly learn and submit; how much more would they do so by inferior men? Seeing, then, the work is cast upon us, and it is we that must do it, or else it must be undone, let us be up and doing with all our might, and the Lord will be with us. I can tell you one thing for your encouragement: it is a work that the enemies of the Church and ministry do exceedingly vex at, and hate, and fear more than anything that yet we have

undertaken. I perceive the signs of the Papists' indignation against it. And methinks it hath the most notable character of a work extraordinarily and unquestionably good: for they storm at it, and yet they have nothing to say against it. They cannot blame it, and yet they hate and fear it, and would fain undermine it if they knew how. You know how many false rumours have been spread abroad this country to deter the people from it, as that the Lord Protector and Council were against it; that the subscribers were to be ejected; that the agreement was to be publicly burnt, &c. And when we have searched after the authors, we can drive it no higher than the Quakers, the Papists' emissaries; from whom we may easily know their minds. And yet when a Papist speaks openly as a Papist, some of them have said that it is a good work, but that it wants authority, and is done by those that are not called to it: forsooth, because we have not the authority of their pope or prelates: and some that should be more sober have used the same language; as if they would rather have thousands and millions of souls neglected than have them so much as catechised and instructed without commission from a prelate. Yea, and some that differ from us about infant baptism, I understand, repine at it, and say that we will hereby insinuate ourselves into the people, and hinder them from receiving the truth. A sad case, that any that seem to have the fear of God should have so true a character of a partial, dividing, and siding mind, as to grudge at the propagation of Christianity itself, and the common truths which we are all agreed in, for fear lest it should hinder the propagation of their opinions. The common cause of Christianity must give place to the cause of these

lower controverted points; and they grudge us our very labour and suffering for the common work, though there be nothing in it which meddled with them, or which they are able with any shew of reason to gainsay.

I beseech you, brethren, let all this, and the many motives that I have after given you, persuade you to greater diligence herein! When you are speaking to your people, do it with the greatest prudence and seriousness, and be as earnest with them as for life or death; and follow it as close as you do your public exhortations in the pulpit. I profess again, it is to me the most comfortable work, except public preaching, (for there I speak to more, though yet with less advantage to each one,) that ever I yet did set my hand to; and I doubt not but you will find it so to you, if you faithfully perform it.

My *second* request to the reverend ministers in these nations is, that at last they would, without any more delay, unanimously set themselves to the practice of those parts of Christian discipline, which are unquestionably necessary, and part of their work. It is a sad case that good men, under so much liberty, should settle themselves so long in the constant neglect of so great a duty. The common cry is, *Our people are not ready for it; they will not bear it.* But is not the meaning, that *you will not bear* the trouble and hatred which it will occasion? If, indeed, you proclaim our churches incapable of the order and government of Christ; what do you but give up the cause to them that withdraw from them, and encourage men to look out for better societies where that discipline may be had? For though preaching and sacraments may be omitted in some cases, till a fitter season, and accord-

ingly so may discipline be; yet is it a hard case to settle in a constant neglect, for so many years together as we have done, unless there were a flat impossibility of the work: and if it were so, because of our incapable materials, it would plainly call us to alter our constitution, that the matter may be capable. I have spoke plainly afterward to you of this, which I hope you will bear, and conscientiously consider of. I now only beseech you that would make a comfortable account to the chief Shepherd, and would not be found unfaithful in the house of God, that you do not wilfully or negligently delay it, as if it were a needless thing; nor shrink from the duty because of trouble to the flesh that doth attend it: for as that is too sad a sign of hypocrisy, so the costliest duties are usually the most comfortable; and be sure that Christ will bear the cost. I could here produce a heap of testimonies, of fathers and reformed divines, that inculcate this duty with great importunity. I shall only now give you the words of two of the most godly, laborious, judicious divines, that ever the Church of Christ had since the days of the Apostles.

Calvin. Institut. lib. 4. cap. xii. sec. 1, 2. "Sed quia nonnulli in odium disciplinæ ab ipso quoque, nomine abhorrent, hi sic habeant: Si nulla societas, imò nulla domus quæ vel modicam familiam habeat, contineri in recto statu sine disciplina potest: Eam esse multo magis necessariam in Ecclesia, cujus statum quàm ordinatissimum esse decet. Proinde quemadmodum salvifica Christi doctrina anima est Ecclesiæ, ita illic disciplina pro nervis est: qua fit ut membra corporis, suo quodque loco inter se cohæreant. Quamobrem quicumque vel sublatam disciplinam cupiunt, vel ejus

impediunt restitutionem, sive hoc faciant data operâ, sive per incogitantiam, Ecclesiæ certè extremam dissipationem quærunt. Quid enim futurum est, si unicuique liceat quod libuerit? Atqui id fieret nisi ad doctrinæ prædicationem accederent privatæ monitiones, correctiones, et alia ejusmodi adminicula quæ doctrinam sustinent et otiosam esse non sinunt. Disciplina igitur veluti frænum est, quo retineantur et domentur qui adversus Christi doctrinam ferociunt: vel tanquam stimulus quo excitentur parum voluntarii: interdum etiam velut paterna ferula, qua clementer et pro Spiritus Christi mansuetudine castigentur, qui gravius lapsi sunt. Quum ergo jam imminere cernamus initia quædam horrendæ in Ecclesia vastitatis, ex eo quòd nulla est cura, nec ratio continedi populi, ipsa necessitas clamat remedio opus esse. Porrò hoc unicum remedium est quod et Christus præcipit, et semper usitatum inter pios fuit. 2. Primum disciplinæ fundamentum est, ut privatæ monitiones locum habeant: hoc est, si quis officium sponte non faciat aut insolenter se gerat, aut minus honestè vivat, aut aliquid admiserit reprehensione dignum, ut patiat se moneri: atque ut quisque fratrem suum, dum res postulabit, monere studeat. Præsertim verò in hoc advigilent Pastores ac Presbyteri, quorum partes sunt non modò concionari ad populum, sed per singulas domos monere et exhortari, sicubi universali doctrina non satis profecerint: quemadmodum docet Paulus, quum refert se docuisse privatim et per domos: et se mundum à sanguine omnium attestatur, quia non cessaverit cum lachrymis nocte et die monere unumquemque." See the rest. And sec. 4, he adds of the necessity; "Sine hoc disciplinæ vinculo qui diu stare posse Ecclesias confidunt,



opinionem fallantur: nisi fortè carere impunè possimus eo adminiculo, quod Dominus fore nobis necessarium providit." Et sec. 5, "Atque hîc quoque, habenda est Cœnæ Dominicæ ratio, ne promiscua exhibitione profanetur. Verissimum est enim eum, cui commissa est dispensatio, si sciens ac volens indignum admiserit quem repellere jure poterat, proinde reum esse sacrilegii acsi corpus Domini canibus prostituerit."

Hier. Zanchius de Ecclesia, vol. iii. fol. 123, 124. "(Disciplina) est actio qua Ecclesia, secundum facultatem sibi à Christo traditam fideles suos non solum publicè, sed etiam privatim, tam in vero Dei cultu quam in bonis moribus, idque tum doctrina, tum correctionibus, tum Ecclesiasticis pœnis et censuris, tum etiam si opus sit excommunicationibus instituit et institutos retinet." Fol. 124. "Primo habet privatam doctrinam. Habet enim Ecclesia potestatem, si publica doctrina in publico Templo non sufficiat, privatas fidelium domos ingrediendi; atque ibi eos privatim docendi, ac in vera doctrina ac religione Christiana instituendi: et fideles pati debent ut pastor suas ædes ingrediatur, et eos privatim instituat. Hujus exemplum est, in Acts xx. &c. Idem fecerunt reliqui Apostoli. 2. Habet privatas admonitiones, correctiones, objurgationes," &c. This is for private teaching: Now for the Sacrament, hear what he saith, ibid. fol. 79. Obj. "Manebimus in Ecclesia, audiemus verbum, &c., sed qui possumus in Cœnâ communionem vobiscum habere, cum ad eam admittantur multi impuri, ebrii, avari, &c. Resp. 1. Quantum ad hos peccatores, eos intelligi posse bifariam; vel qui ante fuerunt, ebrii, &c. Sed postea resipuerunt. Hos dicimus secundum verbum Domini non esse excludendos à

mensa Domini, quandoquidem verâ penitentiâ et fide præditi sunt: vel eos qui etiamnum ebrietati student, aliisque vitiis, et talis sine pœnitentiâ et fide accedunt: hos dicimus simpliciter non esse admittendos. Quod autem admittantur plerumque hoc contingere potest bifariam: vel ex ignorantia Ministrorum, eò quod non agnoverint tales esse, quales sunt: Et hanc certè ignorantiam, non probamus, quoniam debet minister agnoscere, qualesnam sint illi quibus Cœnam Domini administrat: quod si ignorat, non potest non accusari supinæ et reprehendæ negligentiae, &c. Aut cum sint omnibus noti qualesnam sint, non student tamèn eos arcere præ timore, vel aliquo alio humano respectu. Hoc damnamus in Ministro vitium timiditatis. Debet enim minister Christi esse cordatissimus et heroicus. Sed hic non est spectandum quid unus aut alter vilis minister agat (mark the title) sed quæ sit Ecclesiæ institutio, quæque communis in omnibus Ecclesiis consuetudo: in omnibus autem Ecclesiis nostris antequam Cœna ministretur, omnibus hujusmodi, interdicitur, &c. Et certo magnum est probrum, quod inter filios Dei locum habeant et porci et canes: Multò verò magis, si illis prostituuntur Sacrosancta Cœnæ Dominicæ symbola, &c. Quare Ecclesiæ Christi non debent hujusmodi sceleratos in sinu suo ferre, nec ad Sacrum Cœnam dignos simul et indignos promiscuè admittere: id quod plerumque sit in Ecclesiis nostris:” (How many were then the “viles ministri!”)

But the principal is behind, of the necessity of discipline; and I desire both magistrates and ministers, into whose hands these lines shall fall, to read and consider it:—

Ibid. fol. 134, 135. “Videant igitur principes et

magistratus qui hanc disciplinam in Ecclesiam restitutam, nolunt, quid agant. Hæc instituta est à Christo, ut perpetuo in Ecclesia tanquam singularis thesaurus conservetur: ergo, qui eam exulare volunt, sciant se velle Christum exulare. Hæc pars est evangelii Jesu Christi. Ergo qui hanc restitutam nolunt, sciant se nolle evangelium Christi, sicut debet, restitutum. Quomodo igitur gloriamur restitutum esse Evangelium in Ecclesiis nostris, si hanc eamque non postremam partem Evangelii restitutam nolumus? Hæc vitia corriguntur; virtutes promoventur: Ergo qui hanc disciplinam restitutam nolunt, quomodo audent dicere se vitia odisse, virtutum vero amentes esse, pietatis promotores, impietatis osiores. Hæc conversatur et regitur Ecclesia, singulæque Ecclesiæ membra sua quæque loco cohærent: ergò quomodo qui hanc expulsam, volunt, dicunt se velle Christi Ecclesiam, bene rectam siquando sine hac bene regi non potest. Si nulla domus, nullum opidum; nulla urbs, nulla respublica, nullum regnum, imò ne exiguus quidem ludus literarius, sinè disciplina regi potest, quomodo poterit Ecclesia?" I would magistrates would read the rest, which is purposely to them.

Et fol. 135. "At timetur seditio et tumultus. Resp. ergo neque Evangelium est prædicandum, &c. Quid: Annon vident principes et magistratus nostri quantum malum in Ecclesia oriatur, et intus et foris ex neglectu contemptuve hujus disciplinæ? Foris nulla res est, quæ magis Papistas et alios, arceat, vel saltem retrudet amplectendo Evangelio, atque hæc disciplinæ Ecclesiasticæ destitutio, quæ est in Ecclesiis nostris. Intus, nihil quod magis alat vitia, hæresis, &c. Annon vident Ecclesias suas principes plenas sectis hæreti-

corum, et impurorum hominum? Ad has confluit omne genus hominum fanaticorum, impurorum, &c. tanquam ad asylum. Quare? Quia ibi nulla disciplina.

“Sciunt ergo Principes, et quicumque illi sint qui disciplinam Ecclesiasticam in Ecclesiis restitutam nolunt, sed ei adversantur, eamque proscribunt, se Christo adversari: Qui Ministros impediunt ne eam excerceant, se Christum et Deum impedire, ne sua fungantur potestate. Quid enim agunt Ministri cum excommunicant? Pronunciant sententiam Domini. Ait enim Christus: Quicquid ligaveritis in terris, &c. Quid igitur agunt qui impediunt Ecclesiam ne sententiam Domini pronunciet? Peccant contra Christum, et rei sunt læsæ Divinæ Majestatis. Annon reus esset læsæ majestatis Cæsareæ, si quis ejus judicem ne sententiam Cæsaris pronunciet impediatur? Videant igitur quid agant. Hactenus Christus rexit Ecclesiam suam hac disciplinâ; et ipsi Principes, imo et ministri aliquot, nolunt eam sic regi? Viderint ipsi. Pronuncio, proclamo, protestor, eos peccare, qui cum possint et debeant eam restituere, non restituunt.”

I hope both magistrates and ministers that are guilty will give me leave to say the like with Zanchy, if not to call them traitors against the majesty of God, that hinder discipline, and adversaries to Christ, yet at least to pronounce, proclaim, protest, that they sin against God, who set it not up when they may and ought. But what if the magistrate will not help us? Nay, what if he were against it? So he was for about three hundred years, when discipline was exercised in the primitive Church. To this Zanchy adds, *ib.*, “Ministri Ecclesiæ quantum per consensum et pacem Ecclesiæ

licet hanc disciplinam excercere debetis. Hanc enim potestatem vobis dedit Dominus, neque quispiam auferre eam potest : nec contenti esse debetis ut doceatis quid agendum, quid fugiendum sit, utut quisque pro sua libidine vivat nihil curantes, sed urgenda disciplina. vid. August. de fide et operib. c. 4. Obj. At impedimur per Magistratum. Resp. Tunc illi significate quam male agat," &c. Read the rest of the solid advice that Calvin and Zanchy in the forecited places do give both to ministers and people, where discipline is wanting.

The great objection that seemeth to hinder some from this work is, because we are not agreed yet who it is that must do it. Whether only a prelate, or whether a presbytery, or a single pastor, or the people.

*Ans.* Let so much be exercised as is out of doubt. 1. It is granted that a single pastor may expound and apply the Word of God : he may rebuke a notorious sinner by name. He may make known to the Church that God hath commanded them, with such a one, no not to eat ! And require them to obey this command, &c. I shall say no more of this now, than to cite the words of two learned, godly, moderate divines, impartial in this cause. The one is Mr Lyford, a maintainer of Episcopacy, in his "Legacy of Admission to the Lord's Supper," who, page 55, saith,

"*Quest.* 1. In which of the ministers is this power placed ?

"*Ans.* Every minister hath the power of all Christ's ordinances to dispense the same in that congregation or flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer ; yet with this difference : he may preach the word, baptize, and administer the holy Supper alone of himself, without the assistance or consent of the people,

but not excommunicate alone, (*he means not without the people, though of that more must be said*;) because excommunication doth presuppose an offence to the congregation, a conviction and proof of that offence, and witnesses of the party's obstinacy, and therefore hereunto is required the action of more than one, &c. Excommunication compriseth several acts: admonition, private, public. The last act is the casting out of a wicked, obstinate person from the society of the faithful. (1.) By the authority of Christ. (2.) Dispensed and executed by the ministers of the gospel. (3.) With the assistance and consent of the congregation, &c. 2. If you ask by whose office and ministry this sentence is denounced. I answer by the ministers of the gospel; we bind and loose doctrinally, in our preaching peace to the godly and curses to the wicked; but in excommunication, we denounce the wrath of God against this or that particular person, (thou art the man! thou hast no part with us,) and that not only declaratively, but judicially. It is like the sentence of a judge on the bench, &c. 3. If you ask whether this be done by the minister alone. I answer no; it must be done by the assistance and consent of the congregation. (1 Cor. v. 4.) Excommunication must not be done in a corner, by the Chancellor and his Register, &c. But whosoever doth, by his offences, lose his right to the holy things of God, he must lose it in the face of the congregation; and that after proofs and allegations as are aforesaid; the people hear and see the offence, complain of it, and are grieved at his society with them, and judge him worthy to be cast out. This concurrence and consent being supposed, every minister is 'Episcopus gregis,' a bishop in his own

parish, (N.B.,) 'To all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *Ἐπισκόπους*, *overseers*.' (Acts xx. 28.) And 'Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God.' (Heb. xiii. 17.) Where note, (1.) That they who preach the word of God must rule and govern the Church; and every preacher is a ruler, unto whom the people must submit. (Ver. 17.) Besides, every minister is vested with this authority at his ordination: 'Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven: whose sins thou dost retain,' &c. (2.) Every minister is vested with this authority by the laws of this land. The words of the rubric for the administration of the Lord's Supper, which do enable us thereto, are these: 'If any of those which intend to be partakers of the holy communion be an open, notorious, evil liver, so that the congregation by him is offended, or have done wrong to his neighbours by word or deed, the curate having knowledge thereof, shall call him, and advertise him in anywise not to come to the Lord's table until he have openly declared himself to be truly repented and amended of his former naughty life; that the congregation may thereby be satisfied, which afore was offended; and that he have recompensed the parties whom he hath done wrong to; or, at least, declare himself to be in full purpose so to do as soon as he conveniently may.' Besides this, our authority in this particular is confirmed by an ordinance of the Lords and Commons in Parliament," &c. So far Mr Lyford's words.

The other is Mr Thomas Ball, of Northampton, in his late book for the Ministry; where (part iii., cap. 4) he bringeth many arguments to prove it the minister's

duty to exercise discipline as well as to preach; and the seventh argument is this:—"What was given by the bishops unto such ministers as they ordained, and laid their hands upon, should not be grudged or denied them by anybody: for they were never accounted lavish or over liberal to them, especially in point of jurisdiction—that was always a very tender point, and had a guard and sentry always on it. For conceiving themselves the sole possessors of it, they were not willing to admit partners. Whatever they indulged in other points, as Pharaoh to Joseph, 'Only in the throne will I be greater than thou;' yet bishops granted to all that they ordained presbyters the use and exercise of discipline as well as doctrine; as appears in the book of Ordering Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, whereof the interrogatories propounded to the party to be ordained is, 'Will you then give your faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this realm hath received the same according to the commandments of God, so that you may teach the people committed to your care and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same?' Which a reverend and learned brother not observing, would confine all jurisdiction to diocesan bishops, &c. Arg. 8. What is granted and allowed to ministers, by the laws and customs of this nation, cannot reasonably be denied; for the laws of England have never favoured usurpation in the clergy, &c. But the laws and customs of this nation allow to the ministers of England the use and exercise of discipline as well as doctrine; for such of them as have parsonages or rectories, are in all processes and proceedings called rectors," &c.



2. And as to the points of the people's interest, the moderate seem to differ but in words. Some say the people are to govern by vote. I confess if this were understood as it is spoken, according to the proper sense of the words, and practised accordingly, it were contrary to the express command of Scripture, which command the elders to rule well, and the people to obey them as their rulers in the Lord; and it seems to me to be destructive to the being of a political church, whose constitutive parts are the *ruling* and the *ruled* parts; as every school consisteth of master and scholars, and every commonwealth of the "pars imperans, et pars subdita;" and therefore those that rigidly stick to this, do cast out themselves from all particular political churches' communion of Christ's institution. (Which because I have formerly said, or somewhat to that purpose, a late nameless writer makes me cruel to his party, while I seem for them, and so self-contradicting, as if it were cruelty to tell a brother of his sin, and not to leave it on him; or, as if I understood not myself, because he understands me not!) But I perceive the moderate mean not any such things as these words, in their proper sense, import. They only would have the Church ruled as a free people, (as from unjust impositions,) and in a due subordination to Christ. And we are all agreed that the pastors have the "judicium directionis," the teaching, directing power, by office; and that the people have "judicium discretionis;" and must try his directions, and not obey them when they lead to sin; and therefore we cannot expect that the people should execute any of our directions, except their judgment lead them to execute them. (Though if their judgment be wrong, God requireth them to rectify it.) And as for the *judicial decisive*

*power*, about which there is so great contending, in the strictest sense, it is the prerogative of Christ, and belongeth to neither of them; for only Christ is the proper lawgiver and judge of the Church, whose law and judgment is absolute, of itself determinative, and not subjected to our trial of its equity or obligation. So that we must as much conclude, that there is no final judge of controversies in a particular Church, as we do against the Papists; that there is none in the Church in general. And therefore the Church's judicial decisive power is but improperly such, reducible to the former; which seeing we are agreed in, we are as far in sense agreed in this. A pastor is judge, as a physician in an hospital, or as Plato, or Zeno was in his school, or any tutor in a college of voluntary students. For any more, it belongeth to Christ, and to the magistrate. Why then do we stand quarrelling about the name? One saith, *the people have a power of liberty, and the ministers only the power of authority*. And what is this more than we yield them?—viz: That the guiding authority being only in the guides, and the people commanded to obey them in a due subordination to Christ, there is a liberty belonging to all the saints; from any other kind of ministerial rule, that is, from a “*sic volo, sic jubeo*,” a rule without Divine authority; and therefore the people must first try and judge whether the direction be according to God, and so obey; and this in Church-censures as well as in other cases. So that, (1.) As the people ought not to dissent or disobey their guides, unless they lead them to sin, (and therefore must see a danger of sin before they suspend obedience,) So, (2.) The guides cannot bring the people to execute their censures or directions,

but by procuring their consent. And, therefore, though he must do his duty, and may pass his directive censure though they dissent, and ministerially require them in the name of the Lord, *e. g.*, to avoid a notorious, obstinate offender, and so to obey the command of God; that is, though we may charge them in the name of the Lord to consent and obey, and do their duty; yet, if their judgments remain unconvinced in a case which is to them obscure, we have no more to do but satisfy ourselves that we have done our duty. So that when we have quarrelled never so long, what is it but the people's *consent* that the moderate men on one side require? and *consent* the other side requireth also. Call it what else you will, whether a Government, or an Authority, or a Liberty; Consent is the thing which both require! And are we not, then, in the matter agreed? Peruse for this Mr Lyford's words before-cited. See also what the leading men for Presbyterian government do not only acknowledge, but maintain as effectually as others; as Dav. Blondellus de Jure plebis in Regim Eccles. Calvin. Institut. lib. 4. cap. xii. sec. 4. "Ne quis tale judicium spernat, aut parvi æstimet se fidelium suffragiis damnatum, testatus est Dominus," &c. Ita Zanchius ubi sup., and many more. Indeed, this consent of the people is not "sine qua non" to the pastor's performance of his own part—viz., "Charging the Church in Christ's name to avoid the communion of such a notorious, obstinate offender, and suspending his own acts towards him; and so charging them to receive the innocent or penitent." (For if the people consent not to avoid such, and so would exclude all discipline, yet the pastor must charge it unto them, and do his part.) But it is "sine qua non" to their

actual rejecting and avoiding that offender. In a word, we must teach them their duty, and require it; and they and we must obey and do it; and neither they nor we may oblige any to sin.

*Object.* "But we are not agreed about the matter of the Church that must be governed."

*Ans.* Peruse the qualifications required in church members in the writings of the moderate on both sides, and see what difference you can find! Are not both agreed that professors of true faith and holiness, cohabiting and consenting, are a true church? And when they contradict that profession by wicked actions, (doctrine or life,) they are to be dealt with by discipline. Though, I confess, in our practice we very much differ; most that I know running into one of the extremes of looseness or rigour.

My *third* and last request is, that all the faithful ministers of Christ would, without any more delay, unite and associate for the furtherance of each other in the work of the Lord, and the maintaining of unity and concord in His Churches. And that they would not neglect their brotherly meetings to those ends, nor yet spend them unprofitably, but improve them to their edification, and the effectual carrying on the work. Read that excellent letter of Edmond Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury to Queen Elizabeth. For ministerial meetings and exercises such bishops would have prevented our contentions and wars. You may see it in Fuller's "New History of the Church of England."

And let none draw back that accord in the substantials of faith and godliness; yea, if some should think themselves necessitated I will not say to schism, lest I

offend them ; but to separate in public worship from the rest ; methinks, if they be indeed Christians, they should be willing to hold so much communion with them as they can, and to consult how to manage their differences to the least disadvantage to the common truths and Christian cause, which they all profess to own and prefer.

And here I may not silently pass by an uncharitable slander which some brethren of the prelatical judgment have divulged of me far and near—viz., That while I persuade men to accommodation, it was long of me that the late proclamation or ordinance was procured for silencing all sequestered ministers, viz., by the late Worcestershire petition, which, they say, was the occasion of it, and they falsely report that I altered it after the subscription. To which I say, (1.) It was the petition of many justices, and the grand jury, and thousands of the county, as well as me. (2.) There is not a word in it, nor ever was, against any godly man, but only that the notoriously insufficient and scandalous should not be permitted to meddle with the mysteries of Christ, (especially the sacraments,) which we desire should have impartially extended to all parties alike. And so much of this as was granted we cannot but be thankful for, whosoever grudge at it, and wish it had been fully granted. (3.) I desire nothing more than that all able, godly, faithful ministers, of what side soever in our late State differences, may not only have liberty, but encouragement, for the Church hath not any such to spare, were they ten times more. In a word, I would have those, of what party soever, to have liberty to preach the gospel, whose errors or miscarriages are not so

great as that probably they will do as much hurt as good.

Brethren, I crave your pardon for the infirmities of this address ; and earnestly longing for the success of your labours, I shall daily beg of God that He would persuade you to those duties which I have here requested you to perform, and would preserve and prosper you therein, against all the serpentine subtlety and rage that is now engaged to oppose and hinder you.

Your unworthy fellow-servant,

RICH. BAXTER.

April 15, 1656.

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### TO THE LAY READER.

The reason why I have called this volume *the first part* of the book is, because I intend, if God enable me, and give me time, a *second part*, containing the duty of the people in relation to their pastors, and therein to shew, 1. The right and necessity of a ministry. 2. The way to know which is the true Church and ministry, and how we justify our own calling to this office, and how false prophets and teachers must be discerned. 3. How far the people must assist the pastors in the gospel, and the pastors put them on, and make use of them to that end. And, 4. How far the people must submit to their pastors, and what other duty they must perform in that relation. But because my time and strength are so uncertain that I know not whether I may yet live to publish my yet imperfect preparations on this subject, I dare not let this first part come

into your hands without a word of caution and advice, lest you should misunderstand or misapply it.\*

The caution that I must give you is in two parts.

1. Entertain not any unworthy thoughts of your pastors, because we here confess our own sins, and aggravate them in order to our humiliation and reformation. You know they are men, and not angels, that are put by God in the office of Church-guides ; and you know that we are imperfect men. Let Papists and Quakers pretend to a sinless perfection ; we dare not do it, but confess that we are sinners. And we should heartily rejoice to find the signs of imperfect sincerity in them that so confidently pretend to sinless perfection ; yea, if in some of them we could find but common honesty, and a freedom from some of the crying abominations of the ungodly, such as cruel bloodiness, lying, slandering, railing, &c. If it would make a man perfect to say he is perfect, and if it would deliver a man from sin to say, I have no sin, I confess this were an easy way to perfection.

But for our parts we believe, that he that saith he hath “no sin, deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him.” (1 John i. 8.) “And that in many things we offend all.” (James iii. 2.) And we profess to know but in part, and to have our treasure in earthen vessels, and to be insufficient for these things. And therefore see that you love and imitate the holiness of your pastors ; but take not occasion of disesteeming or reproaching them for their infirmities.

2. I take it to be my duty, as a watchman for your souls, to give you notice of a train that is laid for your perdition. The Papists, who have found that they could

\* It does not appear that the author ever published the above.—ED.

not well play their game here with open face, have masked themselves, and taken the vizards of several sects; and by the advantage of the licence of the times, are busily at work abroad in this land to bring you back to Rome. What names or garb soever they bear, you may strongly conjecture which be they by these marks following: (1.) Their main design is to unsettle you, and to make you believe that you have been all this while misled, and to bring you to a loss in a matter of religion, that when they have made you dislike or suspect that which you had, or seemed to have, you may be more respective of theirs. (2.) To which end their next means is to bring you to suspect first, and then to contend and reject your teachers. For, saith Rushworth, one of their writers, "Not one of ten among the people, indeed, do ground their faith on the Scripture, but on the credit of their teachers," &c.; therefore they think, if they can bring you to suspect your teachers, and so to reject them, they may deal with the sheep without the shepherds, and dispute with the scholars without their teachers, and quickly make you say what they list. To this end their design is partly to cry them down as false teachers; (but how are they baffled when it comes to the proof!) and partly to persuade you that they have no calling to the work, and urge them to prove their calling; (which how easily can we do!) and partly to work upon your covetous humour, by crying down tithes and all established maintenance for the ministry. And withal they are busy yet in contriving how to procure the governors of the nation to withdraw their public countenance and maintenance, and sacrilegiously to deprive the Church of the remnant that is devoted to it for God, and to leave the ministry



on equal terms with themselves, or all other sects, (which in Spain, Italy, France, &c., they will be loath to do.) And time will shew you whether God will suffer them to prevail with the governors of this sinful land, to betray the gospel into their hands or not. But we have reason to hope for better things. (3.) Their next design is to diminish the authority and sufficiency of Scripture; and, because they dare not yet speak out, to tell us what they set up in its stead; some of them will tell you of new prophets and revelations; and some of them will tell you that in that they are yet at a loss themselves, that is, they are of no religion, and then are no Christians. I shall now proceed no further in the discovery, but only warn you, as you love your souls, keep close to Scripture and a faithful ministry, and despise not your shepherds, if you would escape the wolves. If any question our calling, send them to our writings, where we have fully proved them; or send them to us, who are ready to justify them against any Papist or heretic upon earth. And let me tell you, that for all the sins of the ministry which we have here confessed, the known world hath not a more able, faithful, godly ministry than Britain hath at this day. If at the Synod of Dort the "Clerus Anglicanus" was called "stupor mundi," before all those ignorant and scandalous ones were cast out; what may we now call it? Brethren, let me deal freely with you! The ungrateful contempt of a faithful ministry is the shame of the faces of thousands in this land! And if thorough repentance prevent it not, they shall better know in hell whether such ministers were their friends or foes, and what they would have done for them if their counsel had been heard. When "the messengers of

God were mocked, and His words despised, and His prophets abused, the wrath of the Lord arose on the Israelites themselves, and there was no remedy." (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.) Shall ministers study, preach, and pray for you, and shall they be despised? When they have the God of heaven and their conscience to witness, that they desire not yours, but you, and are willing to spend and be spent for your sakes; that all the wealth in the world would not be regarded by them in comparison of your salvation, and that all their labours and sufferings are for your sake; if yet they be requited with your contempt, or scorn, or discouraging unteachableness, see who will be the losers in the end. When God himself shall justify them with a *Well done, good and faithful servant*, let those that reproached, despised, and condemned them, defend their faces from shame, and their consciences from the accusations of their horrid ingratitude, as well as they can! Read the Scriptures, and see whether they that obeyed God's messengers, or they that despised and disobeyed them, sped best. And if any of the seducers will tell you that we are not the ministers of Christ, leave them not till they tell you which is His true Church and ministry, and where they are; and by that time they have well answered you, you may know more of their minds.

3. My last advice to you is this: See that you obey your faithful teachers, and improve their help for your salvation while you have it; and take heed that you refuse not to learn when they would teach you. And in particular, see that you refuse not to submit to them in this duty of private instruction, which is mentioned in this treatise. Go to them when they desire you,

and be thankful for their help. Yea, and at other times when you need their advice, go to them of your own accord, and ask it. Their office is to be your guides in the way of life : if you seek not their direction, it seems you despise salvation itself, or else you are so proud as to think yourselves sufficient to be your own directors. Shall God in mercy send you leaders to teach you and conduct you in the way to glory, and will you shortly send them back, or refuse their assistance, and say, We have no need of their direction? Is it for their own ease or gain that they trouble you, or is it for your own everlasting gain? Remember that Christ hath said to His messengers, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me." If your obstinate refusal of the instruction do put them to bear witness against you in judgment, and to say, "Lord, I would have taught these ignorant sinners, and admonished these worldly, impenitent wretches, but they would not so much as come to me, nor speak with me!" look you to it, and answer it as you can ; for my part, I would not be then in your case for all the world ! But I shall say no more to you on this point, but only desire you to read and consider the exhortation which is published in our agreement itself, which speaks to you more fully ; and if you read this book, remember the duty which you find to belong to the ministers doth shew also what belongs to yourselves ; for it cannot be our duty to teach, catechise, advise, &c., if it be not yours to hear, learn, and seek advice. If you have any temptation to question our office, read the London Ministers' "Jus Divinum Minister. Evang.," and Mr Thomas Ball's book for the Ministry. If you doubt of the duty of learning the principles, and being

catechised, read the London Ministers' late Exhortation to Catechising; and Mr Zach. Crofton's book for Catechising (now newly published).

"There will," saith Dr Hammond, "be little matter of doubt or controversy, but that private, frequent, spiritual conference betwixt fellow-Christians, but especially (and in matters of high concernment and difficulty) between the presbyter and those of his charge, even in the time of health; and peculiarly that part of it which is spent in the discussion of every man's special sins and infirmities, and inclinations, may prove very useful and advantageous (in order to spiritual directions, reproof, and comfort) to the making the man of God perfect. And to tell truth, if the pride and self-conceit of some, and wretchlessness of others, the bashfulness of the third sort, the nauseating and instant satiety of any good in a fourth, the follies of men, and the artifices of Satan, have not put this practice quite out of fashion among us, there is no doubt but more good might be done by ministers this way, than is now done by any other means separated from the use of this particularly, than by that of public preaching, (which yet need not be neglected the more when this is used,) which hath now the fate to be cried up, and almost solely depended on, it being the more likely way, as Quintilian saith, (comparing public and private teaching of youth,) to fill narrow-mouthed bottles, (and such are the most of us,) by taking them single in the hand, and pouring in water into each, than by setting them altogether, and throwing never so many bottles of water on them."\*

"The ignorant soul," saith Gurnal, "feels no such

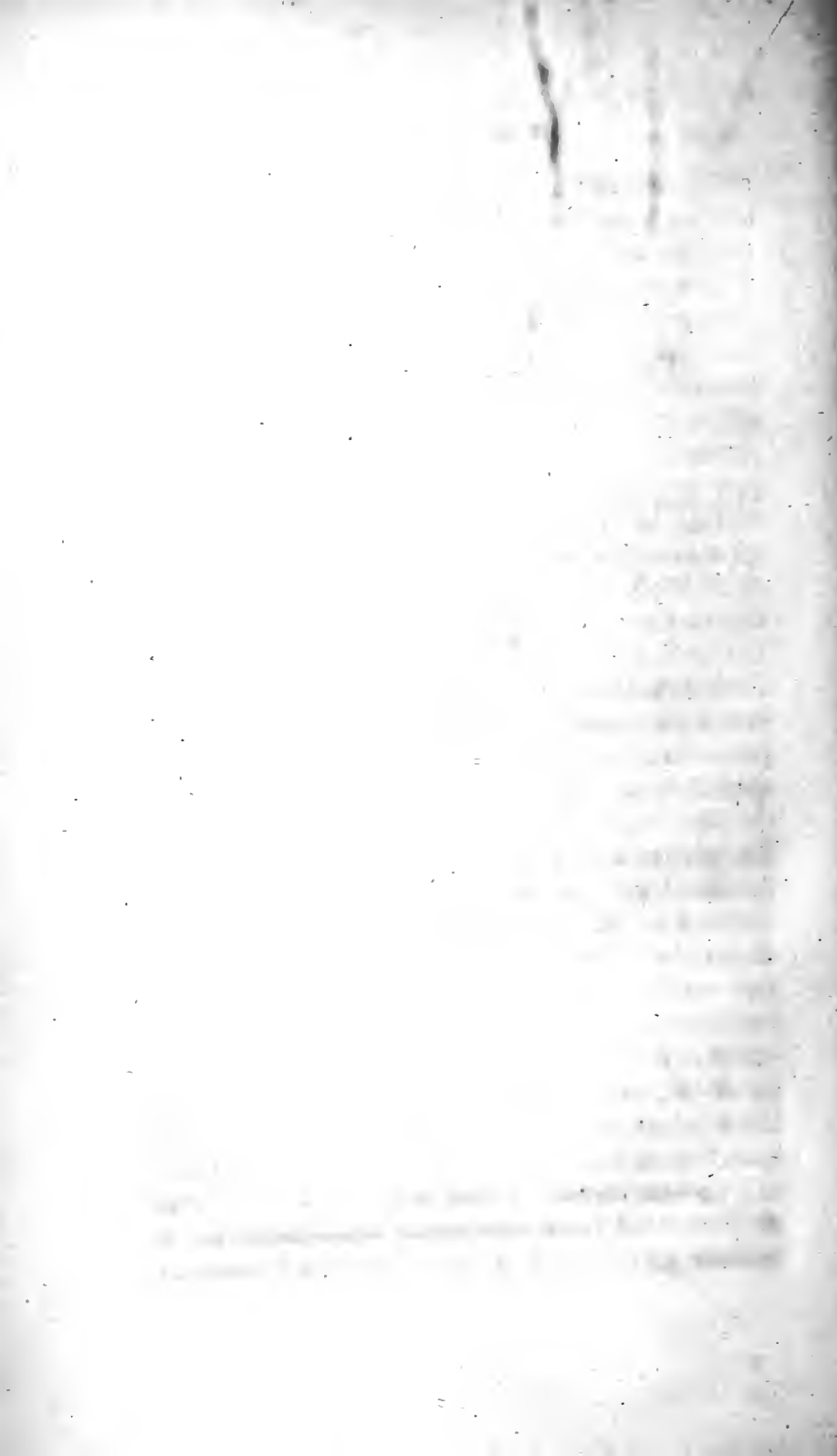
\* "Power of the Keys," c. iv. s. 104, p. 113.

smart: if the minister stay till he sends for him to instruct him, he may sooner hear the bell go for him, than any messenger come for him: You must seek them out, and not expect that they will come to you. These are a sort of people that are more afraid of their remedy than their disease, and study more to hide their ignorance, than how to have it cured; which should make us pity them the more, because they can pity themselves so little. I confess it is no small unhappiness to some of us, who have to do with a multitude, that we have neither time nor strength to make our addresses to every particular person in our congregations, and attend on them as their needs require; and yet cannot well satisfy our consciences otherwise. But let us look to it, that though we cannot do to the height of what we would, we be not found wanting in what we may. Let not the difficulty of our province make us like some, who when they see they have more work upon their hands than they can well despatch, grow sick of it, and sit down out of a lazy despondency, and do just nothing.—Oh, if once our hearts were filled with zeal for God, and compassion to our people's souls, we would up and be doing, though we could lay but a brick a day! and God will be with us. It may be, you who find a people rude and sottishly ignorant, like stones in the quarry and trees unfelled, shall not bring the work to such perfection in your days as you desire! Yet, as David did for Solomon, thou mayst by thy pains in teaching and instructing them, prepare materials for another, who shall rear the temple."\*

RICH. BAXTER.

April 16, 1656.

\* "The Christian in Complete Armour," p. 235.



GILDAS SALVIANUS:  
THE REFORMED PASTOR.

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“Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”—  
ACTS xx. 28.

CHAPTER I.

REVEREND AND DEARLY-BELOVED BRETHREN,—Though some think that Paul’s exhortation to these elders doth prove him their ruler, we hope, who are this day to speak to you from the Lord, that we may freely do the like without any jealousies of such a conclusion. Though we teach our people as officers set over them in the Lord, yet may we teach one another as brethren, in office as well as in faith. If the people of our charge must teach, and admonish, and exhort each other daily, (Col. iii. 16; Heb. iii. 13,) no doubt teachers may do it to one another without any supremacy of power or degree. We have the same sins to kill, and the same graces to be quickened and corroborated, as our people have: we have greater works than they to do, and greater difficulties to overcome, and no less necessity is laid upon us; and therefore we have need to be warned and awakened, if not to be instructed, as well as they. So that, I confess, I

think such meetings should be more frequent, if we had nothing else to do together but this. And as plainly and closely should we deal with one another, as the most serious among us do with our flocks; lest, if only they have the sharp admonitions and reproofs, they only should be sound and lively in the faith. That this was Paul's judgment, I need no other proof than this rousing, heart-melting exhortation to the Ephesian elders—a short sermon, but not soon learned. Had the bishops and teachers of the Church but thoroughly learned this short exhortation, though with neglect of many a volume which hath taken up their time and helped them to greater applause in the world, how happy had it been for the Church and them!

Our present straits of time will allow me to touch upon no part of it but my text; which, supposing Paul the speaker, and the Ephesian elders his hearers, containeth:—1. A twofold duty; 2. A fourfold motive to enforce it.

The first duty is *to take heed to themselves*; the second is, *to take heed to all the flock*. And the main work for the flock, which is thus heedfully to be done, is expressed, even *to feed them, or play the shepherds for them*.

The motives closely laid together are these:—  
 1. From their engagement and relation; they are the overseers of the flock; it is their office. 2. From the efficient cause, even the authority and excellency of Him that called them to it, which was the Holy Ghost. 3. From the dignity of the object which is the matter of their charge: it is the Church of God, the most excellent and honourable society in the



world. 4. From the tender regard Christ has of His Church, and the price it cost Him: He purchased it with His own blood. This motive is partly subordinate to the former.

The terms of the text have no such difficulty as to allow me the spending of much of our little time for their explication. *Προσεχειν* here is, “maxima cura et diligentia animum adhibere;” *ποίμνιον*, as Jansenius and others note, a *little flock*. It signifieth not here the whole Church of Christ, which elsewhere is called *ποίμνιον*, in reference to Christ the great Shepherd; but it signifieth that particular church which these elders had a special charge of. Whether that was one or many, we shall inquire anon. What is meant by *Ἐπισκόπους*, *bishops* or *overseers*, here, is thus far agreed on: that they were officers appointed to teach and guide those churches in the way to salvation; and that they are the same persons that are called elders of the church of Ephesus before, and bishops here: of whom more anon. The verb *ἔθετο* seemeth here to import both the qualification, ordination, and particular designation of these elders or bishops to their charge; for we must not limit and exclude without necessity. The Holy Ghost did by all these three ways make them overseers of their flocks:—(1.) By qualifying them with such gifts as made them fit for it. (2.) By directing the minds of those that ordained them to the ministry. (3.) By disposing both their own minds, and the ordainer’s, and the people’s, for the affixing them to that particular church, rather than another. “Dicit eos constitutos à Spiritu Sancto,” saith Grotius, “quia constituti erant ab Apostolis plenis Spiritu Sancto, quanquam approbante plebe.”

But, no doubt, in those times the Holy Ghost did give especial directions, as by internal oracle, for the disposal of particular teachers, as we read in the case of Saul and Barnabas, and for the provision of particular congregations.

*Ποιμαίνειν τήν ἐκκλησίαν*, is by some translated barely to *feed*, as ours here, by others only to *rule*; but indeed, as Gerhard, Jansenius, and others, note, it is not to be restrained to either, but containeth in it all the pastoral work. In one word, it is "Pastorem agere," to do the work of a pastor to the flock. Whether it be the Ephesian congregation, before called *ποιμνιον*, that is here called *ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ*, or whether it be the universal Church, which they may be said to feed and rule by doing their part towards it in their station, (as a justice of peace may be said to rule the land,) is not a matter of much moment to be stood upon; but the former seems most likely to be the sense; *περιεποιήσατο*, is both "acquisivit et asseruit et in suam vindicavit." It is said to be done by the blood of God, by a communication of the names of the distinct natures; and it affords us an argument against the Arians, seeing Christ is here expressly called God.

But it is necessary, before we proceed to instruction and application, that we be resolved more clearly who those elders or bishops are that Paul doth here exhort. I am desirous to do all that lawfully I may to avoid controversy, especially in this place, and on such occasions; but it is here unavoidable, because all our following application will much depend upon the explication; and if you shall once suppose that none of this exhortation was spoken to men in your office and capacity, no wonder if you pass it over and let it alone,

and take all that I shall hence gather for your practice, as impertinent. This text was wont to be thought most apt to awaken ministers of the gospel to their duty; but of late the negligent are gratified with the news, (for news it is,) that only bishops in a super-eminent sense, whom we usually call prelates, are spoken to in this text, and not only so, but that no other text of Scripture doth speak to any other Church Presbyters (certainly) but them; yea, that no other were in being in Scripture times. Here are two questions before us to be resolved:—1. Whether the elders here mentioned were the elders of one church of Ephesus, or of all that part of Asia, that is, of every church one? This is but in order to the second, which is, Whether these elders were only prelates, or such bishops as among us have carried that name?

The reasons that may be brought to prove these to be prelates of the several cities of Asia, and that the *πάν τὸ ποίμνιον*, is those many cities, are these following:—1. The affirmation of Irenæus. To which we say, (1.) There might be many elders of Ephesus present, though some from the nearest cities were there also, which is all that Irenæus affirms. (2.) We oppose to the saying of Irenæus the ordinary exposition of the ancients, the most singular is of least authority, “*cæteris paribus.*”

2. It may be said that “Paul calls them to remember how he had been among them three years, not ceasing to warn every one, &c. But he was not three years at Ephesus only, but in Asia,” &c. *Ans.* He may be said to be where his chief place of abode is. He that resideth ordinarily at Ephesus, though he thence make frequent excursions to the neighbouring

parts, may well be said to abide so long at Ephesus. And the Ephesian elders might well be acquainted with his industry round about them, though there is no certainty that he mentioneth any more than what he did with them. For what he did in Ephesus he did in Asia, as that which is done in London is done in England.

*Object.* 3. "But it is meant of all Asia, for he saith, 'among whom I have gone,'" &c. *Ans.* (1.) As though Paul might not go preaching the gospel in Ephesus. (2.) If he went further, the Ephesian elders might accompany him. *Object.* 4. "Ephesus was the metropolis, and therefore all Asia might be thence denominated." *Ans.* (1.) It must be proved that it was so denominated. All France is not called Paris, nor all England, London. (2.) It is not whole countries, but a church, that Paul speaks of; and it is yet unproved that the church of one city had then any such dependence on the church of another city, as lesser cities had upon the metropolis.

Our reasons that make us think that either all, or many of these elders, or bishops, were over the particular church of Ephesus, are these:—1. It is expressly said in the text, that they were Elders of the Church, referring to Ephesus next before mentioned. "He sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." And it cannot be proved in all the New Testament that the bishops of other churches and cities are called bishops of a greater city, because it is the metropolis. 2. Here is mention but of one church and one flock, in the singular number, and not of many; when yet it is acknowledged that he speaketh not of the universal Church, (for then that language were not strange),

but of a particular church. And it is the use of the apostles to speak still in the plural number when they mention the particular churches of many cities, and not to call them all one church or flock. 3. And it may seem else that the elder of each one of these cities hath a charge of all the rest. For they are required to take heed of all the flock, which though it may possibly be by taking every one his part, yet if one should fail, the rest seem to have his charge upon them, which is more than they can do. 4. Paul was now in so great haste in his journey to Jerusalem, that Luke measureth it out by the days. And it is not likely that Paul could, in such haste, call the elders from the several cities of Asia. If he had passed through the British seas in such haste, and lodged at Plymouth, and had thence called to him the elders of Paris, he must have stayed there many days or weeks, before he could have gathered also the bishops of Rhemes, Arles, Orleans, and the rest of France. 5. The numbers of prophets and gifted men in those times, and the state of other particular churches, do give us sufficient reason to conjecture that Ephesus was not so scant of help as to have but one presbyter. Grotius thought that Timothy, with his co-presbyters, made this appearance; but others have given very probable reasons that Timothy was none of them. 6. The judgment of expositors, ancient and modern, running so commonly the other way, commandeth some respect from us.

But I confess the matter seemeth but conjectural on both sides, and neither part to have a certainty; but if probability may carry it, there seems to be many of the elders of Ephesus, though possibly some of the neighbouring cities might be with them. But let this

go how it will, it maketh not much to the main matter in hand. What if Ephesus and each other city or church had then but one presbyter, will it follow that he was a prelate? No; but the contrary: it will prove that there were none such at all, if there were no subject presbyters. For there is no king without subjects, nor master without servants. 1. The stream of ancient and modern expositors do take this text to speak of presbyters in the common sense. And we must be cautious, before we be singular in the expounding of so many texts as speak the same way. 2. If men be put now, in the end of the world, to find out a new foundation for Prelacy, supposing it hath been amiss defended till now, and all these texts (except by one or two) amiss expounded, it will occasion the shaking of the frame itself. 3. But the best is, we begin to be pretty well agreed, at least about the whole government that "de facto" was in being in Scripture times. For, (1.) It is at last confessed that the word presbyter is not certainly taken anywhere in the New Testament for one that is subject to a bishop, having not power of ordination or jurisdiction; and that no such presbyters were in being in Scripture times. And by what authority they were since elected, let them prove that are concerned in it. (2.) We are agreed now that they were the same persons who in Scripture are called bishops and presbyters. (3.) And that these persons had the power of ordination and jurisdiction. (4.) And that these persons were not the bishops of many particular churches, but one only; they ruled not many assemblies ordinarily meeting for church communion, for there could no such meetings be kept up without a bishop or presbyter to administer the

ordinances of Christ in each. And if there were in a diocese but one bishop, and no other presbyters in Scripture times, then it must needs be that a diocese contained but one ordinary church assembly, and that "de facto" no bishop in Scripture times had under him any presbyters, nor more such assemblies than one, that is, they ruled the particular churches just as our parish pastors do. So that we are satisfied that we go that way that the apostles established, and was used "de facto" in Scripture times. And if any will prove the lawfulness of latter mutations, or will prove that the apostles gave power to these particular pastors to degenerate into another sort of officers hereafter, according to the cogency of their evidence, we shall believe it. In the meantime, desiring to be guided by the Word of God, and to go upon sure ground, and take only so much as is certain, we hold where we are, and are glad that we are so far agreed. Yet not presuming to censure all superior episcopacy, nor refusing to obey any man that commandeth us to do our duty, but resolving to do our own work in faithfulness and peace.

For my own part, I have ever thought it easier to be governed than to govern; and I am ready, as the British told Austin, to be obedient to any man in, and for the Lord. Nor can I think that any government can be burdensome, which Christ appointeth, but all beneficial to us; as making our burden lighter and not heavier, and helping and not hindering us in the way to heaven. Were Christ's work but thoroughly done, I should be the most backward in contending who should have the doing of it. Let us agree but on this one thing, which is plain here in my text, That

the churches or flocks should be no greater than the pastors can personally oversee, so that they may "take heed to all the flock," and then let but able, faithful men be the overseers, that will make the Word of God the rule, and lay out themselves for the saving of men's souls, and I am resolved never to contend with such about the business of superiority; but cheerfully to obey them in all things lawful, if they require my obedience. If the difference were not more about the matters commanded, and the work itself to be done, than who should command it, methinks humble men should be easily agreed. Would they but lay by all needless human impositions and obtrusions, and be contented with the sufficient Word of God, and not make new work to necessitate new canons and authorities to impose it, but be content with the gospel simplicity, and let us take that for a sufficient way to heaven that Peter and Paul went thither in; I think I should not disobey such a bishop, though I were satisfied of his differing order or degree. Yea, if he were addicted to some encroaching usurpation of more power than is meet, would he but forbear the "Ecce duo gladii," and come to us only with the sword of the Spirit, which will admit of fair debates, and works only upon the conscience, I know no reason much to fear such power, though it were undue. But enough of this.

The observations which the text affordeth us are so many, that I may not now stay so much as to name them; but shall only lay down that one which containeth the main scope of the text, and take in the rest as subordinate motives in the handling of that, in the method in which the apostle doth here deliver them to us.



*Doct.* "The pastors or overseers of the churches of Christ must take great heed both to themselves and to all their flocks, in all the parts of their pastoral work."

The method which we shall follow in handling this point, shall be this:—I. I shall briefly open to you the terms of the subject: what is meant by Pastors and Churches. II. I shall shew you what it is to take heed to ourselves, and wherein it must be done. III. I shall give you some brief reasons of that part of the point. IV. I shall shew you what it is to take heed to all the flock in our pastoral work, and wherein it must be done. V. I shall make some application of all.

I. What the words Pastor, Bishop, and Church do signify, I will not waste time to tell you, they being so well known. As for the things signified: By a pastor or bishop here is meant an officer appointed by Christ for the ordinary teaching and guiding a particular church and all its members, in order to their salvation, and the pleasing of God.

Christ appointeth the office itself by His laws. The person He calleth to it by His qualifying gifts, providential disposal, secret impulses, and ordinarily by the ordination of His present officers, and the acceptance of the Church.

Teaching and guidance contain the main parts at least of the work to which they are designed. The particulars we shall further stand upon anon.

A particular church is the object of their work; by which they are distinguished from apostolical, unfixed, itinerant ministers.

They are the stated, ordinary teachers of such a church; by which they are differenced, both from

private men, who do occasionally teach, and from the aforesaid itinerant ministers, and do but "in transitu," or seldom teach a particular church. The subject is the matters of salvation and obedience to God, and the end is salvation itself, and the pleasing of God therein; by which work and ends the office is distinguished from all other offices, as magistrates, schoolmasters, &c.; though they also have the same remote or ultimate ends.

By the flock and Church is meant that particular society of Christians of which these bishops or elders have the charge, associated for personal communion in God's public worship, and for other mutual assistance in the way to salvation. Exact definitions we may not now stand on; we have more fully made some attempts that way heretofore.

II. Let us next consider, What it is to take heed to ourselves, and wherein it must be done. And here I may well, for brevity sake, adjoin the application to the explication, it being about the matter of our practice, that I may be put to go over, as little as may be, of the same things again. Take, therefore, I beseech you, all this explication, as so much advice and exhortation to the duty, and let your hearts attend it as well as your understandings.

1. Take heed to yourselves, lest you should be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual workings of that gospel which you preach; and lest while you proclaim the necessity of a Saviour to the world, your own hearts should neglect Him, and you should miss of an interest in Him and His saving benefits! Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish, while you call upon others to take heed of perishing; and lest you famish

yourselves while you prepare their food. Though there be a promise of shining as the stars to those that turn many to righteousness, (Dan. xii. 3,) that is but on supposition that they be first turned to it themselves: such promises are meant, "cæteris paribus, et suppositis supponendis." Their own sincerity in the faith is the condition of their glory simply considered, though their great ministerial labours may be a condition of the promise of their greater glory; many a man hath warned others that they come not to that place of torment, which yet they hasted to themselves; many a preacher is now in hell, that hath an hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it. Can any reasonable man imagine that God should save men for offering salvation to others, while they refused it themselves; and for telling others those truths which they themselves neglected and abused? Many a tailor goes in rags, that maketh costly clothes for others; and many a cook scarcely licks his fingers, when he hath dressed for others the most costly dishes. Believe it, brethren, God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an able preacher; but because he was a justified, sanctified man, and consequently faithful in his Master's work. Take heed, therefore, to yourselves first, that you *be* that which you persuade your hearers to *be*, and believe that which you persuade them daily to believe; and have heartily entertained that Christ and Spirit which you offer unto others. He that bid you love your neighbours as yourselves, did imply that you should love yourselves, and not hate and destroy yourselves and them.

2. Take heed to yourselves, lest you live in those actual sins which you preach against in others; and

lest you be guilty of that which daily you condemn. Will you make it your work to magnify God, and when you have done, dishonour Him as much as others? Will you proclaim Christ's governing power, and yet contemn it, and rebel yourselves? Will you preach His laws, and wilfully break them? If sin be evil, why do you live in it? if it be not, why do you dissuade men from it? if it be dangerous, how dare you venture on it? if it be not, why do you tell men so? If God's threatenings be true, why do you not fear them? if they be false, why do you trouble men needlessly with them, and put them into such frights without a cause? Do you know the judgment of God, that they that commit such things are worthy of death, and yet will you do them? (Rom. i. 32.) Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, or be drunk, or covetous, art thou such thyself? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? (Rom. ii. 21-23.) What! shall the same tongue speak evil that speaketh against evil? Shall it censure and slander, and secretly backbite, that cries down these and the like in others? Take heed to yourselves, lest you cry down sin and not overcome it; lest while you seek to bring it down in others, you bow to it, and become its slaves yourselves. For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage. (2 Pet. ii. 19.) To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. (Rom. vi. 16.) It is easier to chide at sin than to overcome it.

3. Take heed also to yourselves, that you be not unfit

for the great employments that you have undertaken. He must not be himself a babe in knowledge that will teach men all those mysterious things that are to be known in order to salvation. Oh, what qualifications are necessary for that man that hath such a charge upon him as we have! How many difficulties in divinity to be opened! yea, about the fundamentals that must needs be known! How many obscure texts of Scripture to be expounded! How many duties to be done, wherein ourselves and others may miscarry, if in the matter, and end, and manner, and circumstances they be not well informed! How many sins to be avoided, which without understanding and foresight cannot be done! What a number of sly and subtle temptations must we open to our people's eyes, that they may escape them! How many weighty and yet intricate cases of conscience have we almost daily to resolve! Can so much work, and such work as this, be done by raw, unqualified men? Oh, what strongholds have we to batter, and how many of them! What subtle, and diligent, and obstinate resistance must we expect at every heart we deal with! Prejudice hath blocked up our way; we can scarcely procure a patient hearing. They think ill of what we say while we are speaking it. We cannot make a breach in their groundless hopes and carnal peace, but they have twenty shifts and seeming reasons to make it up again; and twenty enemies that are seeming friends are ready to help them. We dispute not with them upon equal terms, but we have children to reason with that cannot understand us; we have distracted men (in spirituals) to reason with, that will bawl us down with raging nonsense: we have wilful, unreasonable people to deal

with, that when they are silenced they are never the more convinced ; and when they can give you no reason, they will give you their resolution ; like the man that Salvian had to deal with, (lib. iv. de Gubernat. p. 133,) that being resolved to devour a poor man's means, and being entreated by Salvian to forbear, told him, he could not grant his request, for he had made a vow to take it ; so that the preacher "audita religiosissimi sceleris ratione" was fain to depart. We dispute the case against men's wills and sensual passions, as much as against their understandings ; and these have neither reason nor ears : their best arguments are, "I will not believe you, nor all the preachers in the world in such things. I will not change my mind or life : I will not leave my sins ; I will never be so precise, come on it what will." We have not one, but multitudes of raging passions and contradicting enemies to dispute against at once, whenever we go about the conversion of a sinner ; as if a man were to dispute in a fair or tumult, or in the midst of a crowd of violent scolds ; what equal dealing, and what success were here to be expected ? Why, such is our work, and yet a work that must be done.

O dear brethren, what men should we be in skill, resolution, and unwearied diligence, that have all this to do ! Did Paul cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii. 16,) and shall we be proud, or careless and lazy, as if we were sufficient ? As Peter saith to every Christian, in consideration of our great approaching change, (2 Peter iii. 11,) "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" so may I say to every minister, Seeing all

these things lie upon our hands, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy endeavours and resolutions for our work! This is not a burden for the shoulder of a child. What skill doth every part of our work require, and of how much moment is every part! To preach a sermon, I think, is not the hardest part; and yet what skill is necessary to make plain the truth, to convince the hearers; to let in the irresistible light into their consciences, and to keep it there, and drive all home; to screw the truth into their minds, and work Christ into their affections; to meet every objection that gainsays, and clearly to resolve it; to drive sinners to a stand, and make them see there is no hope, but they must unavoidably be converted or condemned: and to do all this so for language and manner as beseems our work, and yet as is most suitable to the capacities of our hearers; this, and a great deal more that should be done in every sermon, should surely be done with a great deal of holy skill. So great a God, whose message we deliver, should be honoured by our delivery of it. It is a lamentable case, that in a message from the God of heaven, of everlasting consequence to the souls of men, we should behave ourselves so weakly, so unhandsomely, so imprudently, or so slightly, that the whole business should miscarry in our hands, and God be dishonoured, and His work disgraced, and sinners rather hardened than converted, and all this much through our weakness or neglect! How many a time have carnal hearers gone jeering home at the palpable and dishonourable failings of the preacher! How many sleep under us, because our hearts and tongues are sleepy; and we bring not with us so much skill and zeal as to awake them!

Moreover, what skill is necessary to defend the truth against gainsayers, and to deal with disputing cavillers according to their several modes and cases! and if we fail through weakness, how will they insult! but this is the smallest matter: but who knows how many weak ones may be perverted by the success, to their own undoing and the trouble of the Church? What skill is there necessary to deal in private with one poor ignorant soul for its conversion! (Of which more in the end.)

O brethren! do you not shrink and tremble under the sense of all this work? Will a common measure of holy skill, and ability of prudence, and other qualifications, serve for such a task as this? I know necessity may cause the Church to tolerate the weak; but woe to us if we tolerate and indulge our own weakness. Doth not reason and conscience tell you, that, if you dare venture on so high a work as this, you should spare no pains to be fitted to perform it? It is not now and then an idle snatch or taste of studies that will serve to make a sound divine. I know that laziness hath lately learned to pretend the lowness of all our studies, and how wholly and only the Spirit must qualify and assist us to the work; and so, as Salvian saith in another case, (lib. iv. p. 134,) "*authorem quodammodo sui sceleris Deum faciunt.*" As if God commanded us the use of the means, and then would warrant us to neglect them! As if it were His way to cause us to thrive in a course of idleness, and to bring us to knowledge by dreams when we are asleep, or to take us up into heaven, and shew us His counsels, while we think of no such matter, but are rooting in the earth. Oh, that men should



dare so sinfully, by their laziness, to quench the Spirit, and then pretend the Spirit for the doing of it. "Quis unquam," saith he before mentioned, "crederet usque in hanc contumeliam Dei, progressuram esse humanæ cupiditatis (ignaviæ) audaciam? ut id ipsum in quo Christo injuriam faciunt, dicant se ob Christi nomen esse facturos? O inestimabile facinus et prodigiosum!" God hath required of us that we be "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (Rom. xii. 11.) Such we must provoke our hearers to be, and such we must be ourselves. Oh, therefore, brethren, lose no time: study, and pray, and confer, and practise; for by these four ways your abilities must be increased. Take heed to yourselves, lest you are weak through your own negligence, and lest you mar the work of God by your weakness. "As man is, so is his strength." (Judges viii. 21.)

4. Moreover, take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine, and lest you lay such stumbling-blocks before the blind as may be the occasion of their ruin; lest you may unsay that with your lives which you say with your tongues, and be the greatest hinderers of the success of your own labours. It much hindereth our work, when other men are, all the week long, contradicting, to poor people in private, that which we have been speaking to them from the Word of God in public; because we cannot be at hand to manifest their folly: but it will much more hinder if we contradict ourselves, and if your actions give your tongue the lie, and if you build up an hour or two with your mouths, and all the week after pull down with your hands! This is the way to make men think that the Word of God is but an idle

tale, and to make preaching seem no better than prating. He that means as he speaks will surely do as he speaks. One proud, surly, lordly word, one needless contention, one covetous action may cut the throat of many a sermon, and blast the fruit of all that you have been doing. Tell me, brethren, in the fear of God, do you regard the success of your labours, or do you not? Do you long to see it upon the souls of your hearers? If you do not, what do you preach for, what do you study, and what do you call yourselves the ministers of Christ for? But if you do, then surely you cannot find in your heart to mar your work for a thing of nought! What! do you regard the success of your labours, and yet will not part with a little to the poor, nor put up with an injury or a foul word, nor stoop to the meanest, nor forbear your passionate or lordly carriage—no, not for the winning of souls and attaining the end of all your labours? You much regard the success, indeed, that will sell it at so cheap a rate, or will not do so small a matter to attain it!

It is a palpable error in those ministers that make such a disproportion between their preaching and their living, that they will study hard to preach exactly, and study little or not at all to live exactly. All the week long is little enough to study how to speak two hours; and yet one hour seems too much to study how to live all the week. They are loath to misplace a word in their sermons, or to be guilty of any notable infirmity, (and I blame them not, for the matter is holy and of weight;) but they make nothing of misplacing affections, words, and actions in the course of their lives. Oh, how curiously have I heard some

men preach, and how carelessly have I seen them live! They have been so accurate as to the wordy part in their own preparations, that seldom preaching seemed a virtue to them, that their language might be the more polite; and all the rhetorical, jingling writers they could meet with were pressed to serve them for the adorning of their style, and gauds were oft their chiefest ornaments. They were so nice in hearing others, that no man pleased them that spoke as he thought, or that drowned not affections, or dulled not or distempered not the heart, by the predominant strains of a fantastic wit. And yet, when it came to matter of practice, and they were once out of church, how incurious were the men, and how little did they regard what they said or did, so it were not so palpably gross as to dishonour them! They that preached precisely would not live precisely! What difference between their pulpit speeches and their familiar discourse! They that are most impatient of barbarisms, solecisms, and paralogisms, in a sermon, can easily tolerate them in their conversations.

Certainly, brethren, we have very great cause to take heed what we do as well as what we say. If we be the servants of Christ indeed, we must not be tongue servants only, but must serve Him with our deeds, "and be doers of the work, that in our deed we may be blessed." (James i. 25.) As our people must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only," so we must be doers, and not speakers only, lest we be "deceivers of ourselves." (James i. 22.) A practical doctrine must be practically preached. We must study as hard how to live well as how to preach well. We must think and think again how to compose our

lives as may most tend to men's salvation, as well as our sermons. When you are studying what to say to them, I know these are your thoughts, or else they are naught and to no purpose, "How should I get within them? and what shall I say that is likely most effectually to convince them, and convert them, and tend to their salvation?" And should you not diligently bethink yourselves, "How shall I live, and what shall I say and do, and how shall I dispose of all that I have, as may most probably tend to the saving of men's souls?" Brethren, if saving souls be your end, you will certainly intend it as well out of the pulpit as in it. If it be your end, you will live for it, and contribute all your endeavours to attain it; and if you do so, you will as well ask concerning the money in your purse as the words of your mouth, "Which way should I lay it out for the greatest good, especially to men's souls?" Oh that this were your daily study—how to use your wealth, your friends, and all you have for God, as well as your tongues! And then we should see that fruit of your labours which is never else likely to be seen. If you intend the end of the ministry in the pulpit only, then it seems you take yourselves for ministers no longer than you are there; and then I think you are unworthy to be esteemed such at all.

III. Having shewed you, in four particulars, how it is that we must take heed to ourselves, and what is comprised in this command, I am next to give you the *reasons* of it, which I entreat you to take as so many motives to awaken you to your duty, and thus apply them as we go.

1. You have heaven to win or lose yourselves, and souls that must be happy or miserable for ever; and

therefore it concerneth you to begin at home, and take heed to yourselves as well as unto others. Preaching well may succeed to the salvation of others without the holiness of your own hearts or lives; it is possible, at least, though less usual. But it is impossible it should serve to save yourselves. Many shall say at that day, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" (Matt. vii. 22,) who shall be answered with, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Ver. 23.) O sirs, how many men have preached Christ, and perished for want of a saving interest in Him! How many that are now in hell have told their people of the torments of hell, and have warned them against it! How many have preached of the wrath of God against sinners that are now feeling it! Oh, what sadder case can there be in the world than for a man that made it his very trade and calling to proclaim salvation, and to help others to attain it, yet, after all, to be himself shut out! Alas! that ever we should have many books in our libraries that tell us the way to heaven; that we should spend so many years in reading those books and studying the doctrine of eternal life, and yet, for all this, to miss it!—that ever we should study and preach so many sermons of salvation, and yet fall short of it!—so many sermons of damnation, and yet fall into it! And all because we preached so many sermons of Christ, while we neglected Him; of the Spirit, while we resisted it; of faith, while we did not heartily believe; of repentance and conversion, while we continued in the state of flesh and sin; and of a heavenly life, while we remained carnal and earthly ourselves. If we will be divines only in tongues and title, and have not the

Divine image upon our souls, nor give up ourselves to the Divine honour and will, no wonder if we be separated from the Divine presence, and denied the fruition of God for ever. Believe it, sirs, God is no respecter of persons. He saveth not men for their coats or callings; a holy calling will not save an unholy man. If you stand at the door of the kingdom of grace, to light others in, and will not go in yourselves, when you are burnt to the snuff, you will go out with a stink, and shall knock in vain at the gates of glory, that would not enter at the door of grace. You shall then find that your lamps should have had the oil of grace as well as of ministerial gifts—of holiness as well as of doctrine, if you would have had a part in the glory which you preached. Do I need to tell you that preachers of the gospel must be judged by the gospel, and stand at the same bar, and be sentenced on the same terms, and dealt with as severely as any other men? Can you think to be saved, then, by your clergy, and to come off by a “*legit ut clericus*,” when there is wanting the “*credidit et vixit ut Christianus*?” Alas! it will not be; you know it will not. Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, for your own sakes, seeing you have souls to save or lose as well as others.

2. Take heed to yourselves, for you have a depraved nature, and sinful inclinations as well as others. If innocent Adam had need of heed, and lost himself and us for want of it, how much more need have we? Sin dwelleth in us, when we have preached never so much against it: one degree prepareth the heart for another, and one sin inclineth the mind to more. If one thief be in the house, he will let in the rest, because they

have the same disposition and design. A spark is the beginning of a flame ; and a small disease may bring a greater. A man that knows himself to be purblind, should take heed to his feet. Alas ! even in our hearts, as well as in our hearers, there is an averseness to God, a strangeness to Him, unreasonable and almost unruly passions. In us there is at the best the remnants of pride, unbelief, self-seeking, hypocrisy, and all the most hateful, deadly sins. And doth it not then concern us to take heed ? Is so much of the fire of hell yet unextinguished, that at first was kindled in us ? Are there so many traitors in our hearts, and is it not time for us to take heed ? You will scarce let your little children go themselves while they are weak, without calling upon them to take heed of falling. And, alas ! how weak are those of us that seem strongest ! How apt to stumble at a very straw ! How small a matter will cast us down, by enticing us to folly ; or kindling our passions and inordinate desires, by perverting our judgments, or abating our resolutions, and cooling our zeal, and dulling our diligence ! Ministers are not only sons of Adam, but sinners against the grace of Christ, as well as others, and so have increased their radical sin. Those treacherous hearts will one time or other deceive you, if you take not heed. Those sins that seem to lie dead will revive : your pride and worldliness, and many a noisome vice will spring up, that you thought had been weeded out by the roots. It is most necessary, therefore, that men of such infirmities should take heed to themselves, and be careful in the dieting and usage of their souls.

3. And the rather also, take heed to yourselves, because such works as ours do put men on greater use.

and trial of their graces, and have greater temptations, than most other men. Weaker gifts and graces may carry a man out in a more even and laudable course of life, that is not put to so great trials. Smaller strength may serve for lighter works and burdens. But if you venture on the great undertakings of the ministry; if you will lead on the troops of Christ against the face of Satan and his followers; if you will engage yourselves against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places; if you undertake to rescue captivated sinners, and to fetch men out of the devil's paws; do not think that a heedless, careless minister is fit for so great a work as this. You must look to come off with greater shame, and deeper wounds of conscience, than if you had lived a common life; if you will think to go through such things as these with a careless soul. It is not only the work that calls for heed, but the workman also, that he may be fit for business of such weight; we have seen by experience, that many men that lived as private Christians, in good reputation for parts and piety, when they have taken upon them either military employment, or magistracy, where the work was above their parts, and temptations did overmatch their strength, they have proved scandalous, disgraced men. And we have seen some private Christians of good note, that having thought too highly of their own parts, and thrust themselves into the ministerial office, they have been empty men, and alway burdens to the Church, and worse than some that we have endeavoured to cast out. They might have done God more service in the station of the higher rank of private men, than they do among the lowest



of the ministry. If you will venture into the midst of the enemies, and bear the burden and heat of the day, take heed to yourselves.

4. And the rather, also, take heed to yourselves; because the tempter will make his first or sharpest onset upon you. If you will be the leaders against him, he will spare you no further than God restraineth him. He beareth you the greatest malice, that are engaged to do him the greatest mischief. As he hateth Christ more than any of us, because He is the General of the field, and the "Captain of our salvation," and doth more than all the world besides against the kingdom of darkness; so doth he hate the leaders under Him, more than the common soldiers on the like account (in their proportion); he knows what a rout he may make among the rest, if the leaders fall before their eyes. He hath long tried that way of fighting, neither against great or small comparatively, but these; and of smiting the shepherds, that he may scatter the flock; and so great hath been his success this way, that he will follow it on as far as he is able. Take heed, therefore, brethren, for the enemy hath a special eye upon you. You shall have his most subtle insinuations, and incessant solicitations, and violent assaults. As wise and learned as you are, take heed to yourselves lest he overwit you. The devil is a greater scholar than you, and a nimbler disputant. He can transform himself into an angel of light to deceive; he will get within you and trip up your heels before you are aware; he will play the juggler with you undiscerned, and cheat you of your faith or innocence, and you shall not know that you have lost it; nay, he will make you believe it is multiplied or increased when it is lost. You shall

see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait; and his bait shall be so fitted to your temper and disposition, that he will be sure to find advantages within you, and make your own principles and inclinations to betray you; and whenever he ruineth you, he will make you the instruments of your own ruin. Oh, what a conquest will he think he hath got, if he can make a minister lazy and unfaithful! if he can tempt a minister into covetousness or scandal, he will glory against the Church, and say, "These are your holy preachers; you see what their preciseness is, and whither it will bring them!" He will glory against Jesus Christ himself, and say, "These are thy champions! I can make Thy chiefest servants to abuse Thee; I can make the stewards of Thy household unfaithful." If he did so insult against God upon a false surmise, and tell Him he could make Job to curse Him to His face, what would he do if he should indeed prevail against us? And at last he will insult as much over you, that ever he could draw you to be false to your great trust, and to blemish your holy profession, and to do him so much service that was your enemy. Oh, do not so far gratify Satan; do not make him so much sport; do not suffer him to use you as the Philistines did Samson, first to deprive you of your strength, and then to put out your eyes, and so to make you the matter of his triumph and derision.

5. Take heed to yourselves, also, because there are many eyes upon you, and therefore there will be many observers of your falls. You cannot miscarry but the world will ring of it. The eclipses of the sun by day-time are seldom without witnesses. If you take your-

selves for the lights of the churches, you may well expect that men's eyes should be upon you. If other men may sin without observation, so cannot you. And you should thankfully consider how great a mercy this is, that you have so many eyes to watch over you, and so many ready to tell you of your faults, and so have greater helps than others, at least for the restraining of your sin. Though they may do it with a malicious mind, yet you have the advantage by it. God forbid that we should prove so impudent, as to do evil in the public view of all, and to sin wilfully while the world is gazing on us! He that is drunk, is drunk in the night; and he that sleepeth, doth sleep in the night. (1 Thes. v. 7.) What fornicator so impudent as to sin in the open streets while all look on? Why, consider that you are still in the open light; even the light of your own doctrine will disclose your evil doings. While you are as lights set upon a hill, look not to lie hid. (Matt. v. 14.) Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and do your works as those that remember that the world looks on them, and that with the quick-sighted eye of malice, ready to make the worst of all, and to find the smallest fault where it is, and aggravate it where they find it, and divulge it, and make it advantageous to their designs; and to make faults where they cannot find them. How cautiously, then, should we walk before so many ill-minded observers!

6. Take heed, also, to yourselves; for your sins have more heinous aggravations than other men's. It is noted among King Alphonsus's sayings, That a great man cannot commit a small sin; we may much more say, That a learned man, or a teacher of others, cannot commit a small sin; or at least that the sin is

great, as committed by him, which is smaller in another.

(1.) You are more likely than others to sin against knowledge, because you have more than they. At least you sin against more light or means of knowledge. What ! do you not know that covetousness and pride are sins? Do you not know what it is to be unfaithful to your trust, and by negligence, or self-seeking, to betray men's souls? You know your Master's will, and if you do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. There must needs, therefore, be the more wilfulness, by how much there is the more knowledge. If you sin, it is because you will sin.

(2.) Your sins have more hypocrisy in them than other men's, by how much the more you have spoken against them. Oh, what a heinous thing it is in us to study how to disgrace sin to the utmost, and make it as odious to our people as we can ; and when we have done, to live in it, and secretly cherish that which we openly disgrace ! What vile hypocrisy it is to make it our daily business to cry it down, and yet to keep it ; to call it publicly all to naught, and privately to make it our bed-fellow and companion ; to bind heavy burdens for others, and not to touch them ourselves with a finger ! What can you say to this in judgment? Did you think as ill of sin as you spoke, or did you not? If you did not, why would you dissemblingly speak it? If you did, why would you keep it and commit it? Oh, bear not that badge of the miserable Pharisees, "They say, but do not!" Many a minister of the gospel will be confounded, and not able to look up, by reason of this heavy charge of hypocrisy.

(3.) Moreover, your sins have more perfidiousness in them than other men's. You have more engaged yourselves against them. Besides all your common engagements as Christians, you have many more as ministers. How often have you proclaimed the evil and danger of sin, and called sinners from it! How often have you declared the terrors of the Lord! All these did imply that you renounced it yourselves. Every sermon that you preached against it, every private exhortation, every confession of it in the congregation, did lay an engagement upon you to forsake it. Every child that you have baptized and entered into the covenant with Christ, and every administration of the Supper of the Lord, wherein you called men to renew their covenant, did import your own renouncing of the flesh and the world, and your engagement unto Christ. How often and how openly have you borne witness of the odiousness and damnable nature of sin! and yet will you entertain it against all these professions and testimonies of your own? Oh, what treachery is it to make such a stir in the pulpit against it, and after all to entertain it in the heart, and give it the room that is due to God, and even prefer it before the glory of the saints! Many more such aggravations of your sins might be mentioned, but as we haste over these, so we must pass them by through our present haste.

7. Take heed to yourselves, for the honour of your Lord and Master, and of His holy truth and ways, doth lie more on you than on other men. As you may do Him more service, so always more disservice than others. The nearer men stand to God, the greater dishonour hath He by their miscarriages, and the more

will they be imputed by foolish men to God himself. The heavy judgment was threatened and executed on Eli and on his house, because they "kicked at His sacrifice and offering." (1 Sam. ii. 29.) "For therefore was the sin of the young men great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." (Ver. 17.) It was that great aggravation of "causing the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," which provoked God to deal more sharply with David than else He would have done. (2 Sam. xii. 11-14.) If you are indeed Christians, the glory of God is dearer to you than your lives. Take heed, therefore, what you do against it, as ye would take heed what you do against your lives. Would it not wound you to the heart to hear the name and truth of God reproached for your sakes? To see men point to you, and say, "There goes a covetous priest, a secret tippler, a scandalous man; these are they that preach for strictness, when themselves can live as loose as others; they condemn us by their sermons, and condemn themselves by their lives: for all their talk, they are as bad as we?" O brethren, could your hearts endure to hear men cast the dung of your iniquities in the face of the holy God, and in the face of the gospel, and of all that desire to fear the Lord? Would it not break your hearts to think that all the godly Christians about you should suffer reproach for your misdoings? If one of you that is a leader of the flock should but once be ensnared in a scandalous crime, there is scarcely a man or woman that seeketh diligently after their salvation, within the hearing of it, but, besides the grief of their hearts for your sin, they are likely to have it cast in their teeth by the ungodly about them, though they

never so much detest and lament it. The ungodly husband will tell his wife, and the ungodly parents will tell their children, and neighbours and fellow-servants will be telling one another of it, and saying, "These are your godly preachers; you may see what comes of all your stir; are you any better than others? you are even all alike." Such words as these must all the godly in the country perhaps hear for your sakes. "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." (Matt. xviii. 7.) Oh, take heed, brethren, in the name of God, of every word that you speak, every step that you tread, for you bear the ark of the Lord; you are intrusted with His honour, and dare you let it fall, and cast it into the dirt? If you, "that know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and being confident that you yourselves are guides of the blind, and lights to them that are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes;" if you, I say, should live contrary to your doctrine, and, "by breaking the law, dishonour God, the name of God will be blasphemed among the ignorant and ungodly through you." (Rom. ii. 19-24.) And you are not unacquainted with that standing decree of Heaven, "Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Sam. ii. 30.) Never did man dishonour God but it proved the greatest dishonour to himself. God will find out ways enough to wipe off all that can be cast upon Him, but you will not so easily remove the shame and sorrow from yourselves.

8. Take heed to yourselves; for the souls of your hearers, and the success of your labours, do very much

depend upon it. God useth to fit men for great works before He will make them His instruments in accomplishing them. He useth to exercise men in those works that they are most suited to. If the work of the Lord be not soundly done upon your own hearts, how can you expect that He should bless your labours for the effecting it in others? He may do it if He please, but you have much cause to doubt whether He will. I shall here shew you some particular *reasons* under this last, which may satisfy you, that he who would be a means of saving others, must take heed to himself, and that God doth more seldom prosper the labours of unsanctified men.

(1.) Can it be expected that God will bless that man's labour (I still mean comparatively, as to other ministers) who worketh not for God, but for himself? Now, this is the case of every unsanctified man. None but the upright do make God their chief end, and do all or anything heartily for His honour: they make the ministry but a trade to live by: they choose it rather than another calling, because their parents did destine them to it, and because it is a pleasant thing to know; and it is a life wherein they have more opportunity to furnish their intellects with all kinds of science; and because it is not so toilsome to the body, to those that have a will to favour their flesh; and because it is accompanied with some reverence and respect from men; and because they think it a fine thing to be leaders and teachers, and have others depend on them, and receive the law at their mouth; and because it affordeth them a competent maintenance. For such ends as these are they ministers, and for these do they preach; and were it not for these, and such as these,



they would soon give over. And can it be expected that God should much bless the labours of such men as these? It is not Him they preach for, but for themselves, and their own reputation or gain: not Him, but themselves, that they seek and serve; and therefore no wonder if He leave them to themselves for the success, and if their labours have no greater a blessing than themselves can give them, and the word reach no further than their own strength is able to make it reach.

(2.) Can you think that he is likely to be as successful as others, that dealeth not heartily and faithfully in his work, and never soundly believeth what he saith, and never is truly serious when he seemeth to be most diligent? And can you think that any unsanctified man can be hearty and serious in the ministerial work? It cannot be. A kind of seriousness, indeed, he may have, such as proceedeth from a common faith, or opinion that the word is true, and is actuated by a natural fervour, or by selfish ends; but the seriousness and fidelity of a sound believer, that ultimately intendeth the glory of God and men's salvation, this he hath not. O sirs, all your preaching and persuading of others will be but dreaming and trifling hypocrisy, till the work be thoroughly done upon yourselves. How can you set yourselves day and night to a work that your carnal hearts are averse from? How can you call out with serious fervour upon poor sinners to repent and come to God, that never repented or came in yourselves? How can you heartily follow poor sinners with importunate solicitations, to take heed of sin, and to set themselves to a holy life, that never felt yourselves the evil of sin, or the worth of holiness? I tell you, these things are never well known till they are felt, nor well

felt till they are possessed; and he that feeleth them not himself, is not so likely to speak feelingly to others, nor to help others to the feeling of them. How can you follow sinners with compassion in your hearts, and tears in your eyes, and beseech them in the name of the Lord to stop their course and turn and live, that never had so much compassion on your own soul as to do thus much for yourselves? What! can you love other men better than yourselves? and have pity on them, while you have none upon yourselves? Sirs, do you think they will be hearty and diligent to save men from hell, that be not heartily persuaded that there is a hell? Or to bring men to heaven, that do not sincerely believe that there is such a thing? As Calvin saith on my text, "*Neque enim aliorum salutem sedulo unquam curabit, qui suam negligit.*" He that hath not so strong a belief of the word of God, and the life to come, as will take off his own heart from the vanities of this world, and set him upon a resolved diligence for salvation, I cannot expect that he should be faithful in seeking the salvation of other men. Surely he that dare damn himself, dare let others alone in the way to damnation; and he that will sell his Master, with Judas, for silver, will not stick to make merchandise of the flock; and he that will let go his hopes of heaven rather than he will leave his worldly and fleshly delights, I think will hardly leave these for the saving of others. In reason we may conceive, that he will have no pity on others, that is wilfully cruel to himself; and that he is not to be trusted with other men's souls, that is unfaithful to his own, and will sell it to the devil for the short pleasures of sin. I confess that man shall never have my consent to have the care and charge of

others, and to oversee them in order to their salvation, that takes no heed to himself, but is careless of his own, (except it were in case of absolute necessity, that no better could be had.)

(3.) Do you think it is a likely thing that he will fight against Satan with all his might, that is a servant of Satan himself? And will he do any great harm to the kingdom of the devil, that is himself a member and subject of that kingdom? And will he be true to Christ that is in covenant with His enemy, and Christ hath not his heart? Why, this is the case of every unsanctified man, of what cloth soever his coat be made. They are the servants of Satan, and the subjects of his kingdom; it is he that ruleth in their hearts; and are they like to be true to Christ that are ruled by the devil? What prince chose the friends and voluntary servants of his enemy to lead his armies in war against him? This is it that hath made so many preachers of the gospel to be enemies to the work of the gospel which they preach. No wonder if such be secretly girding at the holy obedience of the faithful; and while they take on them to preach for a holy life, if they cast reproaches on them that use it! Oh, how many such traitors have been in the Church of Christ in all ages, that have done more against Him under His colours, than they could do in the open field; that have spoken well of Christ, and Scripture, and godliness in the general, and yet slyly and closely do what they can to bring it into disgrace, and make men believe that those that set themselves to seek God with all their hearts, are but a company of hypocrites, or self-conceited fantastical fellows: and what they cannot for shame speak that

way in the pulpit, they will do in secret amongst their companions! How many such wolves have been set over the sheep, because they had sheep's clothing; pretending to be Christians, and as good as others! If there were a traitor among the twelve in Christ's family, no marvel if there be many now. It cannot be expected that a slave of Satan, "whose god is his belly, and who mindeth earthly things," should be any better than "an enemy to the cross of Christ." What though they live civilly, and preach plausibly, and have the outside of an easy, cheap religiousness? They may be as fast in the devil's snares by worldliness, pride, a secret distaste of diligent godliness, or by an unsound heart that is not rooted in the faith, nor unreservedly devoted to God in Christ, as any others are by drunkenness, uncleanness, and such disgraceful sins. Publicans and harlots do sooner come to heaven than Pharisees, because they are sooner convinced of their sin and misery.

And though many of these men may seem excellent preachers, and cry down sin as loud as others, yet is it all but an affected fervency, and too commonly but a mere uneffectual bawling. For he that cherisheth it in his own heart, doth never fall upon it in good sadness in others. I know that a wicked man may be more willing of another's reformation than his own, and may thence have a kind of real earnestness in dissuading them from it; because he can preach against sin at easier rates than he can forsake it, and another man's reformation may stand with his own enjoyments of his lusts. And therefore a wicked minister, or parent, may be earnest with his people or family to mend, because they lose not their own sinful profits or

pleasures by another's reformation, nor doth it call them to that self-denial as their own doth. But yet, for all this, there is none of that zeal, resolution, and diligence as is in all that are true to Christ. They set not against sin as the enemy of Christ, and as that which endangereth their people's souls. A traitorous commander, that shooteth nothing against the enemy but powder, may cause his guns to make as great a sound or report, as some that are laden with bullets; but he doth no hurt to the enemy by it. So one of these men may speak loud, and mouth it with an affected fervency, but he seldom doth any great execution against sin and Satan. No man can fight well but where he hateth, or is very angry; much less against them whom he loveth, and loveth above all. Every unrenewed man is so far from hating sin to the purpose, that it is his dearest treasure; though not as sin, yet the matter of it is, as it affordeth delight to his sensual desires. So that you may see, that an un-sanctified man is very unfit to be a leader in Christ's army, who loveth the enemy; and to draw others to renounce the world and the flesh, who cleaveth to them himself as his chief good.

(4.) And it is not a very likely thing that the people will regard much the doctrine of such men, when they see that they do not live as they preach. They will think that he doth not *mean* as he speaks, if he *do* not as he speaks. They will hardly believe a man that seemeth not to believe himself. If a man bid you run for your lives, because a bear or an enemy is at your backs, and yet do not mend his pace himself in the same way, you will be tempted to think that he is but in jest, and there is really no such danger as he pre-

tends. When preachers tell people of a necessity of holiness, and that without it no man shall see the Lord, and yet remain unholy themselves, the people will think they do but talk to pass away the hour, and because they must say somewhat for their money, and that all these are but words of course. Long enough may you lift up your voices against sin, before men will believe that there is any such harm or danger in it as you talk of, as long as they see the same man that reproacheth it, put it in his bosom and make it his delight. You rather tempt them to think that there is some special good in it, and that you dispraise it as gluttons do a dish which they love, that they may have it all to themselves. As long as men have eyes as well as ears, they will think they see your meaning as well as hear it ; and they are more apt to believe their sight than their hearing, as being the more perfect sense. All that a preacher doth is a kind of preaching : and when you live a covetous or a careless life, you preach these sins to your people by your practice. When you drink, or game, or prate away your time in vain discourse, they take it as if you told them, "Neighbours, this is that life that you should all live ; you may venture on this course without any danger." If you are ungodly, and teach not your families the fear of God, nor contradict the sins of the company you come into, nor turn the stream of their vain talking, nor deal with them plainly about the matters of their salvation, they will take it as if you preached to them that such things are needless, and they may boldly do so as well as you. Yea, and you do worse than all this ; for you teach them to think ill of others that are better. How many a faithful minister and

private man is hated and reproached for the sake of such as you! What say the people to them? "You are so precise, and tell us so much of sin, and dangers, and duty, and make so much stir about these matters, when such or such a minister that is as great a scholar as you, and as good a preacher as you, will be merry and jest with us, and let us alone, and never trouble themselves or us with such discourse. These busy fellows can never be quiet, but make more ado than needs; and love to fright men with talk of damnation, when sober, learned, peaceable divines can be quiet, and live with us like other men." This is the very thoughts and talk of people, which your negligence doth occasion. They will give you leave to preach against their sins as much as you will, and talk as much for godliness in the pulpit, so you will but let them alone afterwards, and be friendly and merry with them when you have done, and talk as they do, and live as they, and be indifferent with them in your conscience and your conversation. For they take the pulpit to be but as a stage; a place where preachers must shew themselves and play their parts; where you have liberty to say what you list for an hour: and what you say, they much regard not, if you shew them not by saying it personally to their faces, that you were in good earnest, and indeed did mean them. Is that man therefore likely to do much good, or fit to be a minister of Christ, that will speak for Him an hour, and by his life will preach against Him all the week besides; yea, and give his public words the lie?

And if any of the people be wiser than to follow the examples of such men, yet the loathsomeness of their lives will make their doctrine the less effectual. Though

you know the meat to be good and wholesome, yet it may make a weak stomach rise against it, if the cook or the servant that carrieth it have leprous or dingy hands. Take heed therefore to yourselves, if ever you mean to do good to others.

(5.) Lastly, consider whether the success of your labours depend not on the grace and blessing of the Lord: and where hath He made any promise of His assistance and blessing to ungodly men? If He do promise *His Church* a blessing even by such, yet doth He not promise *them* any blessing. To His faithful servants He hath promised that He will be with them, that He will put His Spirit upon them, and His word into their mouths, and that Satan shall fall before them as lightning from heaven. But where is there any such promise to the ungodly, that are not the children of the promise? Nay, do you not rather by your abuse of God, provoke Him to forsake and blast your endeavours? at least as to yourselves, though He may bless them to His chosen. For I do not all this while deny, but that God may often do good to His Church by wicked men, but not so ordinarily nor eminently as by His own.

And what I have said of the wicked themselves, doth hold in part of the godly while they are scandalous and backsliding, proportionably according to the measure of their sin. So much for the *reasons*.



## CHAPTER II.

IV. HAVING shewed you what it is to take heed to ourselves, and why it must be done, I am next to shew you what it is to “take heed to all the flock,” and wherein it doth consist, and must be exercised. It was first necessary to take into consideration, *what we must be*, and *what we must do for our own souls*, before we come to that which must be done for others: “Ne quis aliorum vulnera medendo ad salutem, ipse per negligentiam suæ salutis intumescat, ne proximos juvando, se deserat; ne alios erigens, cadat,” saith Gregor. *M. de cur. past.* l. 4. Yea, lest all his labours come to nought, because his heart and life is nought that do perform them. “Nonnulli enim sunt qui solerti curâ spiritualia præcepta perscrutantur, sed quæ intelligendo penetrant, vivendo conculcant: repente docent quæ non opere, sed meditatione didicerunt: et quod verbis prædicant, moribus impugnant; unde fit ut cum pastor per abrupta graditur, ad præcipitium grex sequatur.” *Idem, ib. li. 1, cap. 2.* When we have led them to the living waters, if we muddy it by our filthy lives, we may lose our labour, and yet they be never the better. “Aquam pedibus perturbare, est sancta meditationis studia male vivendo corrumpere, inquit.” *Idem, ib.*

Before we speak of the work itself, we must begin with somewhat that is implied and presupposed.

And, 1. It is here implied, that *every flock should have their own pastor, (one or more,) and every pastor his*

*own flock.* As every troop or company in a regiment of soldiers must have their own captain and other officers, and every soldier know his own commanders and colours; so is it the will of God that every church have their own pastors, and that all Christ's disciples "do know their teachers that are over them in the Lord." (1 Thes. v. 12, 13.) The universal Church of Christ must consist of particular churches, guided by their own overseers; and every Christian must be a member of one of these churches, except those that, upon embassages, travels, or other like cases of necessity, are deprived of this advantage. "They ordained them elders in every church." (Acts xiv. 23; so Tit. i. 5.) And in many places this is clear. Though a minister be an officer in the universal Church, yet is he in a special manner the overseer of that particular church which is committed to his charge. As he that is a physician in the commonwealth may yet be the "Medicus vel Archiater cujusdam civitatis," and be obliged to take care of that city, and not so of any other; so that, though he may and ought occasionally to do any good he can elsewhere that may consist with his fidelity to his special charge, (when an unlicensed person may not;) yet is he first obliged to that city, and must allow no help to others that must occasion a neglect of them, except in extraordinary cases, where the public good requireth it. So is it betwixt a pastor and his special flock. When we are ordained ministers without a special charge, we are licensed and commanded to do our best for all, as we shall have a call for the particular exercise; but when we have undertaken a particular charge, we have restrained the exercise of our gifts and guidance so especially to that,

that we may allow others no more than they can spare of our time and help, except where the public good requireth it, which must be first regarded. From this relation of pastor and flock arise all the duties which mutually we owe. As we must be true to our trust, so must our people be faithful to us, and obey the just directions that we give them from the Word of God.

2. When we are commanded to "take heed to all the flock," it is plainly implied that *flocks must be no greater, regularly and ordinarily, than we are capable of overseeing or taking heed of*; that particular churches should be no greater, or ministers no fewer, than may consist with a taking heed to *all*; for God will not lay upon us natural impossibilities. He will not bind men, on so strict account as we are bound, to leap up to the moon, to touch the stars, to number the sands of the sea. If it be the pastoral work to oversee and take heed to all the flock, then surely there must be such a proportion of pastors assigned to each flock, or such a number of souls in the care of each pastor, as he is able to take such heed to as is here required. Will God require of one bishop to take the charge of a whole county, or of so many parishes or thousands of souls, as he is not able to know or to oversee; yea, and to take the sole government of them, while the particular teachers of them are free from that undertaking? Will God require the blood of many parishes at one man's hands, if he do not that which ten, or twenty, or a hundred, or three hundred men can no more do than I can move a mountain? Then woe to poor prelates! This were to impose on them a natural or unavoidable necessity of being damned. Is it not,

therefore, a most doleful case that learned, sober men should plead for this as a desirable privilege, or draw such a burden wilfully on themselves, and that they tremble not rather at the thoughts of so great an undertaking? Oh, happy had it been for the Church, and happy for the bishops themselves, if this measure that is intimated by the apostle here had been still observed, and the diocese had been no greater than the elders or bishops could oversee and rule, so that they might have taken heed to all the flock! or that pastors had been multiplied as churches multiplied, and the number of overseers proportioned so far to the number of souls, that they might not have let the work be undone, while they assumed the empty titles and undertook impossibilities! and that they had rather prayed the Lord of the harvest to send forth more labourers, even so many as had been proportioned to the work, and not to have undertaken all themselves! I should scarcely commend the prudence or humility of that labourer (let his parts in all other respects be never so great) that would not only undertake to gather in all the harvest in this county himself, and that upon pain of death, yea of damnation, but would also earnestly contend for this prerogative.

*Object.* "But there are others to teach, though one only have had the rule."

*Ans.* Blessed be God, it was so; and no thanks to some of them. But is not government of great concernment to the good of souls as well as preaching? If not, then what matter is it for church governors? If it be, then they that nullify it, by undertaking impossibilities, do go about to ruin the churches and themselves. If only preaching be necessary, let us

have none but mere preachers. What needs there, then, such a stir about government? But if discipline (in its place) be necessary too, what is it but enmity to men's salvation to exclude it? and it is unavoidably excluded when it is made to be his work that is naturally incapable of performing it! He that will command an army alone may as well say, *It shall be destroyed for want of command*; and the school-master that will oversee or govern all the schools in the county alone, may as well say plainly, *They shall be all ungoverned*; and the physician who will undertake the guidance of all the sick people in a whole nation or county, when he is not able to visit or direct the hundredth man of them, may as well say, *Let them perish!*

*Object.* "But, though they cannot rule them by themselves, they may do it by others."

*Ans.* The nature of the pastoral work is such as must be done by the pastor himself. He may not delegate a man that is no pastor to baptize, or administer the Lord's Supper, or to be the teacher of the church. No more may he commit the government of it to another; otherwise, by so doing, he makes that man the bishop, if he make him the immediate ruler and guide of the church. And if a bishop may make each presbyter a bishop, so he do but derive the power from him, then let it no more be held unlawful for them to govern, or to be bishops. And if a prelate may do it, it is likely Christ or His apostles might, and have done it; for as we are to preach in Christ's name, and not in any man's, so it is likely that we must rule in His name. But of this somewhat more anon.

Yet, still, it must be acknowledged that, in case of necessity, where there are not more to be had, one man may undertake the charge of more souls than he is able well to oversee particularly. But then he must only undertake to do what he can for them, and not to do all that a pastor ordinarily ought to do. And this is the case of some of us that have greater parishes than we are able to take that special heed to as their state requireth. I must profess, for my own part, I am so far from their boldness that dare venture on the sole government of a county, that I would not, for all England, have undertaken to have been one of the two that should do all the pastoral work that God enjoineth to that one parish where I live, had I not this to satisfy my conscience, that, *through the Church's necessities, more cannot be had; and, therefore, I must rather do what I can, than leave all undone, because I cannot do all.* But cases of unavoidable necessity are not to be the standing condition of the Church, or, at least, it is not desirable that it should so be. Oh, happy Church of Christ, were the labourers but able and faithful, and proportioned in number to the number of souls; so that the pastors were so many, or the particular flocks or churches so small, that we might be able to take heed to all the flocks!

Having told you these two things that are here implied, I come next to the duty itself that is expressed. And this taking heed to all the flock in general is—*A very great care of the whole and every part, with great watchfulness and diligence in the use of all those holy actions and ordinances which God hath required us to use for their salvation.*

More particularly : this work may be considered,—

1. In respect to the subject-matter of it. 2. Its object.  
 3. The work itself, or the actions which we must perform. 4. The end which we must intend.

I shall begin with the last, as being first in our intention, though last attained.

1. The ultimate end of our pastoral oversight is that which is the ultimate end of our whole lives; even the pleasing and glorifying of God, to which is connexed the glory of the human nature also of Christ, and the glorification of His Church, and of ourselves in particular; and the nearer ends of our office are the sanctification and holy obedience of the people of our charge; their unity, order, beauty, strength, preservation, and increase; and the right worshipping of God, especially in the solemn assemblies. By which it is manifest, that before a man is capable of being a true pastor of a church, according to the mind of Christ, he must have so high an estimation of these things as to make them the great and only end of his life.

(1.) That man, therefore, that is not himself taken up with the predominant love of God, and is not himself devoted to Him, and doth not devote to Him all that he hath, and can do; that man that is not in the habit of pleasing God, and making Him the centre of all his actions, and living to Him as his God and happiness: that is, that man that is not a sincere Christian himself, is utterly unfit to be a pastor of a church. And if we be not in a case of desperate necessity, the Church should not admit such, so far as they can discover them. Though to inferior, common works (as to teach the languages, and some philosophy, to translate Scriptures, &c.,) they may be admitted. A man that is not heartily devoted to God, and attached

to His service and honour, will never set heartily about the pastoral work; nor, indeed, can he possibly (while he remaineth such) do one part of that work, no, nor of any other, nor speak one word in Christian sincerity; for no man can be sincere in the means, that is not so in his intentions of the end. A man must heartily love God above all, before he can heartily serve Him before all.

(2.) No man is fit to be a minister of Christ that is not of a public spirit as to the Church, and delighteth not in its beauty, and longeth not for its felicity; as the good of the commonwealth must be the end of the magistrate, (his nearer end,) so must the felicity of the Church be the end of the pastors of it. So that we must rejoice in her welfare, and be willing to spend and be spent for her sake.

(3.) No man is fit to be a pastor of a church that doth not set his heart on the life to come, and regard the matters of everlasting life, above all the matters of this present life; and that is not sensible in some measure how much the inestimable riches of glory are to be preferred to the trifles of the world. For he will never set his heart on the work of men's salvation, that doth not heartily believe and value that salvation.

(4.) He that delighteth not in holiness, hateth not iniquity, loveth not the unity and purity of the Church, and abhorreth not discord and divisions; and taketh not pleasure in the communion of saints, and the public worship of God with His people, is not fit to be a pastor of a church; for none of all these can have the true ends of a pastor, and therefore cannot do the work. For of what necessity the end is to the means, and in relations, is easily known.



2. The subject-matter of the ministerial work is, in general, *spiritual things*, or matters that concern the pleasing of God, and the salvation of our people. It is not about temporal and transitory things. It is a vile usurpation of the pope and his prelates to assume the management of the temporal sword, and immerse themselves in the businesses of the world; to exercise the violent coercion of the magistrate, when they should use only the spiritual weapons of Christ. Our business is not to dispose of commonwealths, nor to touch men's purses or persons by our penalties; but it consisteth only in these two things:—

(1.) In revealing to men that happiness, or chief good, which must be their ultimate end. (2.) In acquainting them with the right means for the attainment of this end, and helping them to use them, and hindering them from the contrary.

(1.) It is the first and great work of the ministers of Christ to acquaint men with that God that made them, and is their happiness; to open to them the treasures of His goodness, and tell them of the glory that is in His presence, which all His chosen people shall enjoy; that so by shewing men the certainty and the excellency of the promised felicity, and the perfect blessedness in the life to come, compared with the vanities of this present life, we may turn the stream of their cogitations and affections, and bring them to a due contempt of this world, and set them on seeking the durable treasure; and this is the work that we should lie at with them night and day. Could we once get them right in regard of the end, and set their hearts unfeignedly on God and heaven, the chief part of the work were done; for all the rest would undoubtedly

follow. Here we must diligently shew them the vanity of their sensual felicity, and convince them of the baseness of those pleasures which they prefer to the delights of God.

(2.) Having shewed them the right end, our next work is to acquaint them with the right means of attaining it. Where the wrong way must be disgraced, the evil of all sin must be manifested, and the danger that it hath brought us into, and the hurt it hath already done us, must be discovered. Then we have the great mystery of Redemption to disclose; the person, natures, incarnation, perfection, life, miracles, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, dominion, intercession of the blessed Son of God. As also the tenor of His promises, the conditions imposed on us, the duties which He hath commanded us, and the everlasting torments which He hath threatened to the final impenitent neglecters of His grace. Oh, what a treasury of His blessings and graces, and the privileges of His saints, have we to unfold! What a blessed life of holiness and communion therein have we to recommend to the sons of men! And yet how many temptations, difficulties, and dangers to disclose, and assist them against! How many precious spiritual duties have we to set them upon, and excite them to and direct them in! How many objections of flesh and blood, and cavils of vain men have we to refute! How much of our own corruptions and sinful inclinations to, discover and root out! We have the depth of God's bottomless love and mercy, the depth of the mysteries of His designs, and works of creation, redemption, providence, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification; the depth of Satan's temptations, and the

depth of their own hearts to disclose. In a word, we must teach them, as much as we can, of the *word* and *works* of God. Oh, what two volumes are these for a minister to preach upon! How great, how excellent, how wonderful, how mysterious! All Christians are disciples or scholars of Christ; the Church is His school, we are His ushers; the Bible is His grammar; this is that we must be daily teaching them. The Papists would teach them without book, lest they should learn heresies from the Word of Truth; lest they learn falsehood from the Book of God, they must only learn the books or words of their priests. But our business is not to teach them without book, but to help them to understand this Book of God. So much for the subject-matter of our work.

3. The object of our pastoral care is, *all the flock*: that is, the Church and every member of it. It is considered by us, (1.) In the whole body or society. (2.) In the parts or individual members.

(1.) Our first care must be about the whole; and therefore the first duties to be done are public duties, which are done to the whole. As our people are bound to prefer public duties before private, so are we much more. But this is so commonly confessed, that I shall say no more of it.

(2.) But that which is less understood or considered of, is, that *all the flock*, even each individual member of our charge, must be taken heed of, and watched over by us in our ministry. To which end it is to be presupposed necessary, that (unless where absolute necessity forbiddeth it, through the scarcity of pastors, and greatness of the flock,) we should *know* every person that belongeth to our charge; for how can we

take heed to them if we do not know them? Or how can we take that heed that belongeth to the special charge that we have undertaken, if we know not who be of our charge, and who not, though we know the persons? Our obligation is not to all neighbour-churches, or to all stragglers, so great as it is to those whom we are set over. How can we tell whom to exclude, till we know who are included? Or how can we repel the accusations of the offended, that tell us of the ungodly or defiled members of our churches, when we know not who be members, and who not? Doubtless the bounds of our parish will not tell us, as long as Papists, and some worse, do there inhabit. Nor will bare hearing us certainly discover it, as long as those are used to hear that are members of other churches, or of none at all. Nor is mere participation of the Lord's Supper a sure note, while strangers may be admitted, and many a member accidentally be kept off. Though much probability may be gathered by these, or some of these, yet a fuller knowledge of our charge is necessary where it may be had, and that must be the fittest expression of consent, because it is consent that is necessary to the relation.

All the flock being thus known, must afterward be taken heed to. One would think all reasonable men should be satisfied of that, and it should need no further proof. Doth not a careful shepherd look after every individual sheep? and a good schoolmaster look to every individual scholar, both for instruction and correction? and a good physician look after every particular patient? and good commanders look after every individual soldier? Why, then, should not the teachers, the pastors, the physicians, the guides of the

churches of Christ, take heed to every individual member of their charge? Christ himself, the great and good Shepherd, and Master of the Church, that hath the whole to look after, doth yet take care of every individual. In Luke xv. He tells us, that He is as the shepherd that "leaveth the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, to seek after one that was lost;" or as the "woman that lighteth a candle, and sweepeth the house, and searcheth diligently to find the *one* groat that was lost; and having found it, doth rejoice, and call her friends and neighbours to rejoice." And Christ telleth us, that "even in heaven there is joy over *one* sinner that repenteth." The prophets are often sent to single men. Ezekiel is made a watchman over individuals; and must say to the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die." (Ezek. iii. 18-20.) And Paul taught them "publicly, and from house to house;" which was meant of his teaching particular families; for even the public teaching was then in houses; and *publicly*, and *from house to house*, signify not the same thing. The same Paul "warned every man, and taught every man, in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. i. 28.) Christ expoundeth His parables to the twelve apart. Every man must "seek the law at the mouth of the priest." (Mal. ii. 7.) We must give an account of our watching for the souls of all that are bound to obey us. (Heb. xiii. 7.) Many more passages in Scripture assure us that it is our duty to take heed of every individual person in our flock. And many passages in the ancient Councils do plainly tell us, it was the practice of those times, till churches began to be crowded, and to swell so big that they could not be

guided as churches should be, when they should rather have been multiplied, as the converts did increase. But I will pass over all these, and mention only one passage in Ignatius (or whoever it was, I matter not much, seeing it is but to prove what was then the custom of the Church,) ad Polycarp. *Πικνότερον συναγωγὰι γενέθωσαν ἕξ ὀνόματος πάντα ζῆτει δούλους καὶ δούλας μὴ ὑπερήφανει, i. e.,* “ Let the assemblies be gathered, seek after (or inquire of) all by name : despise not servant-men or maids.” You see it was then taken for a duty to look after every member of the flock by name ; though it were the meanest servant-man or maid. The reasons of the necessity of this I shall pass over now, because some of them will fall in when we come to the duty of Catechising and Personal Instruction in the end.

*Object.* “ But the congregation that I am set over is so great that it is not possible for me to know them all, much less to take heed of all individuals.”

*Ans.* 1. Is it necessity or not that hath cast you upon such a charge ? If it be not, you excuse one sin with another. How durst you undertake that which you knew yourself unable to perform, when you were not forced to it ? It seems, then, you had some other ends in your undertaking, and never intended to make it good, and be faithful to your trust. But if you think that you were necessitated to it, I must ask you, 1. Might not you possibly have procured some assistance for so great a charge ? Have you done all that you could with your friends and neighbours to get maintenance for another to help you ? 2. Have you not so much maintenance yourself as might serve yourself and another ? What though it will not serve

to maintain you in fulness? Is it not more reason that you should pinch your flesh and family, than undertake a work that you cannot do, and neglect the souls of so many men? I know it will seem hard to some what I say, but to me it seems an unquestionable thing: that if you have but an hundred pounds a year, it is your duty to live upon part of it, and allow the rest to a competent assistant, rather than the flock that you are over should be neglected. If you say this is hard measure, your wife and children cannot so live; I answer, (1.) Do not many families in your parish live on less? (2.) Have not many able ministers in the prelates' days been glad of less, with liberty to preach the gospel? There are some yet living (as I have heard) that have offered the bishops to enter into bond to preach for nothing, so they might but have the liberty to preach. (3.) If still you say, that you cannot live so nearly as poor people do; I further ask, Can your parishioners better endure damnation than you can endure want and poverty? What! do you call yourselves ministers of the gospel, and yet are the souls of men so base in your eyes that you had rather they did eternally perish, than yourselves and family should live in a low and poor condition? Nay, should you not rather beg your bread than put such a thing as men's salvation upon a hazard or disadvantage? yea, or hazard the damnation but of one soul? O sirs, it is a miserable thing when men study and talk of heaven and hell, and the fewness of the saved, and the difficulty of salvation, and are not all this while in good sadness. If you were, you could never surely stick at such matters as these, and let your people go to damnation, that you might live at

higher rates in the world. Remember this, the next time you are preaching to them, *that they cannot be saved without knowledge*, and hearken whether conscience do not conclude, *It is likely they might be brought to knowledge if they had but diligent instruction and exhortation privately, man by man*; and then, *Were there another minister to assist me, this might be done*; and then, *If I would live nearly and deny my flesh, I might have an assistant*; and then it must conclude, *Dare I let my people live in ignorance, which I myself have told them is damning, rather than put myself and family to a little want?*

And I must further say, that indeed this poverty is not so sad and dangerous a business as it is pretended to be. So you have but food and raiment, must you not therewith be content? and what would you have more than that which may enable you for the work of God? And it is not purple and fine linen, and faring deliciously every day, that you must expect, as that which must content you. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." So your clothing be warm, and your food be wholesome, you may as well be supported by it to do God service, as if you had the fullest satisfaction to your flesh. A patched coat may be warm, and bread and drink is wholesome food. He that wanteth not these, hath but a cold excuse to make for hazarding men's souls, that he may live on a fuller diet in the world.

*Object.* "If this doctrine be received, then it will discourage men from meddling with great places, and so all cities, market-towns, and other great parishes will be left desolate."

*Ans.* It will discourage none but the carnal and self-



seeking, not those that thirst after the winning of souls, and are wholly devoted to the service of God, and have taken up the cross, and follow Christ in self-denial. And for others, they are so far from being good ministers, that they are not His disciples or true Christians. Christ would not forbear to tell the world of the absolute necessity of self-denial, and resigning up all, and bearing the cross, and mortifying the flesh, for fear of discouraging men from His service; but contrarily, telleth them that He will have no other servants but such, and those that will not come on those terms may go their ways, and take their course, and see who will lose by it, and whether He do want more their service, or they want His protection and favour.

*Object.* "But I am not bound to go to a charge which I cannot perform, and take a greater place, when I am fit but for a less."

*Ans.* 1. If you would undertake it but for want of maintenance, then it is not unfitness, but poverty that is your discouragement; and that is no sufficient discouragement. 2. We are all bound to dispose of ourselves to the greatest advantage of the Church, and to take that course in which we may do God the greatest service; and we know that He hath more work for us in greater congregations than in lesser, and that the neglect of them would be the greatest injury and danger to His Church and interest; and therefore we must not refuse, but choose the greatest work, though it be accompanied with the greatest difficulties and suffering. It must be done; why not by you as well as others?

*Object.* "But no man must undertake more than he can do."

*Ans.* I will add the rest of my inquiries, which will answer this objection. 3. Would the maintenance of the place serve two others, that have less necessity, or smaller families, than you? If it will, try to get two such as may accept it in your stead. 4. If this cannot be done, nor addition be procured, and there be really so little that you cannot have assistance, then these two things must be done. (1.) You must take the charge with limitation, with a profession of your insufficiency for the whole work, and your undertaking only so much as you can do; and this you do for the necessity of the place that cannot otherwise be better supplied. (2.) You must not leave off the work of personal oversight, nor refuse to deal particularly with any, because you cannot do it with all; but take this course with as many as you are able; and withal put on godly neighbours, and especially parents, and masters of families, to do the more. And thus doing what we can will be accepted.

In the meantime, let us importune the rulers of the commonwealth, for such a portion of maintenance to great congregations, that they may have so many ministers to watch over them, as may personally, as well as publicly, instruct and exhort them. It may please God at last to put this into the hearts of governors, and to give them a love to the prosperity of His Church, and a conscience of their duty for the promoting of men's salvation.

Some more of these objections we shall answer anon, under the Uses. So much for the distribution of the work of the ministry, drawn from the object materially considered.

We are next to consider of it in reference to the several qualities of the object. And because we shall

here speak somewhat of the acts with the object, there will be the less afterward to be said of them by themselves.

[1.] The first part of our ministerial work lieth in bringing unsound professors of the faith to sincerity, that they who before were Christians in name and show, may be so indeed. Though it belong not to us, as their pastors, to convert professed infidels to the faith, because they cannot be members of the Church while they are professed infidels; yet doth it belong to us, as their pastors, to convert these seeming Christians to sincerity, because such seeming Christians may be visible members of our churches. And though we be not absolutely certain that this or that man in particular is unsound, and unsanctified, yet as long as we have a certainty that many such are usually in the Church, and have too great probability that it is so with several individuals whom we can name, we have therefore ground enough to deal with them for their conversion. And if we be certain by their notorious impiety that they are no Christians, and so to be rejected from the communion of Christians; yea, if they were professed infidels, yet may we deal with them for their conversion, though not as their pastors, yet as ministers of the gospel. So that upon these terms we may well conclude that the work of conversion is the great thing that we must first drive at, and labour with all our might to effect.

Alas! the misery of the unconverted is so great, that it calleth loudest to us for our compassion! If a truly converted sinner do fall, it will be but into sin, which will surely be pardoned, and he is not in that hazard of damnation by it as others be. Not, as some unjustly

accuse us to say, that God hateth not their sins as well as others, or that He will bring them to heaven let them live never so wickedly; but the Spirit, that is within them, will not let them live wickedly, nor to sin as the ungodly do; but they hate sin habitually, when through temptation they commit it actually; and as they have a general repentance for all, so have they a particular repentance for all that is known; and they usually know all that is gross and much more, and they have no iniquity that hath dominion over them. But with the unconverted it is far otherwise: they are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and have yet no part nor fellowship in the pardon of their sins, or the hopes of glory. We have therefore a work of greater necessity to do for them, even "to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among the sanctified by faith in Christ." (Acts xxvi. 18.) To soften and open their hearts to the entertainment of "the truth, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of it, that they may escape out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. ii. 25.) That so "they may be converted, and their sins may be forgiven them." (Mark iv. 12.) He that seeth one man sick of a mortal disease, and another only pained with the toothache, will be moved more to compassionate the former than the latter, and will surely make more haste to help him, though he were a stranger, and the other a son. It is so sad a case to see men in a state of damnation, wherein if they should die they are remedilessly lost, that methinks we should not be able to let them alone, either in

public or private, whatever other work we have to do. I confess, I am forced frequently to neglect that which should tend to the further increase of knowledge in the godly, and may be called stronger meat, because of the lamentable necessity of the unconverted. Who is able to talk of controversies, or nice unnecessary points, yea, or truths of a lower degree of necessity, how excellent soever, while he seeth a company of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before his face, that must be changed or damned? Methinks I even see them entering upon their final woe! Methinks I even hear them crying out for help, and speediest help! Their misery speaks the louder, because they have not hearts to seek, or ask for help themselves. Many a time have I known that I had some hearers of higher fancies, that looked for rarities, and were addicted to despise the ministry, if he told them not somewhat more than ordinary; and yet I could not find in my heart to turn from the observation of the necessities of the impenitent, for the humouring of these, nor to leave speaking to the apparently miserable for their salvation, to speak to such novelists; no, nor so much as otherwise should be done, to the weak for their confirmation and increase in grace. Methinks as Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw the Athenians so addicted to idolatry, so it should cast us into one of his paroxysms to see so many men in great probability of being everlastingly undone; and if by faith we did indeed look upon them as within a step of hell, it should more effectually untie our tongues, than they tell us that Croesus' danger did his son's. He that will let a sinner go to hell for want of speaking to him, doth set less by souls than the Redeemer of souls did, and less by his neighbour than

rational charity will allow him to do by his greatest enemy. Oh, therefore, brethren, whomsoever you neglect, neglect not the most miserable! Whoever you pass over, forget not poor souls that are under the condemnation and curse of the law, and may look every hour for the infernal execution, if a speedy change do not prevent it. Oh, call after the impenitent, and ply this great work of converting souls, whatever else you leave undone!

[2.] The next part of the ministerial work, is for the building up of those that are already truly converted. And according to the various states of these, the work is various. In general, as the persons are either such as are young and weak, or such as are in danger of growing worse, or such as are already declining, so our work is all reducible to these particulars, *Confirmation, Progress, Preservation, and Restoration.*

1. We have many of our flock that are young and weak; though of long standing, yet of small proficiency or strength. And, indeed, it is the most common condition of the godly: most of them stick in weak and low degrees of grace; and it is no easy matter to get them higher. To bring them to higher and stricter opinions, is very easy—that is, to bring them from the truth into error, on the right hand as well as on the left: but to increase their knowledge and gifts is not easy; but to increase their graces is the hardest of all. It is a very troublesome thing to be weak: it exposeth us to many dangers, it abateth consolation and delight in God, and taketh off the sweetness of His ways, and maketh us go to work with too much backwardness, and come off with little peace or profit. It maketh us less serviceable to God and

man, to bring less honour to our Master and profession, and do less good to all about us. We find but small benefit by the means we use ; we too easily play with the serpent's baits, and are ensnared by his wiles. A seducer will easily make us shake, and evil may be made appear to us as good, truth as falsehood, sin as a duty, and so on the contrary. We are less able to resist and stand in an encounter ; we sooner fall ; we rise with greater difficulty ; and are apt to prove a scandal and reproach to our profession. We know less of ourselves, and are more apt to be mistaken in our own estate, not observing corruptions when they have got advantage ; we are dishonourable to the gospel by our very weakness, and little useful to any about us ; and, in a word, though we live to less profit to ourselves or others, yet are we unwilling and unready to die.

Seeing the case of weakness is comparatively so sad, how diligent should we be to cherish and increase their grace ! The strength of Christians is the honour of the Church. When men are inflamed with the love of God, and live by a lively, working faith, and set light by the profits and honours of the world, and love one another with a pure heart fervently, and can bear and heartily forgive a wrong, and suffer joyfully for the cause of Christ, and study to do good, and walk inoffensively and harmlessly in the world, as ready to be servants of all men for their good, becoming all things to all men to win them, and yet abstaining from the appearances of evil, and seasoning all their actions with a sweet mixture of prudence, humility, zeal, and heavenly spirituality ; oh, what an honour are such to their profession ! what ornaments to the

Church! and how excellently serviceable to God and man! Men would sooner believe that the gospel is indeed a word of truth and power, if they could see more such effects of it upon the hearts and lives of men. The world is better able to read the nature of religion in a man's life than in the Bible. They that obey not the Word, may be won by the conversation of such. It is therefore a necessary part of our work, to labour more in polishing and perfecting of the saints, that they may be strong in the Lord, and fitted for their Master's use.

2d, Another sort of converts that need our special help are those that labour under some particular distemper, which keeps under their graces, and makes them temptations and troubles to others and a burden to themselves; for, alas! too many such there are—some that are especially addicted to pride, and some to worldliness, and some to this or that sensual desire, and many to frowardness and disturbing passions. It is our duty to set in for the assistance of all these; and, partly by dissuasions and clear discoveries of the odiousness of the sin, and partly by suitable directions about the way of remedy, to help them to a conquest of their corruptions. We are leaders of Christ's army against the powers of darkness, and must resist all the works of darkness wherever we find them, though it be in the children of light. We must be no more tender of the sins of the godly than the ungodly, nor any more befriend them or favour them. By how much more we love the persons above others, by so much the more we must express it in the opposition of their sin; and yet must look to meet with some tender persons here, especially when iniquity hath got



any head and made a party, and many have fallen in love with it. They will be as pettish and impatient of a reproof as some who are worse, and interest piety itself into their faults, and say that a minister that preacheth against them doth preach against the godly. A most heinous crime this, to make God and godliness accessory to their sins. But the ministers of Christ must do their duty, for all men's peevishness; and must not so far hate their brother as to forbear the plain rebuke of him, or suffer sin to lie upon his soul. Though it must be done with *much* prudence, yet done it *must* be.

3d, Another sort that our work is about are declining Christians, that are either fallen into some scandalous sin, or else abate their zeal and diligence, and shew us that they have lost their former love. As the case of backsliders is very sad, so our diligence must be great for their recovery. It is sad to them to lose so much of their life, and peace, and serviceableness to God, and to become so serviceable to Satan and his cause! It is sad to us to see that all our labour is to come to this; and that, when we have taken so much pains with men, and had so much hopes of them, all should be so far frustrated! It is saddest of all to think that God should be so abused by those that He hath loved and done so much for, and that the enemy should get such advantage upon His graces, and that Christ should be so wounded in the house of His friends, the name of God evil spoken of among the wicked through such, and all that fear God should be reproached for their sakes. Besides, partial backsliding hath a natural tendency to total apostasy, and would effect it, if special grace prevent it not. The

sadder the case of such Christians is, the more lieth upon us for their effectual recovery, "to restore those that are but overtaken with a fault by the spirit of meekness," (Gal. vi. 1, 2,) and yet to see that the sore be thoroughly searched and healed, and the joint be well set again, what pain soever it cost; and especially to look to the honour of the gospel, and to see that they rise by such free and full confessions and significations of true repentance, that some reparation be thereby made to the Church and their holy profession for the wound of dishonour that they had given it by their sin. Much skill is required to the restoring of such a soul.

4th, Another part of our ministerial work is about those that are fallen under some great temptation. Much of our assistance is needful to our people in such a case; and therefore every minister should be a man that hath much insight into the tempter's wiles. We should know the variety of them, and the cunning craft of all Satan's instruments that lie in wait to deceive, and the methods and devices of the grand deceiver. Some of our people lie under temptations to error and heresy, especially the young, unsettled, and most self-conceited, and those that are most conversant and familiar with seducers. Young, unsettled Christians are commonly of their mind that have most interest in their esteem, and most opportunity of familiar talk to draw them into their way; and as they are tender, so deceivers want not the sparks of zeal to set them in a flame. A zeal for error and opinions of our own is natural, and easily kindled and kept alive; but it is far otherwise with the spiritual zeal for God. Oh, what a deal of holy prudence and

industry is necessary in a pastor, to preserve the flock from being tainted with heresies and falling into noxious conceits and practice; and especially to keep them in unity and concord, and hinder the rising or increase of divisions! If there be not a notable conjunction of all accomplishments, and a skilful improvement of parts and interests, it will hardly be done, especially in such times as ours, when the sign is in the head, and the disease is epidemical. If we do not publicly maintain the credit of our ministry, and second it by unblamable and exemplary lives, and privately meet with seducers and shame them—if we be not able to manifest their folly, and follow not close our staggering people before they fall, how quickly may we give great advantage to the enemy, and let in such an inundation of sin and calamity that will not easily be again cast out!

Others lie under a temptation to worldly-mindedness; and others to gluttony or drunkenness; and others to uncleanness: some to one sin, and some to another. A faithful pastor, therefore, should have his eye upon them all, and labour to be acquainted with their natural temperament, and also with their occasions and affairs in the world, and the company that they live or converse with, that so he may know where their temptations lie; and then speedily, prudently, and diligently help them.

5th, Another part of our work is to comfort the disconsolate, and to settle the peace of our people's souls, and that on sure and lasting ground. To which end, the quality of the complainants, and the course of their lives had need to be known; for all people must have the like consolations that have the like

complaints. But of this I have spoken already elsewhere; and there is so much said by many, especially Mr Bolton in his "Instructions for Right Comforting," that I shall say no more.

6th, The rest of our ministerial work is upon those that are yet strong; for they also have need of our assistance: partly to prevent their temptations and declinings, and preserve the grace they have; partly to help them for a further progress and increase; and partly to direct them in the improving of their strength for the service of Christ, and the assistance of their brethren. As also to encourage them, especially the aged, the tempted and afflicted, to hold on, and to persevere that they may obtain the crown. All these are the objects of the ministerial work, and in respect to all these we must take heed to all the flock.

4. Having done with our work in respect to its objects, I am next to speak of the *acts themselves*. But of this I shall be very brief.

(1.) One part of our work, and that the most excellent, because it tendeth to work on many, is the public preaching of the Word—a work that requireth greater skill, and especially greater life and zeal, than any of us bring to it. It is no small matter to stand up in the face of a congregation, and deliver a message of salvation or damnation, as from the living God, in the name of our Redeemer. It is no easy matter to speak so plain, that the ignorant may understand us; and so seriously, that the deadest hearts may feel us; and so convincingly, that contradicting cavillers may be silenced. I know it is a great dispute whether preaching be proper to the ministers or not? The decision seems not very difficult. Preaching to a con-

gregation as their ordinary teacher, is proper to a minister in office; and preaching to the unbelieving world, Jews, Mohammedans, or Pagans, as one that hath given up himself to that work, and is separated and set apart to it, is proper to a minister in office; but preaching to a church, and infidels occasionally, as an act of charity, extraordinarily, or upon special call to that act, may be common to others. The governor of a church, when he cannot preach himself, may in a case of necessity appoint a private man, "pro tempore," to do it, who is able, as Mr Thorndike hath shewed. But no private man may obtrude, without his consent who by his office is the guide and pastor of that church. And a master of a family may preach to his own family, and a schoolmaster to his scholars, and any man to those whom he is obliged to teach; so that he goes not beyond his ability, and do it in a due subordination to church teaching, and not in the way of opposition and division. A man that is not of the trade, may do some one act of a tradesman in a corporation, for his own use, or family, or friend; but he may not separate himself to it, or set it up, and make it his profession, nor live upon it, unless he had been an apprentice, and were free. For though one man of ten thousand may do it of himself, as well as he that hath served an apprenticeship, yet it is not to be presumed that it is ordinarily so: and the standing rule must not bend to rarities and extraordinaries, lest it undo all; for that which is extraordinary and rare in such cases, the law doth look upon as a "non ens." But the best way to silence such usurping teachers, is for those to whom it belongeth, to do it themselves so diligently, that the people may not have need to go a

begging; and to do it judiciously, and affectingly, that a plain difference may appear between them and usurpers, and that other men's works may be shamed by theirs; and also by the adding of holy lives and unwearied diligence to high abilities, to keep up the reputation of their sacred office, that neither seducers nor tempted ones may fetch matter of temptation from our blemishes or neglects.

(2.) Another part of our pastoral work is to administer the holy mysteries, or seals of God's covenant,—Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. This also is claimed by private usurpers; but I will not stand to discuss their claim. A great fault it is among ourselves, that some are so careless in the manner, and others do reform that with a total neglect; and others do lay such a stress on circumstances, and make them a matter of so much contention, even in that ordinance where union and communion is so professed.

(3.) Another part of our work is to guide our people, and be as their mouth in the public prayers of the church, and the public praises of God; as also to bless them in the name of the Lord. This sacerdotal part of the work is not the least, nor to be so much thrust into a corner, as by too many of us it is. A great part of God's service in the church assemblies was wont in all ages of the Church, till of late, to consist in public praises and eucharistical acts in holy communion; and the Lord's day was still kept as a day of thanksgiving, in the hymns and common rejoicings of the faithful, in special commemoration of the work of redemption, and the happy condition of the gospel-Church. I am as apprehensive of the necessity of preaching as some others; but yet, methinks, the solemn praises of God

should take up much more of the Lord's day than in most places they do. And, methinks, they that are for the magnifying of gospel privileges, and for a life of love and heavenly joys, should be of my mind in this; and their worship should be evangelical as well as their doctrine pretendeth to be.

(4.) Another part of the ministerial work, is to have a special care and oversight of each member of the flock. The parts whereof are these that follow:—

[1.] We must labour to be acquainted with the state of all our people as fully as we can: both to know the persons, and their inclinations and conversation; to know what are the sins that they are most in danger of, and what duties they neglect for the matter or manner, and what temptations they are most liable to. For if we know not the temperament or disease, we are likely to prove but unsuccessful physicians.

[2.] We must use all the means we can to instruct the ignorant in the matters of their salvation: by our own most plain familiar words; by giving, or lending, or otherwise helping them to books that are fit for them; by persuading them to learn catechisms; and those that cannot read, to get help of their neighbours; and to persuade their neighbours to afford them help, who have best opportunities thereto.

[3.] We must be ready to give advice to those that come to us with cases of conscience, especially the great case which the Jews put to Peter, and the jailer to Paul and Silas, "What must we do to be saved?" A minister is not only for public preaching, but to be a known counsellor for their souls, as the lawyer is for their estates, and the physician for their bodies; so that each man that is in doubts and straits, should

bring his case to him and desire resolution. Not that a minister should be troubled with every small matter, which judicious neighbours can give them advice in as well as he, no more than a lawyer or physician should be troubled for every trifle or familiar case, where others can tell them as much as they: but as when their estate or life is in danger they will go to these; so when their souls are in danger, they should go to ministers, as Nicodemus came to Christ, and as was usual with the people to go to the priest, whose lips must preserve knowledge, and at whose mouth they must ask the law, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. And because the people are grown unacquainted with the office of the ministry, and their own necessity and duty herein, it belongeth to us to acquaint them herewith, and to press them publicly to come to us for advice in such cases of great concernment to their souls. We must not only be willing of the trouble, but draw it upon ourselves by inviting them hereto. What abundance of good might we do, could we but bring our people to this! And doubtless much might be done in it, if we did our duty. How few have I ever heard that heartily pressed their people to their duty in this! A sad case, that people's souls should be so injured and hazarded, by the total neglect of so great a duty, and ministers scarcely ever tell them of it, and awaken them to it; were they but duly sensible of the need and weight of this, you would have them more frequently knocking at your doors, opening their cases to you, making their sad complaints, and begging your advice. I beseech you put them more on this for the future, and perform it carefully when they seek your help. To this end it is very



necessary that we be acquainted with practical cases, and especially that we be acquainted with the nature of true grace, and able to assist them in trying their states, and resolve the main question that concerns their everlasting life or death. One word of seasonable and prudent advice, given by a minister to persons in necessity, hath done that good that many sermons would not have done.

[4.] We must also have a special eye upon families, to see that they be well ordered, and the duties of each relation performed,—the life of religion, and the welfare and glory of Church and State, depending much on family government and duty. If we suffer the neglect of this, we undo all. What are we like to do ourselves to the reforming of a congregation, if all the work be cast on us alone, and masters of families will let fall that necessary duty of their own, by which they are bound to help us? If any good be begun by the ministry in any soul in a family, a careless, prayerless, worldly family is almost sure to stifle it, or at least very much hinder it. Whereas, if you could but get the rulers of families to do their part, and take up the work where you left it, and help it on, what abundance of good might be done! I beseech you, therefore, do all that you can to promote this business, as ever you desire the true reformation and welfare of your parishes! To which end let these things following be performed:—1. Get certain information how each family is ordered, and how God is worshipped in them, that you may know how to proceed in your carefulness for their further good. 2. Go now and then among them when they are like to be most at leisure, and ask the master of the family whether he pray with

them, or read the Scriptures, or what he doth ? And labour to convince the neglecters of their sin. And if you have opportunity, pray with them before you go, and give them an example, what you would have them do, and how ; and get a promise of them that they will be more conscientious therein for the future. 3. If you find any unable to pray in tolerable expressions through ignorance and disuse, persuade them to study their own wants, and get their hearts affected with them, and so go often to those neighbours who use to pray, that they may learn, and in the meantime persuade them to use a form of prayer rather than none. Only tell them that it is their sin and shame that they have lived so negligently, as to be now so unacquainted with their own necessities, and not know how to speak to God in prayer, when every beggar can find words to ask an alms ; and therefore tell them that this form is but for necessity, as a crutch to a cripple, while they cannot do as well without it ; but they must not resolve to take up there, but to learn to do better as soon as they can, seeing prayer should come from the feeling of the heart, and be varied both according to our necessities and observations. Yet it is necessary for most of those that have not been brought up where prayer hath been used, that they begin at first with a form, because they will else be able to do nothing at all, and in sense of their disability will wholly neglect the duty, though they desire to perform it. For many persons can mutter out some honest requests in secret, that be not able before others to speak tolerable sense. And I will not be one of them that had rather the duty were wholly neglected, or profaned and made contemptible, than encourage them to the use of a form,

either recited by memory or read. 4. See that they have some profitable, moving book (beside the Bible) in each family; if they have not, persuade them to buy some of small price, and great use, such as Mr Whately's "New Birth," and Dod on the Commandments, or some smaller, moving sermons. If they be not able to buy them, give them some, if you can; if you cannot, get some gentleman, or other rich persons that are willing to do good works, to do it; and engage them to read them at night when they have leisure, and especially on the Lord's day. 5. By all means persuade them to procure all their children to learn to read English. 6. Direct them how to spend the Lord's day, how to despatch their worldly businesses, so as to prevent incumbrances and distractions; and when they have been at the assembly, how to spend the time in their families. The life of religion lieth much on this, because poor people have no other free considerable time, and therefore if they lose this they lose all, and will remain ignorant and brutish. Especially persuade them to these two things: If they cannot repeat the sermon, or otherwise spend the time profitably at home, that they take their family with them, and go to some godly neighbour that spends it better, that by joining with them they may have the better help. That the master of the family will every Lord's day at night, cause all his family to repeat the Catechism to him, and give him some account of what they have learned in public that day. 7. If there be any in the family that are known to be unruly, give the ruler a special charge concerning them, and make them understand what a sin it is to connive at and tolerate them. Neglect not therefore this necessary part of your work.

Get masters of families to their duties, and they will spare you a great deal of labour with the rest, or further much the success of your labours. If a captain can get his lieutenant, cornet, and other inferior officers to their duties, he may rule the soldiers with less trouble than if all should lie upon his hands alone. You are likely to see no general reformation till you procure family reformation. Some little obscure religion there may be in here and there one ; but while it sticks in single persons, and is not promoted by these societies, it doth not prosper, nor promise much for future increase.

[5.] Another part of the work of our private oversight consisteth in a vigilant opposing of seducers, and seeking to prevent the infection of our flock, and speedy reclaiming those that begin to itch after strange teachers, and turn into crooked paths. When we hear of any one that lies under the influence of their temptations, or that is already deceived by them, we must speedily, with all our skill and diligence, make out for their relief. The means I shall shew in the directions in the end.

[6.] Another part of this oversight lieth in the due encouragement of those that are humble, upright, obedient Christians, and profit by our teaching, and are an honour to their profession. We must, in the eyes of all the flock, put some difference between them and the rest by our praises, and more special familiarity, and other testimonies of our approbation, and rejoicing over them ; that so we may both encourage them, and incite others to imitate them. God's graces are amiable and honourable in all, even in the poorest of the flock, as well as in pastors ; and the smallest

degrees must be cherished and encouraged ; but the highest more openly honoured and propounded to imitation. They that have slighted or vilified the most gracious, because they were of the laity, while they claimed to themselves the honour of the clergy, though adorned with little or none of that grace, as they shewed themselves to be proud and carnal, so did they take the next way to debase themselves by self-exaltation, and to bring the office itself into contempt. For if there be no honour due to the real sanctity of a Christian, much less to the relative sanctity of a pastor : and he that vilifieth the person, cannot well plead for the honouring of robes and empty titles : nor can he expect that his people should give him the honour of a pastor, if he will not give them the love and honour that is due to Christians, and the members of Christ. As the orator said to Domitius, “*Cur ego te habeam ut principem, cum tu me non habeas ut senatorem.*” It was an unchristian course, therefore, which our late prelates and their agents took, who discountenanced none so much as the most godly, whom they should have rejoiced in, and encouraged ; and made them not only the common scorn, but also the objects of their persecuting rage, as if they had fed their flock for the butcher, and called them out for suffering as they came to maturity. This vilifying and persecuting the most diligent of the flock, was neither the note of Christian shepherds, nor the way to be so esteemed. As Jerom saith, “*Quid de Episcopis, qui verberibus timeri volunt, canones dicant, bene fraternitas vestra novit. Pastores enim facti sumus, non percussores. Egregius prædicator dixit ; Argue, obseca, increpa in omni patientiâ et doctrina : nova*

vero atque inaudita est illa prædicatio, quæ verberibus exigit fidem." Much more might he have said, " Quæ verberibus castigat pietatem."

[7.] Another part of our oversight lieth in visiting the sick, and helping them to prepare either for a fruitful life, or a happy death. Though this be the business of all our life and theirs, yet doth it at such a season require extraordinary care both of them and us. When time is almost gone, and they must be now or never reconciled to God, and possessed of His grace, oh, how doth it concern them to redeem those hours, and lay hold upon eternal life! And when we see that we are likely to have but a few days or hours more to speak to them, in order to their endless state, what man that is not an infidel or a block, would not be with them, and do all that he can for their salvation in that short space!

Will it not awaken us to compassion to look upon a languishing man, and to think that within a few days his soul will be in heaven or hell? Surely it will much try the faith and seriousness of ministers and others, to be about dying men. They will have much opportunity to discern whether they are themselves in good sadness about the matters of the life to come. So great is the change that is made by death, that it should awaken us to the greatest sensibility, to see a man so near it, and should provoke us in the deepest pangs of compassion, to do the office of inferior angels for the soul before it is departed from the flesh, that it may be ready for the convoy of superior angels to transmit it to the prepared glory when it is removed from sin and misery. When a man is almost at his journey's end, and the next step puts him into

heaven or hell, it is time for us to help him if we can, while there is hope. As Bernard saith, the death of the righteous is "*bona propter requiem, melior propter novitatem, optima propter securitatem : sed mors peccatorum est mala in mundi amissione, pejor in carnis separatione, pessima in vermis ignisque duplici contritione.*" Could they have any hope that it would be their "*ultima linea rerum,*" and that they have no more to suffer when that dismal day is past, they might have such abatements of their terror to die as brutes, who fear no sorrow after death. But it is so far otherwise, that death itself is the smallest matter that they need to care for. "*Sed moriendo quo ire cogantur, ut August.*" It is not the "*prima mors quæ animam pellit violenter è corpore,*" that is the most terrible, "*sed secunda quæ animam nolentem tenent in corpore, inquit, Idem.*"

And as their present necessity should move us to take that opportunity for their good, so should the advantage that sickness and the foresight of death affordeth. There are few of the stoutest hearts but will hear us on their death-bed, that scorned us before. They will then let fall their fury, and be as tame as lambs, that were before as untractable as wasps or madmen : a man may speak to them then, that could not before. I find not one of ten of the most obstinate, scornful wretches in the parish, but when they come to die, will humble themselves, confess their fault, and seem penitent, and promise, if they should recover, to do so no more. If the very meditations of death be so effectual in the time of health, that it is, saith Augustinus, "*quasi Clavis carnis omnes motus superbiæ ligno crucis affigens,*" (1. 2. de Doct. Christ.,)

much more when it comes in, as it were, at the window, and looks men in the face. Cyprian saith to those in health, "Qui se quotidie recordatur moriturum esse, contemnit præsentia, et ad futura festinat;" much more "qui sentit se statim moriturum. Nil ita revocatà peccato," saith Austin, "quam frequens mortis meditatio." Oh, how resolutely will the worst of them seem to cast away their sins, and promise a reformation, and cry out of their folly, and of the vanity of this world, when they see that death is in good earnest with them, and away they must without delay! Perhaps you will say, that these forced changes are not cordial, and therefore we have no great hope of doing them any saving good. I confess it is very common to be frightened into ineffectual purposes, but not so common to be at such a season converted to fixed resolutions: and as Austin saith, "Non potest male mori, qui bene vixerit; et vix bene moritur, qui male vixit." Yet "vix" and "nunquam" are not all one. It should make both them and us the more diligent in the time of health, because it is "vix;" but yet we should bestir us at the last, in the use of the last remedies, because it is not "nunquam."

And it will not be unuseful to ourselves to read such lectures of our own mortality. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting; for it tendeth to make the heart better when we see the end of all the living, and what it is that the world will do for those that sell their salvation for it. When we see that it will be our own case, and there is no escape—

("Scilicet omne sacrum mors importuna prophanat,  
Omnibus obscuras injicit illa manus")—



it will make us talk to ourselves in Bernard's language,—“*Quare, O miser, non omni hora ad mortem te disponis? Cogita te jam mortuum, quem scis necessitate moriturum: distingue qualiter oculi vertentur in capite, venæ rumpentur in corpore, et cor scindetur dolore.*” When we see that (as he saith) death spareth none: “*inopiæ non miseretur, non reveretur divitias; non sapientiæ, non moribus, non ætati denique parcit; nisi quod senibus mors est in januis, juvenibus vero in insidiis;*” it will excite us the better to consider the use of faith and holiness: that it is not to put by death, but to put by hell; not that we may not die as certainly as others, but that we may die better, and be certainly happy after death.

Because I do not intend a directory for the whole ministerial work, I will not stand to tell you particularly what must be done for men in that last extremity, but only choose out these three or four things to remember you of, passing by all the rest.

1st, Stay not till strength and understanding be gone, and the time so short that you scarcely know what you do; but go to them as soon as you hear that they are sick, whether they send for you or not.

2d, When the time is so short, that there is no opportunity to endeavour the change of their hearts in that distinct way as is usual with others, nor to press truths upon them in such order, and stay the working of it by degrees, we must therefore be sure to ply the main, and dwell upon those truths which must do the great work, shewing them the certainty and glory of the life to come, and the way by which it was purchased for us, and the great sin and folly of their neglecting it in time of health; but yet the possibility

that remaineth of obtaining it, if they do but close with it heartily as their happiness, and with the Lord Jesus as the way thereto, abhorring themselves for their former evil, and now unfeignedly resigning themselves up to Him, to be justified, sanctified, ruled, and saved. Three things must be chiefly insisted on, —1. The end: the certainty and greatness of the glory of the saints in the presence of God, that so their hearts may be set upon it. 2. The sufficiency and necessity of the redemption by Jesus Christ, and the fulness of the Spirit, which we may and must be made partakers of. This is the principal way to the end, and the nearer end itself. 3. The necessity and nature of faith, repentance, and resolutions for new obedience, according as there shall be opportunity. This is the subservient way, or the means that, on our part, must be performed.

3d, Labour, upon conviction and deliberation, to engage them, by solemn promise, to Christ and new obedience, according to their opportunity, especially if you see any likelihood of their recovery.

4th, If they do recover, be sure to mind them of their promises. Go to them purposely to set it home, and reduce them into performance; and whenever after you see them remiss, go to them then, and remind them of what they formerly said. And because it is of such use to them that recover, (and hath been a means of the conversion of many a soul,) it is very necessary that you go to them whose sickness is not mortal, as well as to them that are nearer death; and so we may have some advantage to move them to repentance and engage them to newness of life, and may afterward have this to plead against

their sins. As a bishop of Colen is said by Æneas Silvius to have answered the Emperor Sigismund, when he asked him what was the way to be saved—that “he must be what he purposed or promised to be when he was last troubled with the stone or gout”—so may we hereafter answer these.

[8.] Another part of our ministerial oversight consisteth in the right comforting the consciences of the troubled, and settling our people in a well-grounded peace. But this I have spoken of elsewhere, and others have done it more at large.

[9.] Another part of this oversight consists in reproving and admonishing those that live offensively or impenitently, and receiving the information of those that have admonished them more privately in vain. Before we bring such matters to the congregation, or to a representative church, it is ordinarily most fit for the minister to try himself what he can do more privately to bow the sinner to repentance, especially if it be not a public crime. A great deal of skill is here required, and difference must be made, according to the various tempers of offenders; but, with the most, it will be necessary to begin with the greatest plainness and power, in order to shake their careless hearts, and make them see what it is to dally with sin; to let them know the evil of it, and its sad effects, and the unkindness, unreasonableness, unprofitableness, and other aggravations; and what it is they do against God and themselves. For the matter, the following directions may be applied:—

[10.] The next part of our oversight lies in the use of church discipline; and this consisteth, after the aforesaid private reproofs: In more public reproof.—Per-

suading the person to meet expressions of repentance.—Praying for them.—Restoring the penitent.—Excluding and avoiding the impenitent. 1. And for reproof, these things must be observed : That the accusations of none, no, not the best in the church, be taken without proof, nor rashly entertained ; nor that a minister should make himself a party before he have a sufficient evidence of the case. It is better to let many vicious persons go unpunished, or uncensured, when we want sufficient evidence, than to censure one unjustly ; which we may easily do, if we will go upon too bold presumptions ; and then it will bring upon the pastors the scandal of partiality, and unrighteous and injurious dealing, and make all their reproofs and censures contemptible. 2. Let there be, therefore, a less public meeting of chosen persons (as the officers and some delegates of the church on their behalf) to have the hearing of all such cases before they be made more public. Once a month, at a set place, they may come together to receive what charge shall be brought against any member of the church, that it may be considered whether it be just, and the offender may be dealt with then first : and if the fault be either less public or less heinous, so that a less public profession of repentance may satisfy, then if the party shall there profess repentance, it may suffice. 3. But if it be not so, or if the party remain impenitent, he must be reprov'd before all, and there again invited to repentance. This duty is not the less because our brethren have made so little conscience of the practice of it. It is not only Christ's command to *tell the church*, but Paul's to *rebuke such before all* ; and the church hath constantly practised it till selfishness and formality caused them

to be remiss in this and other duties together; and the Reformers have as much stood up for it as the rest; and as deeply are we engaged by vows, covenants, prayers, and other means, for the executing of it: of which more in the application. Austin saith, "Quæ peccantur coram omnibus, coram omnibus corripienda sunt, ut omnes timeant: Qui secreto peccant in te, secreto corripere; nam si solus nosti, et eum vis coram aliis arguere, non es corrector sed proditor." Greg. Mag. in Registro, saith, "Manifesta peccata non sunt occulta correctione purganda: sed palam sunt arguendi qui palam nocent; ut dum aperta objurgatione sanantur, hi qui eos imitando delinquerant, corrigantur. Dum enim unus corripitur, plurimi emendantur, et melius est ut pro multorum salute unus condemnetur, quam ut per unius licentiam multi periclitentur." Isidore saith, "Qui admonitus secretè de peccato corrigi negligit, publicè arguendus est, et vulnus quod occultè sanari nescit, manifestè debeat emendari." If any should say that we shall thus be guilty of defaming men by publishing their crimes, I answer, in the words of Bernard sup. Cantic, "Cum carpuntur vitia, et inde scandalum oritur, ipse sibi scandali causa est, qui fecit quod argui debet; non ille qui arguit. Non ergo timeas contra charitatem esse, si unius scandalum multorum recompensaveris pace. Melius est enim ut pereat unus quam unitas." There is no room for a doubt, whether this be our duty, or whether we are unfaithful as to the performance of it. I doubt many of us that would be ashamed to omit preaching or praying half so much, have little considered what we do in the wilful neglect of this duty, and the rest of discipline, so long as we have done. We little think how we have drawn the

guilt of swearing, and drunkenness, and fornication, and other crimes upon our own heads, for want of using God's means for the cure of them. As Greg. Mag. saith in Registro, "Qui non corrigit resecanda, committit: et facientis culpam habet, qui quod potest corrigere, negligit emendare," saith the comedian. "Si quid me scis fecisse inscite aut improbe, si id non accusas, tuipse objurgandus es." (Plaut.)

If any say, there is little likelihood that public, personal reprehension should do good on them, because they will be but enraged by the shame, I answer:—

1. Philo, a Jew, could say (de Sacrif. Abel and Cain), "We must endeavour, as far as we are able, to save those from their sins that shall certainly perish; imitating good physicians, who, when they cannot save a sick man, do yet willingly try all means for cure, lest they seem to want success through their own neglects."
2. I further answer, It ill beseems the silly creature to implead the ordinances of God as useless, or to reproach His service instead of doing it, and set their wits against their Maker. God can make use of His own ordinances, or else He would never have appointed them.
3. The usefulness of this discipline is apparent to the shaming of sin, and humbling of the sinner; and manifesting the holiness of Christ and His doctrine, and Church, before all the world.
4. What would you have done with such sinners? give them up as hopeless? That were too cruel. Would you use other means? Why, it is supposed that all other have been used without success; for this is the last remedy.
5. The Church of Christ hath found reason enough to use this course, even in times of persecution, when our carnal reason would have told

them that they should then above all have forborne it, for fear of driving away all their converts. 6. The principal use of this public discipline is not for the offender himself, but for the Church. It tendeth exceedingly to deter others from the like crimes, and so to keep pure the congregations, and their worship. Seneca could say, "*Vitia transmittit ad posteros, qui præsentibus culpis ignoscit.*" And elsewhere, "*Bonis nocet, qui malis parcit.*" If you say, that it will but restrain them as hypocrites, and not convert them: I answer, It may preserve others. And who knows how God may bless His ordinance, even to them? The restraint of sin is a benefit not to be contemned. "*Audebo peccanti mala sua ostendere: vitia ejus si non excidero, inhihebo. Non desinent; sed intermittent: fortasse autem desinent, si intermittendi consuetudinem fecerint,*" said the moralist, Sen. Epist. 40. The scorns that I have heard from many against the Scottish ministers, for bringing offenders to the stool of repentance, as if it were mere formality and hypocrisy to take such a thing as satisfactory, when true repentance is absent, hath discovered more of the accuser's error than of theirs. For no doubt it is true repentance that they exhort men to; and it is true repentance which offenders do profess; and whether they truly profess it, who can tell but God? It is not for nothing that sin is brought to so much disgrace, and the Church doth so far acquit themselves of it. But of this next.

Next to the duty of public reproof must be joined an exhortation of the person to repentance, and to the public profession of it for the satisfaction of the Church. For as the Church is bound to avoid com-

munion with impenitent, scandalous sinners, so when they have had the evidence of their sin, they must see some evidence of their repentance; for we cannot know them to be penitent without evidence. And what evidence is the Church capable of, but their profession of repentance, first, and their actual reformation afterwards? both which must be expected.

To these may be most fitly joined the public prayers of the Church, and that both for the reprov'd before they are rejected, and for the rejected (some of them at least) that they may repent and be restored. But we are now upon the former. Though this is not expressly affixed to discipline, yet we have a sufficient discovery of God's will concerning it in the general precepts. We are commanded to *pray always*; and in *all things*, and for *all men*, and in *all places*: and *all things* are said to be *sanctified by it*. It is plain, therefore, that so great a business as this should not be done without it. And who can have any just reason to be offended with us, if we pray to God for the changing of their hearts, and the pardon of their sins? It is therefore, in my judgment, a very laudable course of those Churches that use for the three next days together to desire the congregation to join in earnest prayer to God for the opening of the sinner's eyes, softening his heart, and saving him from impenitency and eternal death. And though we have no express direction in Scripture just how long we shall stay to try whether the sinner be so impenitent, as to be necessarily excluded, yet we must follow the general directions, with such diversity as the case and quality of the person and former proceeding shall require; it being left to the discretion of the Church, who are in



general, to stay so long till the person manifest himself obstinate in his sin: not but that a temporary exclusion, called suspension, may often be inflicted in the meantime; but before we proceed to an exclusion “à statu,” it is very meet (ordinarily) that three days’ prayer for him and patience towards him should antecede.

And, indeed, I see no reason why this course should not be much more frequent than it is; and that not only upon those that are members of our special charge, and do consent to discipline, but even to those that deny our pastoral oversight and discipline, and yet are our ordinary hearers. For, so far as men have Christian communion or familiarity with us, so far are they capable of being excluded from communion. Though the members of our special charge have more full and special communion, and so are more capable of a more full and special exclusion; yet all those that dwell among us, and are our ordinary hearers, have some communion. For as they converse with us, so they hear the word, not as heathens, but as Christians and members of the Universal Church, into which they have been baptized; and they join with us in public prayers and praises in the celebration of the Lord’s day. From this, therefore, they are capable of being excluded, or from part of this, at least morally, if not locally. For the precept of *avoiding*, and *withdrawing from*, and *not eating with* such, is not restrained to the members of a governed church, but extended to all Christians that are capable of communion.

When these ungodly persons are sick, we have daily bills from them to request the prayers of the congregation; and if we must pray for them against sickness and temporal death, I know no reason but we should

much more earnestly pray for them against sin and eternal death. That we have not their consent, is no dissuasive, for that is their disease, and the very venom and malignity of it ; and we do not take it to be sober arguing to say, " I may not pray for such a man against his sickness, because he is sick ;" or, " If he were not sick, I would pray against his sickness." No more is it to say, " If he were not impenitent so as to refuse our prayers, I would pray that he might be saved from his impenitency." I confess I do not take myself to have so strict a charge over this sort of men, who renounce my oversight, as I do over the rest that own it ; and that is the reason why I have called no more of them to public repentance, because it requireth most commonly more time to examine the matter of fact, or deal with the person first more privately, that his impenitency may be discerned, than I can possibly spare from the duties which I owe to my special charge, to whom I am more indebted ; and therefore may ordinarily expend no more on the rest (who are to me but as strangers, or men of another parish, and of no governed, particular church,) than I can spare when I have done my main duty to my flock. But yet, though I cannot use any such discipline on all that sort, nor am so much obliged to do it, yet some of them that are most notoriously and openly wicked, where less proof and short debates are requisite, I intend to deal thus with hereafter, having found some success in that kind already. But especially to all those whom we take for members of that particular church which we are pastors of, there is no question but this is our duty, and therefore where the whole parish are members, discipline must be exercised on the whole.

I confess much prudence is to be exercised in such proceedings, lest we do more hurt than good; but it must be such Christian prudence as ordereth duties, and suiteth them to their ends, and not such carnal prudence as shall enervate or exclude them. It may be fit therefore for younger ministers to consult with others, for the more cautious proceeding in such works. And in the performance of it we should deal humbly, even when we deal most sharply, and make it appear that it is not from any contending or lordly disposition, nor an act of revenge for any injury, but a necessary duty which we cannot conscientiously avoid; and therefore it will be meet we disclaim all such animosities, and shew the people the commands of God obliging us to what we do.

“Neighbours and brethren, sin is so hateful an evil in the eyes of the most holy God, how light soever impenitent sinners make of it, that He hath provided the everlasting torments of hell for the punishment of it; and no less means can prevent that punishment than the sacrifice of the blood of the Son of God, applied to those that truly repent of it and forsake it, and therefore God, that calleth all men to repentance, hath commanded us to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, (Heb. iii. 13;) and that we do not hate our brother in our heart, but in anywise rebuke our neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him, (Lev. xix. 17;) and that if our brother offend us, we should tell him his faults between him and us; and if he hear not, take two or three, and if he hear not them, tell the church; and if he hear not the church, he must be to us as a heathen or a publican, (Matt. xviii 17;) and

those that sin, we must rebuke before all, that others may fear, (1 Tim. v. 20;) and rebuke with all authority, (Tit. i. 15.) Yea, were it an apostle of Christ that should openly sin, he must be openly reprov'd, as Paul did Peter, (Gal. ii. 11, 14;) and if they repent not, we must avoid them, and with such not so much as eat, (2 Thess. iii. 6, 12, 14; 1 Cor. v. 11, 13.) According to these commands of the Lord, having heard of the scandalous practice of N. N. of this church, (or parish,) and having received sufficient proof that he hath committed the odious sin of — ; we have seriously dealt with him to bring him to repentance; but, to the grief of our hearts, do perceive no satisfactory success of our endeavours; but he seemeth still to remain impenitent, or still liveth in the same sin, though he verbally profess repentance. We do therefore judge it our necessary duty to proceed to the use of that further remedy which Christ hath commanded us to try; and hence we desire him in the name of the Lord, without any further delay, to lay by his obstinacy against the Lord and to submit to His rebuke and will, and to lay to heart the greatness of his sin, the wrong he hath done to Christ and to himself, and the scandal and grief that he hath caused to others; and how unable he is to contend with the Almighty, and prevail against the holy God, who to the impenitent is a consuming fire! or to save himself from His burning indignation! And I do earnestly beseech him, for the sake of his own soul, that he will but soberly consider what it is that he can gain by his sin or impenitency, and whether it will pay for the loss of everlasting life? And how he thinks to stand against God in judgment, or to appear before the Lord

Jesus, when death shall snatch his soul from his body, if he be found in this impenitent state; when the Lord Jesus himself, in whose blood they pretend to trust, hath told such with His own mouth, that except they repent they shall all perish? (Luke xiii. 3, 5.) And I do beseech him, for the sake of his own soul, and require him, as a messenger of Jesus Christ, as he will answer the contrary at the bar of God, that he lay by the stoutness and impenitency of his heart, and unfeignedly confess and lament his sin before God and this congregation! And this desire I here publish, not out of any ill-will to his person, as the Lord knoweth, but in love to his soul, and in obedience to Christ, that hath made it my duty; desiring, that if it be possible, he may be saved from his sin, and from the power of Satan, and from the everlasting burning wrath of God, and may be reconciled to God, and to His Church, and therefore that he may be humbled by true contrition, before he be humbled by remediless condemnation."

Thus, or to this purpose, I conceive our public admonition should proceed; and in some cases where the sinner taketh his sin to be small, the aggravation of it will be necessary, especially the citing of some texts of Scripture that do aggravate and threaten it.

And in case he either will not be present, that such admonition may be given him, or will not be brought to a discovery of repentance, and to desire the prayers of the congregation for him, it will be meet that with such a preface as this afore expressed, we desire the prayers of the congregation for him ourselves; that the people would consider what a fearful condition the impenitent are in, and have pity on a poor soul that is so blinded

and hardened by sin and Satan, that he cannot pity himself; and think what it is for a man to appear before the living God in such a case, and therefore that they would join in earnest prayer to God, that he would open his eyes, and soften and humble his stubborn heart, before he be in hell beyond remedy: and accordingly let us be very earnest in prayer for such, that the congregation may be provoked affectionately to join with us; and who knows but God may hear such prayers, and cause the sinner's heart to relent! However, the people will perceive that we make not light of sin, and preach not to them in mere custom or formality. If ministers would be conscientious in thus carrying on the work of God entirely and *self-denyingly*, they might make something of it, and expect a fuller blessing. But when we shrink from all that is dangerous or ungrateful, and shift off all that is costly or troublesome, they cannot expect that any great matter should be done by such carnal, partial use of means; and though some may be here and there called home to God, yet we cannot look that the gospel should prevail, and run, and be glorified, where it is so lamely and defectively carried on.

When a sinner is thus admonished, and prayed for, if it please the Lord to open his eyes and give him remorse, before we proceed to any further censure, it is our next duty to proceed to his full recovery; where these things must be observed:—1. That we do not either discourage him by too much severity, nor yet by too much lenity and levity make nothing of discipline, nor help him to any saving cure, but merely slubber it over. If therefore he have sinned scandalously but once, if his repentance seem deep and serious,

we may in some cases restore him at that time ; that is, if the wound that he hath given to the credit of the church be not so deep as to require more ado for satisfaction, or the sin so heinous as may cause us to delay. But if it be so, or if he have lived long in the sin, it is most meet that he do wait in penitence a convenient time before he be restored. 2. And when the time comes, whether at the first confession, or after, it is meet that we urge him to be serious in his humiliation, and set it home upon his conscience till he seem to be truly sensible of his sin ; for it is not a vain formality, but the recovery and saving of a soul that we expect. 3. We must see that he beg the communion of the church, and their prayers to God for his pardon and salvation. 4. And that he promise to fly from such sin for the time to come, and watch more narrowly, and walk more warily. 5. Then we have these things more to do :—To assure him of the riches of God's love, and the sufficiency of Christ's blood to pardon his sins, and that if his repentance be sincere, the Lord doth pardon him, of which we are authorised as His messengers to assure him :—to charge him to persevere and perform his promises, avoid temptations, and continue to beg mercy and strengthening grace :—to charge the church that they imitate Christ in forgiving and retaining ; or if he were cast out, receive the penitent person into their communion, and that they never reproach him with his sins, or cast them in his teeth, but forgive and forget them as Christ doth. And then to give God thanks for his recovery so far, and to pray for his confirmation and future preservation.

The next part of discipline is the rejecting and re-

moving from the church's communion those that after sufficient trial do remain impenitent ; where note—

1. That if a man have sinned but once in a scandalous manner, it is but a profession of repentance that we can expect for our satisfaction ; but if he be accustomed to sin, or have often broke such promises, then it is an actual reformation we must expect. And, therefore, he that will refuse either of these, to reform, or to profess and manifest repentance, is to be taken by us as living in his sin : for a heinous sin, but once committed, is morally continued in till it be repented of ; and a bare forbearing of the act is not sufficient.
2. Yet have we no warrant to rip up matters that are worn out of the public memory, and so to make that public again that is ceased to be public : at least in ordinary cases.
3. Exclusion from church-communion, commonly called excommunication, is of divers sorts or degrees, more than two or three, which are not to be confounded ; of which, I will not so far digress as here to treat.
4. That which is most commonly to be practised among us is, only to remove an impenitent sinner from our communion, till it shall please the Lord to give him repentance.
5. In this exclusion or removal, the minister or governors of that church are authoritatively to charge the people, in the name of the Lord, to avoid communion with him ; and to pronounce him one whose communion the church is bound to avoid ; and the people's duty is obedientially to avoid him, in case the pastor's charge contradict not the Word of God. So that he hath the guiding or governing power ; and they have a discerning power, whether his charge be just, and an executive power ; for it is they that must execute the sentence



in part by avoiding the rejected, as he himself must execute it by denying him those ordinances and privileges not due to him, whereof he is the administrator.

6. It is very convenient to pray for the repentance and restoration, even of the excommunicated. 7. And if God shall give them repentance, they are gladly to be received into the communion of the church again.

Of the manner of all these I shall say no more, so much having been said of them already. And for the manner of other particular duties, of which I have said little or nothing, you have much already, as in other writings, so in the Directory of the late Assembly.

Would we were but so far faithful in the practice of this discipline as we are satisfied both of the matter and manner; and did not dispraise and reproach it by our negligence, while we write and plead for it with the highest commendations. It is worthy our consideration, who are like to have the heavier charge about this matter at the bar of God? Whether those deluded ones, that have reproached and hindered discipline by their tongues, because they knew not its nature and necessity; or we, that have so vilified it by our constant omission, while with our tongues we have magnified it? If hypocrisy be no sin, or if the knowledge of our Master's will be no aggravation of the evil of disobedience, then we are in a better case than they. I will not advise the zealous maintainers, and obstinate neglecters and rejecters of discipline, to unsay all that they have said, till they are ready to do as they say, nor to recant their defences of discipline till they mean to practise it, nor to burn all the books that they have

written for it, and all the records of their costs and hazards for it, lest they rise up in judgment against them to their confusion; nor that they recant their condemnation of the prelates in this, till they mean a little further to outgo them. But I would persuade them, without any more delay, to conform their practices to these testimonies which they have given, lest the more they are proved to have commended discipline, the more they are proved to have condemned themselves for neglecting it.

I have often marvelled that the same men who have been much offended at the books that have been written for free admission to the Lord's Supper, or for mixed communion in that one part, have been no more offended at as free permission in a church state, and as free admission to other parts of communion; and that they have made so small a matter at as much mixture in all the rest. I should think that it is a greater profanation to permit an obstinate, scandalous sinner to be a stated member of that particular church, without any first private, and then public admonition, prayer for him, or censure of him, than for a single pastor to admit him to the Lord's Supper, if he had no power to censure him, as these suppose. I should think that the faithful practice of discipline in the other parts would soon put an end to the controversy about free admission to the Lord's Supper, and heal the hurt that such discourses have done to our people. For those discourses have more modesty than to plead for a free admission of the censured or rejected ones; but it is only of those that have yet their standing in that church, and are not censured. And if, when they forfeit their title to church communion, we would

deal with them in Christ's appointed way, till we had either reclaimed them to repentance, or censure them to be avoided, it would be past controversy then that they were not to be admitted to that one act of communion in the Supper, who are justly excluded from the whole. But as long as we leave them uncensured members, and tell a single pastor that he hath no power to censure them, we tempt him to think that he hath no power then to deny them that communion with the body which is the common privilege of all uncensured members.

And as we thus ourselves oppose discipline in part, or cherish church corruption in part, one party being for the free admission of them, while members, to the sacraments, and the other as freely permitting them in church state, and other parts of communion, while they exclude them from the sacrament; so some have learned to tie these ends together, and by holding both, set open the doors of church and chancel, pluck up the hedge, and lay the vineyard common to the wilderness. It hath somewhat amazed me to hear some that I took for reverend, godly divines, to reproach, as a sect, the Sacramentarians and Disciplinarians. And when I desired to know whom they meant, they told me they meant them that will not give the sacrament to all the parish, and them that will make distinction by their discipline. I thought the tempter had gained a great victory if he had but got one godly pastor of a church to neglect discipline, as well as if he had got him to neglect preaching: much more if he had got him to approve of that neglect; but it seems he hath got some to scorn at the performers of the duty which they neglect. As the impure were wont to reproach

the diligent by the name of Puritans, so do they reproach the faithful pastors by the name of Disciplinarians. And I could wish they would remember what the ancient reproaches were both symptomatically and effectively, and accordingly judge impartially of themselves, and fear a participation of the judgment that befell them. Sure I am, if it were well understood how much of the pastoral authority and work consisteth in church guidance, it would be almost discerned, that to be against discipline is "tantum non" to be against the ministry; and to be against the ministry is "tantum non" to be absolutely against the Church; and to be against the Church is near to being absolutely against Christ. Blame not the harshness of the inference, till you can avoid it, and free yourselves from the charge of it before the Lord. Prelates would have some discipline; and other parties would have some. Yea, Papists themselves would have some, and plead only against others about the form and manner of it. But these are so much worse than all that they would have none. Was not Christ himself the leader of these Disciplinarians, who instituted discipline, and made His ministers the rulers or guides of His Church, and put the keys of the kingdom into their hand, and commanded the very particular acts of discipline, and required the people to submit to them, and obey them in the Lord? What would these men have said, if they had seen the practice of the ancient Church for many hundred years after Christ, who exercised a discipline so much more rigorous than any among us do, and that even in the heat of heathen persecutions; as if they read only the ancient canons and Cyprian's epistles, they may soon see, though they look no

further? And it was not then (no, nor after, under Christian magistrates,) taken to be a useless thing; nor would it appear such now, if it were shewed in its strength and beauty by a vigorous practice: for it is a thing that is not effectually manifested to the ear, but to the eye; and you will never make men know well what it is by mere talking of it—till they see it they will be strangers to it. As it is in the military art, or in navigation, or in the government of commonwealths, which are so little known till learned by experience. And that will tell us that, as Cyprian saith, “*Disciplina est custos spei, retinaculum fidei, dux itineris salutaris, fomes ac nutrimentum bonæ indolis, magistra virtutis; facit in Christo manere semper, ac jugitur Deo vivere, ad promissa cœlestia, et divinâ præmia pervenire: Hanc et sectari salubre est, et aversari ac negligere lathale:*” as he begins his book “*de Discip. et hab. Virg.*” p. (mihi) 265. When the martyrs and confessors would, upon other’s persuasions, have had some offenders restored before they had made confession, and manifested openly repentance for their sin, and been absolved by their pastor, Cyprian resisteth it, and tells them that they that stand so firmly to the faith should stand as firmly to Christ’s law and discipline: “*Sollicitudo loci nostri, et timor Domini compellit, fortissimi ac beatissimi Martyres, admonere vos literis nostris, ut à quibus tam devotè et fortiter servatur fides Domino, ab iisdem lex quoque et disciplina Domini reservetur,*” &c. (Epist. 11, p. 32.) Upon which Goulartius puts this note, locus “*de necessitate disciplinæ in Domo Dei, quam qui tollunt, et manifestè impios ac sceleratos ad mensam Christi, sine censura Ecclesiastica, et acta pœnitentia pro dilectorum ratione recipiunt, ii videant*

quam de gregibus sibi commissis Pastori summo rationem reddituri sint; vel quid commune habeant in Ecclesiarum suarum regimine cum beato illo Cypriani et aliorum verè Episcoporum Christianorum seculo." And Cyp. Epist. 67, p. 199, mentioning God's threatenings to negligent pastors, addeth, "Cum ergo pastoribus talibus per quos Dominicæ oves negligantur et pereant, sic Dominus comminetur, quid nos aliud facere oportet, quam colligendis et revocandis Christi ovibus exhibere diligentiam plenam, et curandis lapsorum vulneribus paternæ pietatis adhibere medicinam?" In Epist. 61, 28, 38, 41, 49, 53, 55, and many other places of Cyprian, you may see that they were then no contemners of discipline: Vide etiam, eundem de Orat. Dominic. p. 313, in Pet. 4.

Saith Augustine, "Ibi superbia, ubi negligitur Disciplina: Nam Disciplina est Magistra Religionis et veræ pietatis, quæ nec ideo increpat ut lædat, nec ideo castigat ut noceat," &c. Saith Bernard, Ép. 113, "O quam compositum reddit omnem corporis statum, nec non et mentis habitum disciplina! Cervicem submittit, pone supercilia, componit vultum, ligat oculos, moderatur linguam, frænat gulam, sedat iram, format incessum."

I know that when the Church began to be tainted with vain inventions, the word discipline began to have another signification for their own various rules of life and austere impositions, *touch not, taste not, handle not*; but it is the ancient and truly Christian discipline that I am contending for. So much for the acts of pastoral oversight.

From what hath been said, we may see that the pastoral office is another kind of thing than those men have taken it to be, who think it consisteth in preach-

ing and administering sacraments only; much more than they have taken it for, who think it consisteth in making new laws or canons to bind the Church: as if God had not made us laws sufficient; and as if He had committed the proper legislative power over His Church to ministers or bishops, whose office is but to expound, and apply, and execute, in their places, the laws of Christ.

*Object.* "But will you deny to bishops the power of making canons? What are all those articles that you have agreed on among yourselves about catechising and discipline, but such things?"

*Ans.* 1. I know pastors may teach, and expound Scripture, and deliver that in writing to the people, and apply the Scripture generals to their own and the people's particular case, if you will call this making canons. 2. And they may and ought to agree among themselves for an unanimous performance of their duties, when they have discovered them, that so they may excite one another, and be more strong and successful in their work. 3. And they must determine the circumstances of worship in special, which God hath only determined in general; as what time and place they shall meet in, what chapter read, what text preach on, what shape the table, cups, &c., shall be; where the pulpit, when each person shall come to be catechised or instructed, and whither, &c. But these are actions that are fitter to be ordered by them that are in the place, than by distant canon-makers; and to agree for unity in a necessary duty, as we have done, is not to make laws, or arrogate authority over our brethren. Of this I refer you to Luther de Conciliis at large, and to Grotius de Imper. sum. pot., that canons are not properly laws.

## CHAPTER III.

HAVING spoken of the *matter* of our work, we are next to speak of the *manner*; not of each part distinctly, lest we be too tedious, but of the whole in general, especially with reference to the principal part.

1. The ministerial work must be managed purely for God and the salvation of the people, and not for any private ends of our own. A wrong end makes all the work bad, as from us, how good soever in itself. It is not serving God, but ourselves, if we do it not for God, but for ourselves. They that set about this as a common work, to make a trade of it for their worldly livelihood, will find that they have chosen a bad trade, though a good employment. Self-denial is of absolute necessity in every Christian, but of a double necessity in a minister, as he hath a double sanctification or dedication to God. Without self-denial he cannot do God an hour's faithful service. Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching, are but more glorious and hypocritical sinning, if the end be not right. The saying of Bernard (Serm. in Cant. 26) is commonly known: "Sunt qui scire volunt eo fine tantum ut sciant, et turpis curiositas est; et sunt qui scire volunt, ut scientiam suam vendant: et turpis quæstus est: sunt qui scire volunt ut sciantur ipsi: et turpis vanitas est: Sed sunt quoque, qui scire volunt ut ædificent; et charitas est; et sunt qui scire volunt ut ædificentur; et prudentia est."

2. This work must be managed laboriously and dili-



gently, being of such unspeakable consequence to others and ourselves. We are seeking to uphold the world, to save it from the curse of God, to perfect the creation, to attain the ends of Christ's redemption, to save ourselves and others from damnation, to overcome the devil, and demolish his kingdom, and set up the kingdom of Christ, and attain and help others to the kingdom of glory. And are these works to be done with a careless mind or a slack hand? Oh, see then that this work be done with all your might! Study hard, for the well is deep and our brains are shallow; and (as Cassiod.) "*Decorum hic est terminum non habere: hic honesta probatur ambitio; omne si quidem scientificum quanto profundius quæritur, tanto gloriosius invenitur.*" But especially be laborious in practice and in the exercise of your knowledge. Let Paul's words ring in your ears continually: "Necessity is laid upon me, and woe unto me if I preach not the gospel." Still think with yourselves what lieth upon your hands. If I do not bestir me, Satan may prevail, and the people everlastingly perish, and their blood be required at my hand. By avoiding labour and suffering, I shall draw on me a thousand times more than I avoid; for, as Bernard saith, "*Qui in labore hominum non sunt, in labore profecto Dæmonum erunt;*" whereas by present diligence you prepare for future blessedness. For, as Gregor. in Mor. saith, "*Quot labores veritati nunc exhibes, tot etiam remunerationis pignora intra spei tuæ cubiculum clausum tenes.*" No man was ever a loser by God.

3. This work must be carried on prudently, orderly, and by degrees. Milk must go before strong meat; the foundation must be first laid before we build upon

it. Children must not be dealt with as men at age. Men must be brought into a state of grace, before we can expect from them the works of grace. The work of conversion, and repentance from dead works, and faith in Christ, must be first frequently and thoroughly taught. The stewards of God's household must give to each their portion in due season. We must not go beyond the capacities of our people, nor teach them perfection, who have not learnt the first principles. As August. saith, li. 12, de Civit., "Si pro viribus suis alatur infans, fiet ut crescendo plus capiat : si modum suæ capacitatis excedit, deficit antequam crescat;" and as Gregor. Nysen. saith, Orat de Pauper. amand., "As we teach not infants the deep precepts of science, but first letters, and then syllables, &c.; so also the guides of the Church do first propound to their hearers certain documents, which are as the elements, and so by degrees do open to them the more perfect and mysterious matters." Therefore did the Church take so much pains with their "Catechumeni," before they baptized them, and would not lay unpolished stones into the building; as Chrysostom saith, Hom. 40. Imperfect; operis (or whoever else it be, p. (mihi) 318,) "Ædificatores sunt sacerdotes, qui . . . domum Dei componunt, sicut enim ædificatores, nodosos lapides et habentes torturas, ferro dolant, postea vero ponunt eos in ædificio, alioqui non dolati lapides lapidibus non cohærent : Sic et Ecclesiæ doctores vitia hominum quasi nodos acutis increpationibus primum circumcidere debent, et sic in Ecclesiæ ædificatione collocare : alioquin vitiis manentibus Christiani Christianis concordare non possunt."

4. Through the whole course of our ministry, we

must insist most upon the greatest, most certain, and necessary things, and be more seldom and sparing upon the rest. If we can but teach Christ to our people, we teach them all. Get them well to heaven, and they will have knowledge enough. The great and commonly acknowledged truths are they that men must live upon, and which are the great instruments of raising the heart to God, and destroying men's sins; and therefore we must still have our people's necessities in our eyes. It will take us off gauds, and needless ornaments, and unprofitable controversies, to remember that *one* thing is necessary. Other things are desirable to be known, but these *must* be known, or else our people are undone for ever. I confess I think necessity should be a great disposer of a minister's course of study and labour. If we were sufficient for everything, we might fall upon everything, and take in order the whole Encyclopædia; but life is short, and we are dull; eternal things are necessary, and the souls that depend on our teaching are precious. I confess necessity hath been the conductor of my studies and life; it chooseth what book I shall read, and tells when and how long; it chooseth my text, and makes my sermon for matter and manner, so far as I can keep out my own corruption. Though I know the constant expectation of death hath been a great cause of this, yet I know no reason why the most healthful man should not make sure of the *necessaries* first, considering the uncertainty and shortness of all men's lives. Xenophon thought "there was no better teacher than necessity, which teacheth all things most diligently." Curtius saith, "Efficatior est omni arte necessitas." Who can in study, preaching, or life, "aliud agere,"

be doing other matters, if he do but know that *this must be done?* Who can trifle or delay, that feeleth the spurs of hasty necessity? As the soldier saith, “Non diu disputandum, sed celeriter et fortiter dimicandum ubi urget necessitas;” so much more must we, as our business is more important. And, doubtless, this is the best way to redeem time, and see that we lose not an hour, when we spend it only on necessary things. It is also the way to be most profitable to others, though not always to be most pleasing and applauded; because through men’s frailty, it is true that Seneca complains of, that “nova potius miramur quam magna.”

Hence it is that a preacher must be often upon the same things, because the matters of necessity are few. We must not either feign necessities, nor dwell much upon unnecessaries, to satisfy them that look after novelties, though we must clothe the same necessities with a grateful variety in the manner of our delivery. The great volumes and tedious controversies, that so much trouble us and waste our time, are usually made up more of opinion than necessary verities. For, as Marsil. Ficinus saith, “Necessitas brevibus clauditur terminis; opinio nullis.” And as Greg. Nazianz. and Seneca often say, “Necessaries are common and obvious; it is superfluities that we waste our time for, and labour for, and complain that we attain them not.” Ministers, therefore, must be observant of the case of their flocks, that they may know what is most necessary for them, both for matter and for manner; and usually matter is first to be regarded, as being of more concernment than the manner. If you are to choose what authors to read yourselves, will you not

rather take those that tell you what you know not, and speak the needful truth most evidently, though it were with barbarous or unhandsome language, than those that will most learnedly, and elegantly, and in grateful language, tell you that which is false or vain, and “*magna conatu nihil dicere?*” I purpose to follow Austin’s counsel, (li. de. Catech.,) “*Præponendo verbis sententiam, ut animas præponitur corpori: ex quo fit, ut ita malleo veriores quam discretiores invenire sermones, sicut malleo prudentiores quam formosiores habere amicos.*” And surely as I do in my studies for my own edification, I would do in my teaching for other men’s. It is commonly empty, ignorant men that want the matter and substance of true learning, that are over curious and solicitous about words and ornaments, when the ancient, experienced, most learned men, abound in substantial verities, usually delivered in the plainest dress. As Aristotle makes it the reason why women are more addicted to pride in apparel than men, because being conscious of little inward worth and ornament, they seek to make it up with borrowed ornaments without; so it is with empty, worthless preachers, who affect to be esteemed that which they are not, and have no other way to procure esteem.

5. All our teaching must be as plain and evident as we can make it; for this doth most suit to a teacher’s ends. He that would be understood, must speak to the capacity of his hearers, and make it his business to make himself understood. Truth loves the light, and is most beautiful when most naked. It is a sign of an envious enemy to hide the truth; and a sign of an hypocrite to do this under pretence of revealing it:

and therefore painted, obscure sermons (like the painted glass in the windows that keep out the light) are too often the mark of painted hypocrites. If you would not teach men, what do you in the pulpit? If you would, why do you not speak so as to be understood? I know the height of the matter may make a man not understood when he hath studied to make it as plain as he can; but that a man should purposely cloud the matter in strange words, and hide his mind from the people whom he pretendeth to instruct, is the way to make fools admire his profound learning, and wise men his folly, pride, and hypocrisy. And usually, it is a suspicious sign of some deceitful project and false doctrine that needeth such a cloak, and must walk thus masked in the open daylight. Thus did the followers of Basilides and Valentinus, and others among the old heretics; and thus do the Behmenists and other Paracelsians now; who, when they have spoken that few may understand them, lest they expose their errors to the open view, they pretend a necessity of it, because of men's prejudice, and the unpreparedness of common understandings for the truth. But truth overcomes prejudice by mere light of evidence, and there is no better way to make a good cause prevail, than to make it as plain, and commonly, and thoroughly known as we can; and it is this light that will dispose an unprepared mind. And at best it is a sign that he hath not well digested the matter himself, that is not able to deliver it plainly to another. I mean, as plain as the nature of the matter will bear, in regard of capacities prepared for it by prerequisite truths. For I know that some men cannot at present understand some truths, if you speak them as plainly

as words can express them; as the easiest rules in grammar, most plainly taught, will be no whit understood by a child that is but learning his alphabet.

6. Our whole work must be carried on in a sense of our insufficiency, and in a pious, believing dependence upon Christ. We must go to Him for light, and life, and strength, who sends us on the work: and when we feel our own faith weak, and our hearts grown dull, and unsuitable to so great a work as we have to do, we must have recourse to the Lord that sendeth us, and say, "Lord, wilt Thou send me with such an unbelieving heart to persuade others to believe? Must I daily and earnestly plead with sinners about everlasting life and death, and have no more belief and feeling of these weighty things myself? Oh, send me not naked and unprovided to the work; but as Thou commandest me to do it, furnish me with a spirit suitable thereto." As Austin saith, (*de Doct. Christ. l. 4.*) "A preacher must labour to be heard understandingly, willingly, and obediently, 'et hoc se posse magis pietate orationum, quam oratoris facultate non dubitet: ut orando pro se ac pro aliis, quos est allocuturus, sit prius orator quam doctor; et in ipsa hora accedens, priusquam, exeat, proferat linguam ad Deum, levet animam sitientem,'" &c. Prayer must carry on our work as well as preaching; he preacheth not heartily to his people, that will not pray for them. If we prevail not with God to give them faith and repentance, we are unlikely to prevail with them to believe and repent. Paul giveth us frequently his example, of praying night and day for his hearers. When our own hearts are out of order, and theirs so too, if we prevail not with God to mend and

help them, we are like to make but unsuccessful work.

7. Our work must be managed with great humility; we must carry ourselves meekly and condescendingly to all; and so teach others, as to be as ready to learn of any that can teach us, and so both teach and learn at once; not proudly venting our own conceits, and disdainning all that any way contradict them, as if we had attained to the top of knowledge, and we were destined for the chair, and other men to sit at our feet. Not like them that Gregory M. mentioneth in Moral. l. 24. par. 5, c. xii., "In quorum verbis proditur, quod cum docent, quasi in quodam sibi videntur summitatis culmine residere, eosque quos docent, ut longe infra se positos, velut in imo respiciunt, quibus non consulendo loqui, sed vix dominando dignantur." Pride is a vice that ill beseems them that must lead men in such an humble way to heaven. And let them take heed, lest when they have brought others thither, the gate should prove too strait for themselves. For, as Hugo saith, "Superbia in coelo nata est, sed velut immemor qua via inde cecidit, istuc postea redire non potuit." God that thrust out a proud angel, will not entertain there a proud preacher, while such. Methinks we should remember at least the title of a minister, which though the Popish priests disdain, yet so do not we. It is, indeed, this pride at the root that feedeth all the rest of sins; hence is the envy, the contention, and unpeaceableness of ministers, and hence the hindrances in all reformation. All would lead, and few will follow or concur. Yea, hence are the schisms and apostasies, as hence have been former persecutions, and arrogant usurpations, and impositions; as Gregory M. saith, in



Mor., "Latet plerumque superbia, et castitas innotescit, atque ideo tentata diu castitas, circa finem vitæ perditur; quia cooperta superbia usque ad finem, in correctâ retinetur." And the same may be said of other vices, which often revive when they seemed dead, because pride was unmortified, which virtually contains them all. Hence, also, is the non-proficiency of too many ministers, because they are too proud to learn; unless it be as Jerom's adversaries, "publice detrahentes, legentes in angulis;" and scarcely will they stoop to that. But I may say of ministers as Augustine to Jerom, even of the aged of them, "Etsi senes magis decet docere quam discere: magis tamen decet discere quam ignorare;" humility would teach them another lesson; ut Hugo, "Ab omnibus libenter disce quod tu nescis: quid humilitas commune tibi facere potest, quod natura cuique proprium fecit, sapientior omnibus eris, si ab omnibus discere volueris: qui ab omnibus accipiunt, omnibus ditiores sunt."

8. There must be a prudent mixture of severity and mildness both in our preaching and discipline; each must be predominant according to the quality or the person, or matter that we have in hand. If there be *no* severity, there will be contempt of our reproofs. If *all* severity, we shall be taken as usurpers of dominion, rather than persuaders of the minds of men to the truth, as Gregory M. saith, Moral. li. 20, "Miscenda est lenitas cum severitate, et faciendum ex utraque quoddam temperamentum, ut nec multa asperitate exulcerentur subditi, nec nimia benignitate solvantur."

9. We must be sincerely affectionate, serious, and zealous in all our public and private exhortations.

The weight of our matter condemneth coldness, and sleepy dulness. We should see that we be well awakened ourselves, and our spirits in such a state as may make us fit to awaken others. As Gregory saith, Moral. l. 30, c. v., "We should be like the cock, that, 'Cum edere cantus parat, prius alas solerter excutit, et seipsum feriens vigilantiores reddit: ita prædicatores cum verbum prædicationis movent, prius se in sanctis actionibus exercent, ne in se ipsis torpentes opere, alios excitent voce, sed ante se per sublimia facta excutiunt, et tunc ad bene agendum alios sollicitos reddunt. Prius sua punire fletibus curant, et tunc quæ aliorum sunt punienda, denuntiant.'" If our words be not sharpened, and pierce as nails, they will hardly be felt by stony hearts. To speak coldly and slightly of heavenly things, is nearly as bad as to say nothing of them.

10. All our work must be managed reverently, as beseemeth them that believe the presence of God, and use not holy things as if they were common. The more of God appeareth in our duties, the more authority will they have with men: and reverence is that affection of the soul which proceedeth from deep apprehensions of God, and signifieth a mind that is much conversant with Him. To manifest irreverence in the things of God, is so far to manifest hypocrisy, and that the heart agreeth not with the tongue. I know not what it doth by others, but the most reverend preacher, that speaks as if he saw the face of God, doth more affect my heart, though with common words, than an unreverend man with the most exquisite preparations. Yea, if he bawl it out with never so much seeming earnestness, if reverence be not answer-

able to fervency, it worketh but little. Of all preaching in the world, (that speaks not stark lies,) I hate that preaching which tendeth to make the hearers laugh, or to move their mind, with tickling levity, and affect them as stage-players use to do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence of the name of God. Saith Jerom, (in Ep. ad Nepotian, p. mihi. 14.) “Docente in Ecclesia te, non clamor populi, sed gemitus suscitetur; Lacrymæ auditorum laudes tuæ sunt.” We should, as it were, suppose we saw the throne of God, and the millions of glorious angels attending Him, that we might be awed with His majesty, when we draw near Him in His holy things, lest we profane them, and take His name in vain.

To this I annex, that all our work must be done spiritually, as by men possessed of the Holy Ghost, and acted by Him, and men that savour the things of the Spirit. There is, in some men’s preaching, a spiritual strain, which spiritual hearers can discern and relish; and in some men this sacred tincture is so wanting, that, even when they speak of spiritual things, the manner is such as if they were common matters. Our evidence also and ornaments must be spiritual, rather from the Holy Scripture, with a cautious, subservient use of fathers, and other writers, than from Aristotle or the authorities of men. The wisdom of the world must not be magnified against the wisdom of God; philosophy must be taught to stoop and serve, while faith doth bear the chief sway; and great scholars in Aristotle’s school must take heed of too much glorying in their master, and despising those that are there below them, lest themselves prove lower in the school of Christ, and *least* in the kingdom

of God, while they would be *great* in the eyes of men. As wise a man as any of them, would glory in nothing but Him crucified. They that are so confident that Aristotle is in hell, should not too much take him for their guide in the way to heaven. It is an excellent memorandum that Gregory M. hath left in his *Moral.*, l. 33, “Deus primo collegit indoctos; post modum philosophos; et non per oratores docuit piscatores, sed per piscatores subegit oratores.” The most learned men should think of this.

Let all writers have their due esteem, but compare none of them with the Word of God. We will not refuse their service, but we must abhor them as competitors. It is a sign of a distempered heart that loseth the relish of Scripture excellency. For there is a connaturality in a spiritual heart to the Word of God, because this is the seed that did regenerate him; the Word is that seal that made all holy impressions that be in the hearts of true believers, and stamped the image of God upon them. And therefore they must needs be like that Word, and highly esteem it as long as they live. Austin tells us, (in his lib. 10. de Civit. Dei, c. xxix.,) “Quod initium Sancti Evangelii, cui nomen est secundum Joannem, quidam Platonius (sicut à sancto sene Simpliciano, qui postea Mediolanesi Ecclesiæ præsedet Episcopus, solebamus audire) aureis literis conscribendum, et per omnes Ecclesias in locis eminentissimis proponendum esse dicebat.” If he could so value that which suited with his Platonism, how should we value the whole which is suitable to the Christian nature and interest! God is the best teacher of His own nature and will.

11. The whole course of our ministry must be carried

on in a tender love to our people ; we must let them see that nothing pleaseth us but what profiteth them ; and that which doeth them good doth us good ; and nothing troubleth us more than their hurt. We must remember, as Jerom saith, ad Nepotian, "That bishops are not lords, but fathers," and therefore must be affected to their people as their children ; yea, the tenderest love of a mother should not surpass theirs ; we must even "travail in birth of them till Christ be formed in them." They should see that we care for no outward thing—not money, not liberty, not credit, not life—in comparison of their salvation ; but could even be content, with Moses, to have our names wiped out of the book of life—*i. e.*, to be removed "*è numero viventium*"—rather than they should perish, and not be found in the Lamb's Book of Life, "*in numero salvandorum.*" Thus should we, as John saith, be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren ; and with Paul, not to count our lives dear to us, so we may but finish our course with joy, in doing the work of God for their salvation. When the people see that you unfeignedly love them, they will hear anything, and bear anything, and follow you the more easily. As Austin saith, "*Dilige, et dic quicquid voles.*" We will take all things well ourselves from one that we know doth entirely love us. We will put up with a blow that is given us in love sooner than a foul word that is given us in anger or malice. Most men use to judge of the counsel as they judge of the affection of him that gives it, at least so far as to give it a fair hearing. Oh, therefore, see that you feel a tender love to your people in your breasts, and then let them feel it in your speeches, and see it in your dealings. Let them see that you spend,

and are spent for their sakes; and that all you do is for them, and not for any ends of your own. To this end the works of charity are necessary, as far as your estate shall reach; for bare words will hardly convince men that you have any great love to them. “*Amicitia à dando et accipiendo, nascitur.*” (Chrysost.) But when you are not able to give, shew that you are willing to give if you had it, and do that sort of good that you can; “*Si potes, dare da, si non potes, affabilem te fac. Coronat Deus intus bonitatem, ubi non invenit facultatem. Nemo dicat, non habeo, Charitas non de saculo erogatur.*” (August. in Psal. ciii.) But be sure to see that your love prove not carnal, flowing from pride, as one that is a suitor for himself, rather than for Christ, and therefore doth love because *he is* loved, or that he *may be*, pretendeth it. And therefore take heed that you do not connive at their sins under pretence of love; for that were to cross the nature and ends of love: “*Amici vitia si feras, facis tua.*” (Senec.) Friendship must be cemented by piety. “*Tu primum exhibe te bonum, et quæ alterum similem tibi.*” (Sen.) A wicked man can be no true friend; and if you befriend their wickedness, you shew that you are such yourselves. Pretend not to love them, if you favour their sins, and seek not their salvation. “*Soli sancti, et Dei sunt, et inter se amici.*” (Basil.) “*Improborum et stultorum nemo amicus.*” (Id.) By favouring their sin you will shew your enmity to God, and then how can you love your brother? “*Amicus esse homini non potest, qui Deo fuerit inimicus.*” (Ambros.) If you be their best friends, help them against their worst enemies. “*Amicus animæ custos.*” And think not all sharpness inconsistent with love; parents will correct their children;

and God himself will chasten every son that He loveth. "Melius est cum severitate diligere, quam cum lenitate decipere." (August.)

Besides this, the nature of love is to excite men to do good, and to do it speedily, diligently, and as much as we can. "Alios curat ædificare, alios contremiscit offendere, ad alios se inclinatur, cum aliis blanda, aliis severa, nulli inimica, omnibus mater." (August. de Catech.) "Ecce quem amas Domine infirmatur: Non dixerunt veni; Amanti enim tantum nunciandum fuit: sufficet ut noverit: Non enim amat, et deserit." (August. in Joan.) So will it be with us.

12. Another necessary concomitant of our work is patience. We must bear with many abuses and injuries from those that we are doing good for. When we have studied for them, and prayed for them, and besought and exhorted them with all condescension, and spent ourselves for them, and given them what we are able, and dealt with them as if they had been our children, we must look that many should requite us with scorn, and hatred, and contempt, and cast our kindness in our faces with disdain, and take us for their enemies, because we tell them the truth, and that the more we love, the less we shall be beloved. All this must be patiently undergone, and still we must unweariedly hold on in doing good; in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance. If they unthankfully scorn and reject our teaching, and bid us look to ourselves, and care not for them, yet must we hold on. We have to deal with distracted men, that will fly in the face of their physician, but we must not therefore forsake the cure. He is unworthy to be a physician that will be driven

away from a frantic patient by foul words, καθὰπερ οἱ μαινομενοι και τὸν ἰατρὸν, *i. e.*, “Sicut insani etiam medicum impetere conantur, ita et illi,” saith Chrysostom of the Sodomites. (Hom. 43, in Gen.) “Et alibi, Medici ferant ægrotum calcibus ferientem, incessentem contumelis, et convitiis, nec offenduntur; quia nihil aliud quam salutem ægroti quærentes, licet facientis indecora, non ideo à cura desistant, sic concionator licet mala patiatur ab auditoribus,” &c. If we tell them that natural men savour not the things of the Spirit, and are beside themselves in matters of salvation, we must measure our expectations accordingly, and not look that fools should make us as grateful a return as the wise. These are things that all of us can say, but when we come to the practice, with sinners that reproach and slander us for our love, and are more ready to spit in our faces than to give us thanks for our advice, what heart-risings will there be, and how will the remnants of old Adam—pride and passion—struggle against the meekness and patience of the new man! And how sadly do many ministers come off in this part of their trial!

Having given you these twelve concomitants of our ministerial labour, as singly to be performed by every minister, let me conclude with one other that is necessary to us as we are conjoined, and fellow-labourers in the work; and it is this: We must be very studious in union and communion among ourselves, and of the unity and peace of the churches that we oversee. We must be sensible how needful this is to the prosperity of the whole, the strengthening of our common cause, the good of the particular members of our flock, and the further enlargement of the kingdom of Christ.



And therefore ministers must smart when the Church is wounded, and being so far from being the leaders in divisions, that they should take it as a principal part of their work to prevent and heal them. Day and night should they bend their studies to find out means to close such breaches. They must not only hearken to motions for unity, but propound them and prosecute them. Not only entertain an offered peace, but even follow it when it flieth from them. They must therefore keep close to the ancient simplicity of the Christian faith, and the foundation and centre of catholic unity. They must abhor the arrogance of them that frame engines to harass and tear the Church of God, under pretence of obviating errors, and maintaining the truth. The Scripture sufficiency must be maintained, and nothing beyond it imposed on others; and if Papists, or others, call to us for the standard and rule of our religion, it is the Bible that we must shew them, rather than any Confessions of Churches, or writings of men. We must learn to difference well between certainties and uncertainties, necessities and unnecessaries, catholic verities "*quæ ab omnibus, ubique et semper sunt retentæ,*" as Vincent, Licen., speaks, and private opinions; and to lay the stress of the Church's peace upon the former, and not upon the latter. We must therefore understand the doctrine of antiquity, that we may know what way men have gone to heaven by in former ages, and know the writings of later divines, that we may partake of the benefit of their clearer methods and explications; but neither of them must be made the rule of our faith or charity. We must avoid the common confusion of those that make no difference between verbal and real errors, and

hate that "rabies quorundan theologorum," that tear their brethren as heretics, before they understand them. And we must learn to see the true state of controversies, and reduce them to the very point where the difference lieth, and not to make them seem greater than they are. Instead of quarrelling with our brethren, we must combine against the common adversaries ; ministers must associate, and hold communion, and correspondence, and constant meetings to those ends ; and smaller differences of judgment are not to interrupt them. They must do as much of the work of God in unity and concord as they can ; which is the use of synods : not to rule over one another, and make laws ; but to avoid misunderstandings, and consult for mutual edification, and maintain love and communion, and go on unanimously in the work that God hath already commanded us. Had the ministers of the gospel been men of peace, and of catholic rather than factious spirits, the Church of Christ had not been in the case it is now ; the notions of Lutherans and Calvinists abroad, and the differing parties here at home, would not have been plotting the subversion of one another, nor remain at that distance, and in that uncharitable bitterness, nor strengthen the common enemy, and hinder the building and prosperity of the Church, as they have done.

## CHAPTER IV.

## USE.

REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN,—Our business here this day is to humble our souls before the Lord for our former negligence, especially of catechising and personally instructing those committed to our charge; and to desire God's assistance of us in the employment we have undertaken for the time to come. Indeed, we can scarcely expect the latter without the former. If God will help us in our future duty and amendment, He will surely humble us first for our former sins. He that hath not so much sense of his faults as unfeignedly to lament them, will hardly have so much more as may move him to reform them. The sorrow of repentance may be without the change of heart and life; because a passion may be easier wrought than a true conversion; but the change cannot go without some good measure of the sorrow. Indeed, we may justly here begin our confessions: it is too common with us to expect that from our people, which we do little or nothing in ourselves. What pains take we to humble them, while ourselves are unhumbled! How hard do we press them by all our exhortations, convictions, and aggravations, to wring out of them a few penitent tears, (and all too little,) when our own eyes are dry, and our hearts are little affected with remorse; and we give them an example of hardheartedness, while we are endeavouring by our words to

mollify and melt them! Oh, if we did but study half as much to affect and amend our own hearts, as we do our hearers, it would not be with many of us as it is! We do too little for their humiliation; but I fear it is much less that some of us do for our own. Too many do somewhat for other men's souls, while they seem to forget that they have any of their own to regard. They so carry the matter, as if their part of the work lay in calling for repentance, and the hearers in repenting; theirs in speaking tears and sorrow, and other men's only in weeping and sorrowing; theirs in preaching duty, and the hearers in performing it; theirs in crying down sin, and the people's in forsaking it.

But we find the guides of the Church in Scripture did confess their own sins as well as the sins of the people; and began in tears for their own and the people's sins. Ezra confesseth the sins of the priests as well as of the people, weeping, and casting himself down before the house of God. (Ezra ix. 6, 7, x. 1.) So did the Levites. (Neh. ix. 32-34.) Daniel confesseth his own sin, as well as the people's, (Dan. ix. 20,) and God called such to it, as well as others. (Joel ii. 15-17.) When the fast is summoned, the people gathered, the congregation sanctified, the elders assembled, the priests, the ministers of the Lord, are called to begin to them in weeping, and calling upon God for mercy. I think if we consider well of the duties already opened, and withal how we have done them; of the rule, and of our unanswerableness thereto, we need not demur upon the question, nor put it to a question, whether we have cause of humiliation. I must needs say, though I judge myself in saying it,

that he that readeth but this one exhortation of Paul in Acts xx., and compareth his life with it, is too stupid and hardhearted, if he do not melt under a sense of his neglects, and be not laid in the dust before God, and forced to bewail his great omissions, and to fly for refuge to the blood of Christ, and to His pardoning grace. I am confident, brethren, that none of you do in judgment approve of the libertine doctrine, that crieth down the necessity of confession, contrition, and true humiliation; yea, and in order to the pardon of sin! Is it not a pity, then, that our hearts are not more orthodox as well as our heads? But I see our lesson is but half learned when we know it, and can say it. When the understanding hath learned it, there is more ado to teach it our wills and affections, our eyes, our tongues, and hands. It is a sad thing that so many of us do use to preach our hearers asleep; but it is sadder still if we have studied and preached ourselves asleep, and have talked so long against hardness of heart, till our own grow hardened, under the noise of our own reproofs. Though the head only have eyes, and ears, and smell, and taste, the heart should have *life*, and *feeling*, and *motion*, as well as the head.

And that you may see that it is not a causeless sorrow that God calleth us to, I shall take it to be my duty to call to remembrance our manifold sins, or those that are most obvious, and set them this day in order before God and our own faces, that God may cast them behind His back; and to deal plainly and faithfully in a free confession, that He who is faithful and just may forgive them; and to judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord: wherein I suppose

I have your free and hearty consent, and that you will be so far from being offended with the disgrace of your persons, and of others in this office, that you will readily subscribe the charge, and be humble self-accusers ; and so far am I from justifying myself by the accusation of others, that I do unfeignedly put my name with the first in the bill ; for how can a wretched sinner, of so great transgressions, presume to justify himself with God ? or how can he plead guiltless, whose conscience hath so much to say against him ? If I cast shame upon the ministry, it is not on the office, but on our persons, by opening that sin which is our shame. The glory of our high employment doth not communicate any glory to our sin, nor will afford it the smallest covering for its nakedness ; for " sin is a reproach to any people," or persons. (Prov. xiv. 34.) And it is myself as well as others on whom I must lay the shame : and if this may not be done, what do we here to-day ? Our business is to take shame to ourselves, and to give God the glory ; and faithfully to open our sins, that He may cover them ; and to make ourselves bare by confession, as we have done by transgression, that we may have the white raiment that clotheth none but the penitent ; for be they pastors or people, it is only he " that confesseth and forsaketh his sins that shall have mercy, when he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." (Prov. xxviii. 13.)

And I think it will not be amiss, if in the beginning of our confession we look behind us, and imitate Daniel, and other servants of God, who confess the sins of their forefathers and predecessors. For, indeed, my own judgment is so far from denying original sin,

even the imputed part, with the ancient opposers of it, or those of the new edition, that it doth not so much excuse me from the guilt of my later progenitors' offences, as most other men's do seem to excuse them. Let us fetch up then the core of our shame, and go to the bottom, and trace the behaviour of the ministers of the gospel, from the days of Christ till now, and see how far they have been from innocency.

When Christ had chosen Him but twelve apostles, who kept near His person, that they might be acquainted with His doctrine, life, and miracles; yet how ignorant did they long remain, not knowing so much as that He must die, and be a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and be buried and rise again, and ascend into glory; nor what was the nature of His spiritual kingdom! So that it puts us hard to it to imagine how men so ignorant could be in a state of grace; but that we know that those points were after of absolute necessity to salvation, that were not so then.\* How often doth Christ teach them publicly and apart, (Mark iv. 34,) and rebuke them for their unbelief and hardness of heart! and yet after all this, so strange were these great mysteries of redemption to them, and these (now) articles of our creed, that Peter himself dissuadeth Christ from suffering, and goeth so far in contradicting His gracious thoughts for our redemption, that he is called *Satan*, and "tantum non" excommunicated: and no wonder; for if his

\* If any one about the time of Moses, offering sacrifice according to the law, were not instructed in the doctrine of the death of our Redeemer, but only believed that God through the means which He knoweth to be most agreeable and convenient, will forgive us our trespasses, it were rashness to go about to exclude such a man from salvation.—*Pet. Molinæus de Tradition.*, c. 19, pp. 251, 252.

counsel had been taken, the world had been lost for ever. And as there was a Judas among them, so the twelve are before Christ's face contending for superiority; so early did that pride begin to work in the best, which afterwards prevailed so far in others, as to bring the Church so low as we have seen. What should we say of their jointly forsaking Christ; of their failings even after the pourings out of the Spirit; of the dissension and separation between Paul and Barnabas; how strange Peter made of the calling of the Gentiles; of his compliance with the Jews to the endangering of the liberties of the Gentiles, (Gal. ii. ;) of the dissimulation of Barnabas; and the common desertion of Paul in his suffering? When he had found out Timothy, he saith, he "had no man like-minded, that would naturally care for their estate; for all seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ." (Phil. ii. 20, 21.) A sad charge of self-seeking in that glory of the Church for faith and purity! And what charges are against most of the angels of the seven Asiatic churches is expressed, Rev. ii., iii. And it is likely that Archippus was not the only man that had need to be warned to look to his ministry, (Col. iv. 17;) nor Demas the only man that forsook a persecuted partner, and turned after the things of the world; nor Diotrephes the only man that loved to have the pre-eminence, and made quarrels, and dealt unjustly and unmercifully in the Church upon that account!

And even while the churches were frying in the flames, yet did the pride and dissensions even of godly pastors do more than the fire of persecution could do, to turn all to ashes. How sad a story is it that Polycrates with all the Eastern churches should be arro-



gantly excommunicated by Victor with his Romans, upon no higher crime than mischoosing of Easter-day, which our Britons also long after were guilty of! Who would think that so great weakness, and presumptuous usurpation, and uncharitable cruelty, and schismatical zeal, could have befallen the pastors of the Church in the strongest temptations of prosperity, much less in the midst of heathenish persecutions? What toys and trifles did the ancient reverend fathers of the Church trouble their heads about, and pester the Church with; and what useless stuff are many of their canons composed of! Yet these were the great matter and work of many of their famous consultations. How quickly did they seem to forget the perfection of Holy Scripture, the non-necessity and burdensomeness of ceremonious impositions! And by taking upon them an unnecessary and unjust kind of jurisdiction, they made the Church so much more work than ever Christ made it, and so clogged religion with human devices, that the Christian world hath groaned under it ever since, and been almost brought to ruin by it; and the reverence of their persons hath put so much reputation on the crime, and custom hath so taught it to plead prescription, that when the lacerated, languid churches will be delivered from the sad effects of their presumption, God only knoweth. It would make an impartial reader wonder, that peruseth their canons and the history of the Church, that ever men of piety, charity, and sobriety, could be drawn to perplex and tear in pieces the churches by such multitude of vanities, and needless determinations (to say no worse); and that the preachers of the gospel of peace, which so enjoineth humility, unity, and love, should ever be drawn to

such a height of pride, as to think themselves meet to make so many laws for the whole Church of Christ, and to bind all their brethren through the world to the obedience of their dictates, and practice of their histrionical, ensnaring ceremonies, and that upon the penalties of being accounted no less than damned heretics or schismatics. Though Paul had told them betime, that he was afraid of them, lest as the serpent deceived Eve, so they should be deceived, and drawn from the simplicity that was in Christ, (2 Cor. xi. 3,) yet quickly was this caution forgotten, and the thing that Paul feared soon befell them ; and instead of the simplicity of doctrine, they vexed the churches with curious controversies ; and instead of the simplicity of discipline and government, they corrupted the Church with pomp and tyranny, and varieties of new orders and rules of religion ; and instead of the simplicity of worship, they set up such a train of their own inventions, of which the Church had no necessity, that the bishops were become the masters of ceremonies, who should have been the humble and faithful observers of the pure laws and ordinances of Christ. Though their councils were useful for the churches' communion, had they been rightly ordered, yet so unhappily did they manage them for the most part, that Gregory Nazianzen purposed to come at them no more, as having never seen any that did not more harm than good. And so bold and busy were they in additions and innovations, even in making new creeds, that Hilary sadly complains of it, not sparing the Council of Nice itself, though their creed were allowable, because they taught others the way, and set the rest a work. And Luther sheweth us at large in his book

“De Conciliis,” what thoughts he had of these assemblies. Three lamentable vices did the prelates of the Church then commonly abound in—*pride* the root, *contention* and *vain impositions* and *inventions*, the fruits. No charity that is not blind can hide this guilt. We had never else had the Christian world so plagued with their quarrels about superiority and vain traditions, after such warnings, and lessons, and examples as Christ had given His own apostles. When once the favour of a Christian prince did shine upon the churches, what self-exhortation and contention of the prelates did ensue! So that if they had not been restrained and kept in quiet by the Emperor, how soon would they have made a sadder havoc than they did — perhaps in their first general council itself! And though that council had a good occasion, even to suppress the Arian heresy, yet had not Constantine committed their mutual accusations to the flames, and shamed them from their contendings, it had not had so good an end. And yet as good as it was, Luther saith, p. 226, de Concil., “*Arianæ hæresis jocus fuit ante Nicenum Concilium, præ illa confusione quam ipsi post Concilium excitaverunt.*” Augustine’s sad complaint of the loading of the Church with ceremonies, and comparing them to Judaism, is commonly known: of which see Luther’s Comment., ib. pp. 55, 56. And so strange did it seem to Luther, that the learned prelates of those better times should so scold “*circa nænia et nugas,*” about pre-eminence and ceremonies, and things of nought, that he is again and again taken up in admiring it. Read that treatise throughout.

Is it not sad to think of the heat of an Epiphanius and Theophilus Alexand. against Chrysostom, and of

Chrysostom against them? of Jerom against Ruffinus, Chrysostom, and many others? And if Austin had not been more peaceable than he, one of them must have been an heretic, or schismatic at least. How many more such sad examples have we!

And for their damnatory sentences, they were more presumptuous than their laws; few men could stand in another's way, or fall out, but one of them must be an heretic before they had made an end. Small differences were named damnable heresies: though they had enough among them that were such indeed, whereof some of the clergy were almost always the causes and fomenters; yet did they so multiply them by their imputation, that their catalogues swelled beyond the credit of charity. And he that had the highest reputation was usually safest from the blot, and had power to make others heretics almost at his pleasure; and if a man had once got the vote and fame, it was dangerous gainsaying him. Had Vigilantius or Jovinian had Jerom's name, some of their heresies might possibly have been articles of faith.

And as they were dangerously forward on one side to make every small mistake a heresy, and cause divisions in the Church by their unjust condemnation, so many on the other hand were as forward to provoke them, by novelties or false conceits, especially about the Trinity, and the person and natures of Christ; so that unquiet spirits knew not when or where to rest; and multitudes of them did turn cheaters and deluders of the vulgar, by pretending to miracles, and revelations, and visions, and drawing the people deeper into superstition; by such means as Bonifacius Moguntinus wrote to the Pope Zachary about the hypocritical Saint

Aldebert. And in that age especially, when few learned men, as Erasmus complaineth, did escape the suspicion of heresy, and he that was a mathematician was counted a magician, it had been more wit to have silenced some unnecessary verities, than to have angered impatient ignorance. Virgilius might have talked more of the world above us, and let the world below us alone, rather than to force the learned Pope Zachary to say to his brother Boniface of Mentz, “De perversa et iniqua doctrina, quam contra Deum et animam suam locutus est; (a high crime) si clariaficatum fuerit ita eum confiteri, quod alius mundus et alii homines sub terras sint, hunc accito Concilio, ab Ecclesia pelle, sacerdotii honore privatum.”—Vid. Usher. syllog. Hibernic. Epistol., pp. 49, 50. But to mention the twentieth part of the proud usurpation, innovations, impositions, and sentences of those following times, especially among the Romanists, is fitter for large volumes, than a cursory lamentation of the Church’s sins. I will not meddle with the errors and cruel bloodshed of the Popish clergy of late, against the Waldenses and Protestants; nor yet with the sad condition of the rest of the clergy through the Christian world, in Ethiopia, Muscovia, Greece, &c. For you will think that this is less to us that do disclaim them; but let us come nearer ourselves, and we shall find yet matter of further lamentation. And I will purposely say nothing of any of the sins of our foreign reformers, nor meddle with any of those sad contentions which have brought the Reformed Churches into two such exasperated parties, *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*, as they are commonly called, and hindered their reconciliation, and frustrated all means that have been used to that end till this day;

to the exceeding shame of the pastors of these churches, and the publishing of our darkness, pride, and selfishness to all the world. But my present business lieth only at home, and that only with the Reformed pastors of our churches. For though, through the great mercy of God, they are far from the Papal cruelty which made bonfires of their brethren better than themselves throughout the land, and as far from the worst of their errors and false worship; yet have we been so far from innocency, that all posterity is bound to lament the miscarriages of their predecessors.

Is it not a sad history of the troubles at Frankfort, to read that so many godly, learned men, that had forsaken all for the Reformed profession, and were exiles in a foreign land, even in a city where they had but borrowed the liberty of one church, should even then fall in pieces among themselves, and that about a liturgy and ceremonies, so far as to make a division; and after many plotting, and counterplotting, and undermining one another, one part of them must leave the city, and go seek another for their liberty? What! had not those few exiles that left their native country, lands, and friends, and all for the gospel, that fled so far for the liberty of God's worship, and had as great advantage as most men in the world to be sensible of the excellency of reformation and liberty; had these, I say, no more Christian love and tenderness, no more esteem of what they suffered for, than to fall out with one another, and almost fall upon one another, for such things as these? Would not suffering abate their pride and passions, and close their hearts, nor yet make them so far patient as to tolerate each other in so small a differ-

ence. Even when their dearest friends and fellow-servants were frying in the flames at home, and the prisons filled with them, and they had daily news of one after another that was made a sacrifice to the fury of the Papists, could they yet proceed in their own dissensions, and that to such a height? Oh, what is man, and the best of men! Yea, before this, in King Edward's days, what rigour was used against Bishop Hooper about such ceremonies! But the prison abated Bishop Ridley's uncharitableness, and they then learned more charity when they were going to the flames.

From Frankfort, the sad division, at the death of Queen Mary, was transported into England; and the seeds that were sown, or began to spring up in the exiled congregation, did too plentifully fructify in the land of their prosperity. No sooner doth the sun shine upon them, but contentious spirits began to swarm; and the prison doors are no sooner open, and their bolts knocked off, but they contrive the suppressing of the brethren, as if they had been turned loose as fighting cocks, to fall upon one another, and to work for Satan, when they had suffered for Christ. The party that was for prelacy and ceremonies prevailed for the countenance of the state, and quickly got the staff into their hands, and many of their brethren under their feet; and so contrived the business, that there was no quiet station to be had in the ministry for those that would not be of their mind and way. And many of them endeavoured to have a brand of ignominy set upon their names who desired the discipline and order of other Reformed Churches: that all might be accounted schismatics that would

not be ruled by them even in ceremonies. The contrary-minded, also, were some of them too intemperate, and impatient, and unpeaceable; and some few of them turned to flat separation, and flew into the faces of the prelates with reviling. For their sakes many wise and peaceable men were the worse used; and they that were got into the chair began to play the scorners and the persecutors, and thought meet to impose upon them all the nickname of Puritans, as knowing how much names of reproach and scorn could do with the vulgar for the furthering of their cause. Some of these Puritans (as now they had named them) were imprisoned, and some put to death, and some died in and by imprisonment: they are all made incapable of being preachers of the gospel in England, till they would change their minds, and subscribe to the lawfulness of prelacy, and the liturgy, and ceremonies, and use these accordingly when they use their ministry. Oh, how much did many good men rejoice that the Lord had visited their native country with deliverance, and the light of the glorious gospel of His Son!—how much did they long to lay out themselves for the saving of their dear countrymen, and to improve the present freedom for the most effectual propagation of the truth!—when, alas! their own friends, some of their fellow-sufferers, animated and assisted by many temporisers, did suddenly disappoint their hopes, and shut them out of the vineyard of the Lord, and would suffer none to labour in it, but themselves and theirs. Alas! that persecution should be so soon forgotten; and that they should have no more sense of the cruelty of the Papists, to have moved them to some more tenderness of consciences



and liberties of their brethren : that they had no more compassion on the Church of Christ, than to deprive it of the labours of so many choice and worthy men ; and that at such a time of necessity. When Popish priests were newly cast out, and multitudes of congregations had no preachers at all, but some silly readers, yet might not these men be allowed to preach. If the judgments of these prelates were never so absolute for the Divine right of their own government ; yet could it not be so for the absolute necessity of the cross, surplice, and every part of the forms in their liturgy. Had they but countenanced mostly their own party, and silenced all that did speak against their government and ceremonies, and only allowed them to preach the gospel with subscription to the lawfulness of these things, and with a silent forbearance of the use of the ceremonies, they might have better secured their own power and way, and have exercised some sense of brotherly love and compassion on the necessitous state of the Church, and, in all likelihood, might have stood safe themselves to this day. A wonderful thing it seems to me, that wise and good men, for such I doubt not but many of them were, should think it better that many hundred congregations in England (to say nothing of Ireland and Scotland) should be without any preaching at all, to the apparent hazard of the damnation of men's souls, who were so deep in Popish ignorance before, than that a man should preach to them that durst not use the cross or surplice ! Were these of more worth than so many souls ? It was lawful in the apostles' days to baptize without the cross, and to pray, and praise God, without the surplice. And

why might not the prelates of England have tolerated that in the Church's necessities, at least as a weakness in well-meaning brethren, which the apostolical churches used not at all? What if they were lawful? They that thought so might have them. Were they now become more necessary than the preaching of the gospel, when in the apostles' time they were of no necessity or use at all? If it were obedience to the prelates that was necessary, they might have required obedience to undoubted and necessary things, and they should soon have found it. Had they contented themselves to be officers under Christ, and to see the execution of His laws, and to meddle at least with no needless new legislation, I think few would have questioned obedience to them but the ungodly. But it was sadly contrived to have such impositions on men's consciences in needless or indifferent things, as the most tender-conscienced men were likeliest to disobey, and as might be snares to those that desired to please God, when the business of church governors should be to promote the obedience of Christ's laws, and to encourage those that are most fearful to disobey them, and to do as the lawmakers. "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." (Dan. vi. 5.)

But thus it came to pass, that the enemy of the Church did too much attain his ends; such excellent men as Hildersham, Brightman, P. Bayn, Parker, Ames, Bradshaw, Dod, Nicolls, with multitudes more, were laid aside and silenced; and multitudes of them that petitioned for liberty in Lincolnshire, Devonshire, and other parts, suppressed; and the nation, in the meantime abounding with gross ignorance, was brought, by

observing the countenance of the times, to like their own readers better than painful preachers, and to hate and scorn the zealous obedience to the laws of Christ, and all diligence for salvation, because they observed that these men that were such were so many of them hated and persecuted by the rulers, though on the occasions before mentioned. And here was the foundation of our greatest misery laid: while some of the rulers themselves began to turn their hatred against practical godliness, (which corrupted nature hates in all,) and the common people took the hint, and no longer confined the word Puritan to the Nonconformists, but applied it commonly through all parts of the land, to those that would but speak seriously of heaven, and tell men of death and judgment, and spend the Lord's day in preparation thereto, and desire others to do the like; that did but pray in their families, and keep their children and servants on the Lord's day to learn the way of salvation, instead of letting them spend it in gaming or revelling; they did but reprove a swearer or a drunkard, these were become the Puritans and the Precisians, and the hated ones of the time; so that they became a byword in all the towns and villages in England that ever I knew, or heard of, as to these things. And thus when the prelates had engaged the vulgar in their cause, and partly by themselves, and partly by them, had so far changed their cause, as that all serious Christians that feared sin, and were most diligent for salvation, were presently engaged among their adversaries, and they were involved with the rest, though they did nothing against the Government, or ceremonies, and the most ignorant and impious became the friends and agents

of the times, and everywhere made the most pious and sedulous Christians a common scorn, to the dishonour of God, and the hardening of the wicked, and discouraging of the weak; and filling men with prejudice against a godly life, and hindering many thousands from the way of salvation; then did God himself appear more evidently as interested in the quarrels, and rose against them, and shamed them that had let in scorn and shame upon His ways. And this, even this, was the very thing that brought them down.

Besides this, there was scarcely such a thing as church government or discipline known in the land, but only this harassing of those that dissented from them. In all my life I never lived in the parish where one person was publicly admonished, or brought to public penitence, or excommunicated, though there were never so many obstinate drunkards, whoremongers, or vilest offenders. Only I have known now and then one for getting a bastard, that went to the bishop's court and paid their fees; and I heard of two or three in all the country, in all my life, that stood in a white sheet an hour in the church; but the ancient discipline of the Church was unknown. And, indeed, it was made by them impossible, when one man that lived at a distance from them, and knew not one of many hundreds of the flock, did take upon him the sole jurisdiction, and executed it not by himself, but by a lay chancellor, excluding the pastors of the several congregations, who were but to join with the churchwardens and the apparitors in presenting men, and bringing them into their courts; and an impossible task must needs be unperformed. And so the contro-

versy, as to the letter and outside, was, *Who shall be the governors of all the particular churches?* But to the sense and inside of it, it was, *Whether there should be any effectual church government or not?* Whereupon those that pleaded for discipline were called by the new name of the Disciplinarians, as if it had been a kind of heresy to desire discipline in the Church.

At last, the heat began to grow greater, and new impositions raised new adversaries. When conformable Puritans began to bear the great reproach, there being few of the Nonconformists left, then must they also be gotten into the net; altars must be bowed to, or towards; all must publish a book for dancing and sports on the Lord's day, disabling the masters of families, and parents, though they had small time on the week-days, by reason of their poverty or labour, to keep in their own children or families from dancing on that day, that they might instruct them in the matters of God. If a man, as he read a chapter to his family, had persuaded them to observe and practise it, and with any reasons urged them thereto, this was called *expounding*, and was inquired of in their articles, to be presented together with adultery, and such like sins; so also was he used that had no preaching at home, and would go to hear a conformable preacher abroad. So that multitudes have I known exceedingly troubled or undone for such matters as these, when not one was much troubled for scandalous crimes. Then lectures were put down, and afternoon sermons, and expounding the Catechism or Scripture in the afternoons. And the violence grew so great, that many thousand families left the land, and many godly, able ministers, Conformists, as well as others, were fain

to fly and become exiles, some in one country, and some in another, and most in the remote American parts of the world. Thither went Cotton, Hooker, Davenport, Shepherd, Allen, Cobbet, Noyes, Parker, with many others that deserved a dwelling-place in England.

Yet I must profess I should scarcely have mentioned any of this, nor taken it for so heinous a crime, had it not been only cruelty to the persons of these men, though they had dealt much harder with them than they did, and if it had not been greater cruelty to the Church, and if they had but had competent men for their places when they were cast out. But, alas! the churches were pestered with such wretches as are our shame and trouble to this day. Abundance of mere readers, and drunken, profane, deboist men, were the ministers of the churches, so that we have been these many years endeavouring to cleanse the Church of them, and have not fully effected it to this day. Many that had more plausible tongues did make it their chief business to bring those that they called Puritans into disgrace, and to keep the people from being such, so that I must needs say, that I knew no place in these times where a man might not more safely have been drunken every week, as to their punishment, than to have gone to hear a sermon if he had none at home. For the common people readily took the hint, and increased their reproach, as the rulers did their persecution; so that a man could not, in any place of England that I came in, have said to a swearer or a drunkard, "Oh, do not sin against God, and wound or hazard your own soul," but he should have been presently hooted at as a Puritan : he could not have said

to an ignorant or careless neighbour, "Remember your everlasting state; prepare for death and judgment," or have talked of any Scripture matters to them, but he was presently jeered as a Puritan or Precisian; and Scripture itself was become a reproach to him that talked of it, and they would cry out, "What! we must have talk of Scripture now! You will preach to us! We shall have these preachers ordered ere long." So that it was become commonly in England a greater reproach to be a man truly living in the fear of God than to live in open profaneness, and to rail at godliness, and daily scorn it, which was so far from being a matter of danger, that many took it up in expectation of preferment; and the preachers of the times were well aware that the rising way was to preach against the precise Puritans, and not to live precisely themselves; and thus both ministry and people grew to that sad pass, that it was no wonder if God would bear no longer with the land.

Even as it was in the Western churches before the inundation of the Goths and Vandals, as Salvian, among others, tells us; indeed I know not a writer that more fitly painteth out the state of our times,—I shall therefore borrow some of his words to express our case, which, it seems, had been then the Church's case:—

"*Ipsa Dei Ecclesia, quæ in omnibus esse debet placatrix Dei, quid est aliud quam exacerbatrix Dei? aut præter paucissimos quosdam qui mala fugiunt, quid est aliud pene omnis cœtus Christianorum quam sentina vitiorum? Quotum enim quemque invenies in Ecclesia non aut ebriosum aut helluonem, aut adulterum,*" &c.—"immò facilius invenias qui totum sit

quam qui nihil : et quod diximus nihil nimis forsitan gravis videatur esse censura ; plus multo dicam, facilius invenias reum malorum omnium quam non omnium ; facilius majorum criminum quam minorum, ed est, facilius qui et majora crimina cum minoribus, quam qui minora tantum sine majoribus perpetrarint. In hanc enim morum probrositatem prope omnis Ecclesiastica plebs redacta est, ut in euneto populo Christiano genus quodammodo sanctitatis sit, minus esse vitiosum. Itaque, Ecclesias vel potius templa atque altaria Dei minoris reverentiæ quidem habent quam cujuslibet minimi ac municipalis judicis domum. Siquidem intra januas non modo illustrium potestatum, sed etiam præsidum et præpositorum, non omnes passim intrare præsumunt, nisi quos aut judex vocaverit, aut negotium traxerit, aut ipsa honoris proprii dignitas introire permiserit : ita ut, si quispiam fuerit insolenter ingressus, aut cædatur, aut propellatur, aut aliqua verecundiæ atque existimationis suæ labe mulctetur. In templa autem vel potius in altaria atque sacraria Dei passim omnes sordidi ac flagitiosi sine ulla penitus reverentia sacri honoris irrumpunt, non quia non omnes ad exorandum Deum currere debent : sed quia qui ingreditur ad placandum, non debet egredi ad exacerbandum. Neque enim ejusdem officii est indulgentiam poscere et iracundiam provocare : Novum siquidem monstri genus est ; eadem pæne omnes jugitur faciunt, quæ fecisse se plangunt : Et qui intrant in Ecclesiasticam domum, ut mala antiqua defleant, exeunt ; et quid dico exeunt ? in ipsis pene hoc orationibus suis moliuntur.” (Salv. de Gubern., l. 3, pp. 86, 87.)

Et p. 180 : “ O miseriam lacrymabilem, O miseriam luctuosum ! Quam dissimilis nunc à seipso est popu-



lus Christianus, id est, ab eo qui fuit quondam!—Ecce in quid reducti sumus, ut beatam fore Ecclesiam judicemus, si vel tantum in se boni habeat quantum mali. Nam quomodo non beatam arbitremur, si mediam plebis partem haberet innoxiam, quam pene totam nunc esse plangimus criminosa—superfluè unius scelera deflevimus; aut omnes enim, aut pene omnes flendi atque lugendi sunt.”

Et pp. 195, 196: “Omnia amamus, omnia colimus; solus nobis in comparatione omnium Deus vilis est? Siquando enim veniret, (quod sæpe evenit,) ut eodem die et festivitas Ecclesiastica et ludi publici agantur, quæso ab omnium Conscientia, quis locus majores Christianorum virorum copias haberet? Cavea ne ludi publici, an atrium Dei! Et Templum omnes magis sectentur, an Theatrum? Dicta Evangeliorum magis diligant an Thymelicorum? Verba vitæ, an mortis? Verba Christi, an mimi? Non est dubium quin illud magis amemus quod anteponimus.”

Too like to these, here described, were our times grown, through the fault of those that professed themselves to have the oversight of their souls. A most sad thing it was to see those men that undertook to guide men in the ways of life to be the chief means of discouraging them; and to hear them make a mock at holiness, that should have devoted their doctrine and life thereto. The accusation may seem harsh to those of after-times that knew not this, or that by the patrons of iniquity are persuaded of the contrary. But I say, as Salvian, l. 6, p. 197: “Sed gravis est forsitan hæc atque iniqua congestio. Gravis profecto, si falsa.”

Yet through the mercy of God, it was not all the prelates of the Church that thus miscarried; we have

yet surviving our Usher, our Hall, our Morton, learned, godly, and peaceable men ; whose names are as dear to us as any men's alive. And oh that it had been the will of God that all had been such ! Then had we not been like to have seen those days of blood that we have seen, nor those great mutations in Church and State ! But so far were these good men from being able to do the good that they would, that they were maligned for their piety and soundness in the faith, and many a time have I heard them despised as well as others, and scorned as Puritans for all they were prelates.

And yet, it were well if all the guilt had lain upon that party ! But alas ! it was not so. Those pious and painful divines that were oppressed, and much more that part of the people that joined with them, were too impatient under their suffering, and bent themselves, some of them, more than was meet against the persons of those that they suffered by, and too much endeavoured to make the prelates odious with the people, as persecutors of the Church of God, and were ready to go too far from them on the other hand, and to think the worse of some things because they commanded them. Doubtless, had we all suffered with more patience, and carried ourselves with meekness and gentleness to those that we differed from, and given them so much commendation as was their due, and put the best construction on their actions that we could, and covered their infirmities with the most charitable interpretations, we might have done more to mollify their minds, or at least to have maintained our own innocence. But as there was no room on their part to a motion for peace, or a petition for liberty, in the time of their prosperity ; so when advantages did seem

to appear to us of vindicating our liberties, we looked upon them as irreconcilable, and too inconsiderately rushed on, and were wanting in those peaceable endeavours that were our duty. We did not in our Assembly invite them to a free consultation, that their cause might have the fullest and fairest hearing before it had been condemned. Proposals that had any tendency to healing and accommodation had never that entertainment from us that they did deserve. What moderate proposals were made to one party by Bishop Usher, which both parties did dislike! How many pacificatory motions and excellent treatises came from that heavenly, peaceable Bishop Hall, especially his "Peace-maker," his "Pax terris," and his "Modest Offer!" But how little did they effect! Certainly some of the men were so venerable for their admirable learning and piety, that they deserved to be heard, and consulted with too, as wise and most judicious men. And Prelacy was not so young a plant in the Church, nor had it in former and latter ages had so few or mean persons to adorn and credit it, but that it well deserved the fairest hearing and debate.

But thus have we all shewed our frailty, and this is the *heed* that we have *taken to ourselves, and to all the flock*. The Lord open our eyes at last, that we may all more fully see our own miscarriages; for surely they lie as mountains before us, and all the world about us may see them, and yet we will hardly see them ourselves.

A man would think that now if the heart of man be curable, we should by this time be all brought to the sense of our miscarriages, and be prepared to a closure on any reasonable terms. Who would think

but after all the smart of our divisions, we should long ere this have got together, and prayed, and consulted ourselves into peace! But, alas! there is no such matter done; and few do I find that mind the doing of it. We continue our quarrels as hot as ever. As Salvian saith in another case, "Miseri jam sumus: et nec dum nugaces (discordes) esse cessamus!" (l. 6, p. 202.) Et p. 200, "Mala incessabiliter malis addimus, et peccata peccatis cumulamus: et cum maxima nostri pars jam perierit, id agimus ut pereamus omnes. . . . Nos non vicinos nostros tantum ardere vidimus, sed ipsi jam ex maxima nostrorum corporum parte arsimus. Et quid hoc, proh nefas, mali est? Arsimus, arsimus, et tamen flammæ quibus jam arsimus non timemus. Nam quod non ubique agantur quæ prius acta sunt, miserie est beneficium, non disciplinæ. Facile hoc probo. Da enim prioris temporis statum, statum ubique sunt quæ fuerunt."

The minds of many are as much exasperated or estranged as ever. Three sorts I meet with, that all are too backward to any accommodation.

1. The violent men of the prelates' side, especially those of the new way, who are so far from reconciliation and healing of our breaches, that they labour to persuade the world that the contrary-minded are schismatics, and that all the ministers that have not episcopal ordination are no ministers, nor any of the Churches that have not prelates are true Churches, (at least, except it can be proved to be through unavoidable necessity.) And they say, to agree with such, were to strike a covenant with schism itself.

2. Some on the other side say, "Do you not see, that except an inconsiderable number, the Prelatical

party are all empty, careless, if not scandalous, ungodly men? Where are almost any of them whose communion is desirable, that set themselves to the winning and saving of souls, and are serious men in the matters of salvation, in whom you can perceive a heavenly conversation? Hath God brought down these enemies of godliness, and persecutors and depopulators of His Church, and would you make a league with them again? Do you not see that they are as bitter and implacable as ever? And have not some of them the face to justify all the former impositions and persecutions, and draw, or continue the guilt of it upon their heads; and would make the world believe that they are wrongfully ejected, when so many accusations in Parliament before the division, so many centuries of horrid, scandalous ones published by Mr White, and so many more centuries, that lie on record under depositions in the several counties of the nation where the committees ejected them, will be perpetual witnesses of the quality of these men?"

3. Others there be that are peaceable men on both sides, that will not justify the former miscarriages, nor own the present evils of any; but think, though there be too much truth in these latter accusations, yet the nature of the difference, and the quality of some of the persons is such, as deserveth our desires and endeavours of reconciliation. But they think the work to be hopeless and impossible, and therefore not to be attempted.

And thus our breach is made: but how or when it will be well healed, the Lord knoweth. But this is not all; it behoveth us yet to come nearer home, and inquire into the ways of the present approved godly ministers,

of what party soever ; and doubtless, if we are willing to know ourselves, we may soon find that which will lay us very low before the Lord. I shall in all, have an eye at my own corrupt heart, which I am so far from justifying in this common lamentation, that I take it as my necessary duty to cast the first stone at myself.

The great sins that we are guilty of, I shall not undertake to enumerate ; and therefore my passing over any particular is not to be taken as a denial of it for our justification. But I shall take it to be my duty to give instances of some few, that cry loudly for humiliation and speedy reformation. Only I must needs first premise this profession : that for all the faults that are now among us, I do not believe that ever England had so able and faithful a ministry since it was a nation as it hath at this day ; and I fear that few nations on earth, if any, have the like. Sure I am the change is so great within these twelve years, that it is one of the greatest joys that ever I had in the world to behold it. Oh, how many congregations are now plainly and frequently taught, that lived then in great obscurity ! How many able, faithful men are there now in a county in comparison of what were then ! How graciously hath God prospered the studies of many young men, that were little children in the beginning of the late troubles ; so that now they cloud the most of their seniors ! How many miles would I have gone twenty years ago, and less, to have heard one of those ancient, reverend divines, whose congregations are now grown thin, and their parts esteemed mean by reason of the notable improvement of their juniors ! And in particular, how mercifully hath the

Lord dealt with this poor county, (Worcestershire,) in raising up so many of these, that do credit to their sacred office, and self-denyingly and freely, zealously and unweariedly do lay out themselves for the good of souls! I bless the Lord that hath placed me in such a neighbourhood, where I may have the brotherly fellowship of so many able, humble, unanimous, peaceable, and faithful men. Oh that the Lord would long continue this admirable mercy to this unworthy country! I hope I shall rejoice in God while I have a being for the common change in other parts, that I have lived to see; that so many hundred faithful men are so hard at work for the saving of souls, "*fremtentibus licet et frendentibus inimicis*;" and that more are springing up apace. I know there are some men, whose parts I reverence, who being in point of government of another mind from them, will be offended at my very mention of this happy alteration; but I must profess, if I were absolutely prelati- cal, if I knew my heart, I could not choose for all that but rejoice. What! not rejoice at the prosperity of the Church, because men differ in opinion about its order! Should I shut my eyes against the mercies of the Lord? The souls of men are not so contemptible to me, that I should envy them the bread of life, because it is broken to them by a hand that had not the prelati- cal approbation. Oh that every congregation were thus supplied! But all cannot be done at once. They had a long time to settle a corrupted ministry; and when the ignorant and scandalous are cast out, we cannot create abilities in others for the supply; we must stay the time of their preparation and growth; and then, if England drive not away the gospel by their abuse, even by their

wilful unreformedness, and hatred of the light, they are likely to be the happiest nation under heaven. For as for all the sects and heresies that are creeping in daily and troubling us, I doubt not but the free gospel, managed by an able, self-denying ministry, will effectually disperse and shame them all.

But you may say, this is not confessing sin, but applauding those whose sins you pretend to confess? *Ans.* It is the due acknowledgment of God's graces, and thanksgiving for His admirable mercies, that I may not seem unthankful in confession, much less to cloud or vilify God's graces, while I open the frailties that in many do accompany them.

Among the many things that are yet sadly out of order in the best, I shall touch upon these few particulars following:—

1. One of our most heinous and palpable sins is *pride*; a sin that hath too much interest in the best; but is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in any men. Yet is it so prevalent in some of us, that it inditeth our discourses for us; it chooseth us our company, it formeth our countenances, it putteth the accents and emphasis upon our words: when we reason, it is the determiner and exciter of our cogitations; it fills some men's minds with aspiring desires and designs; it possesseth them with envious and bitter thoughts against those that stand in their light, or by any means do eclipse their glory, or hinder the progress of their idolised reputation. Oh, what a companion, what a tyrannical commander, what a sly, and subtle, and insinuating enemy is this sin of pride! It goes with men to the draper, the mercer, the tailor; it chooseth them their cloth, their trimming, and their



fashion. It dresseth them in the morning, at least the outside. Fewer ministers would ruffle it out in the fashion in hair and habit, if it were not for the command of this tyrannical vice; and I would that were all, or the worst, but, alas! how frequently doth it go with us to our studies, and there sit with us and do our work! How often doth it choose our subject, and more often choose our words and ornaments! God biddeth us be as plain as we can, for the informing of the ignorant, and as convincing and serious as we are able, for the melting and changing of unchanged hearts; but pride stands by and contradicteth all; and sometimes it puts in toys and trifles, and polluteth rather than polisheth, and under pretence of laudable ornaments, it dishonoureth our sermons with childish gauds, as if a prince were to be decked in the habit of a stage-player or a painted fool. It persuadeth us to paint the window, that it may dim the light; and to speak to our people that which they cannot understand, to acquaint them that we are able to speak unprofitably. It taketh off the edge, and dulls the life of all our teachings, under the pretence of filing off the roughness, unevenness, and superfluity. If we have a plain and cutting passage, it throws it away as too rustical and ungrateful. When God chargeth us to deal with men as for their lives, and beseech them with all the earnestness that we are able, this cursed sin controlleth all, and condemneth the most holy commands of God, and calleth our most necessary duty a madness; and saith to us, "What! will you make people think you are mad? Will you make them say you rage or rave? Cannot you speak soberly and moderately?" And thus doth pride make many a

man's sermons, and what pride makes, the devil makes; and what sermons the devil will make, and to what end, we may easily conjecture. Though the matter be of God, yet if the dress, and manner, and end be from Satan, we have no great reason to expect success.

And when pride hath made the sermon, it goes with them into the pulpit; it formeth their tone, it animateth them in the delivery, it takes them off from that which may be displeasing, how necessary soever, and setteth them in a pursuit of vain applause; and the sum of all this is, that it maketh men, both in studying and preaching, to seek themselves, and deny God, when they should seek God's glory, and deny themselves. When they should ask, "What should I say, and how should I say it, to please God best, and do most good?" it makes them ask, "What shall I say, and how shall I deliver it, to be thought a learned, able preacher, and to be applauded by all that hear me?" When the sermon is done, pride goeth home with them, and maketh them more eager to know whether they were applauded, than whether they did prevail for the saving change of souls! They could find in their hearts, but for shame, to ask folks, how they liked them, and to draw out their commendation. If they perceive that they are highly thought of, they rejoice, as having attained their end; but if they perceive that they are esteemed but weak or common men, they are displeased, as having missed the prize of the day.

But yet this is not all, nor the worst, if worse may be. Oh that ever it should be spoken of godly ministers, that they are so set upon popular air, and of sitting highest in men's estimation, that envy the parts

and names of their brethren that are preferred before them, as if all were taken from their praises that is given to another, and as if God had given them His gifts to be the mere ornaments and trappings of their persons, that they may walk as men of reputation in the world, and all His gifts in others were to be trodden down and vilified, if they seem to stand in the way of their honour! What! a saint, a preacher for Christ, and yet envy that which hath the image of Christ, and malign His gifts for which He should have the glory, and all because they seem to hinder our glory! Is not every true Christian a member of the body, and therefore partaketh of the blessings of the whole, and of each particular member thereof? And doth not every man owe thanks to God for his brethren's gifts, not only as having himself a part in them, as the foot hath the benefit of the guidance of the eye; but also because his own ends may be attained by his brethren's gifts as well as by his own? For if the glory of God and the Church's felicity be not his end, he is not a Christian. Will any workman malign another because he helpeth him to do his master's work? Yet, alas! how common is this heinous crime among men of parts and eminence in the Church! They can secretly blot the reputation of those that stand cross to their own: and what they cannot for shame do in plain and open terms, lest they be proved palpable liars and slanderers, they will do in generals and malicious intimations, raising suspicions where they cannot fasten accusations. And so far are some gone in this satanical vice, that it is their ordinary practice, and a considerable part of their business to keep down the estimation of any they dislike, and defame others in the slyest and most

plausible way. And some go so far, that they are unwilling that any one that is abler than themselves should come into their pulpits, lest he should be applauded above themselves. A fearful thing, that any man that hath the least of the fear of God, should so envy God's gifts, and had rather that his carnal hearers were unconverted, and the drowsy not awakened, than that it should be done by another who may be preferred before them. Yea, so far doth this cursed vice prevail, that in great congregations that have need of the help of many teachers, we can scarcely in many places get two in equality to live together in love and quietness, and unanimously to carry on the work of God! But unless one of them be quite below the other in parts, and content to be so esteemed, or unless one be a curate to the other, or ruled by him, they are contending for precedency, and envying each other's interest, and walking with strangeness and jealousy towards one another, to the shame of the profession, and the great wrong of the congregation. I am ashamed to think of it, that when I have been endeavouring with persons of public interest and capacity to further a good work, to convince them of the great necessity of more ministers than one in great congregations, they tell me, they will never agree together! I hope the objection is ungrounded as to the most: but it is a sad case that it should be so with any. Nay, some men are so far gone in pride, that when they might have an equal assistant to further the work of God, they had rather take all the burden upon themselves, though more than they can bear, than that any should share with them in the honour; and for fear lest they should diminish their interest in the people.

Hence, also, it comes to pass, that men so magnify their own opinions, and are as censorious of any that differ from them in lesser things, as if it were all one to differ from them and from God; and expect that all should be conformed to their judgments, as if they were the rulers of the Church's faith! And while we cry down Papal infallibility and determination of controversies, we would, too many of us, be popes ourselves, and have all stand to our determination, as if it were infallible. It is true, we have more modesty than expressly to say so: we pretend that it is only the evidence of truth that appeareth in our reasons that we expect men should yield to, and our zeal is for the truth, and not for ourselves: but as that must needs be taken for truth which is ours, so our reasons must needs be taken for valid; and if they be freely examined, and found to be infirm and fallacious, and so discovered, as we are exceeding backward to see it ourselves, because they are ours, so how angry are we that it should be disclosed to others! We so espouse the cause of our errors, as if all that were spoken against them were spoken against our persons, and we were heinously injured to have our arguments fully confuted, by which we injured the truth and the minds of men! So that the matter is come to that pass through our pride, that if an error or fallacious argument do fall under the patronage of a reverend name, (which is no whit rare,) we must either give it the victory, and give away the truth, or else become injurious to the name that doth patronise it. For though you meddle not with their persons, yet do they put themselves under all the strokes which you give their arguments, and feel it as sensibly as if you had

spoken it of themselves, because they think it will follow in the eyes of men, that weak arguing is a sign of a weak man. If, therefore, you take it for your duty to shame their errors and false reasonings, by discovering their nakedness, they take it as if you shamed their persons; and so their names must be a garrison or fortress to their mistakes, and their reverence must defend all their sayings from the light.

And so high are our spirits, that when it becomes a duty to any man to reprove or contradict us, we are commonly impatient both of the matter and of the manner. We love the man that will say as we say, and be of our opinion, and promote our reputation, though he be less worthy of our love in other respects; but he is ungrateful to us that contradicteth us, and differeth from us, and that dealeth plainly with us in our miscarriages, and telleth us of our faults! Especially in the management of our public arguings, where the eye of the world is upon us, we can scarcely endure any contradiction or plain dealing. I know that railing language is to be abhorred, and that we should be as tender of each other's reputation as our fidelity to the truth will permit: but our pride makes too many of us to think all men contemn us that do not admire us, yea, and admire all that we say, and submit their judgments to our most palpable mistakes! We are so tender, that no man can touch us scarcely but we are hurt; and so stout and high-minded, that a man can scarcely speak to us. Like froward children, or sick folk that cannot endure to be talked to, the fault is not that you speak amiss to them, but that you speak to them. So our indignation is not at men for writing or speaking injuriously or unjustly against

our words, but for confuting them. And a man that is not versed in complimenting, and skilled in flattery above the vulgar rate, can scarcely tell how to handle them so observantly, and fit their expectations at every turn, but there will be some word or some neglect which their high spirits will fasten, and take as injurious to their honour: so that a plain countryman that speaks as he thinks must have nothing to do with them, unless he will be esteemed guilty of dishonouring them.

I confess I have often wondered at it, that this most heinous sin should be made so light of, and thought so consistent with a holy frame of heart and life, when far lesser sins are by ourselves proclaimed to be so damnable in our people! And more have I wondered to see the difference between ungodly sinners and godly preachers in this respect. When we speak to drunkards, worldlings, or any ignorant, unconverted men, we disgrace them as in that condition to the utmost, and lay it on as plainly as we can speak, and tell them of their sin, and shame, and misery: and we expect, not only that they should bear all patiently, but take all thankfully, and we have good reasons for all this; and most that I deal with do take it patiently; and many gross sinners will commend the closest preachers most, and will say that they care not for hearing a man that will not tell them plainly of their sins. But if we speak to a godly minister against his errors or any sin—if we honour them and reverence them, and speak as smoothly as we are able to speak—yea, if we mix commendations with our contradictions or reproofs, if the applause be not apparently predominant, so as to drown all the force of the reproof or confutation,

and if it be not more an applause than a reprehension, they take it as an injury almost insufferable. That is considered railing against them that would be no better than flattery in them to the common people, though the cause may be as great.

Brethren, I know this is a sad and harsh confession ; but that all this should be so among us, should be more grievous to us than to be told of it. Could this nakedness be hid, I should not have disclosed it, at least so openly in the view of all. But, alas ! it is long ago open in the eyes of the world : we have dishonoured ourselves by idolising our honour ; we print our shame, and preach our shame, and tell it unto all. Some will think that I speak over charitably to call such persons godly men, in whom so great a sin doth so much prevail. I know where it is indeed predominant, and not hated, bewailed, and mortified in the man, there can be no true godliness ; and I leave every man to a cautious jealousy and search of his own heart. But if all are graceless that are guilty of any, or many, or most of the forementioned discoveries of pride, the Lord be merciful to the ministers of this land, and give us quickly another spirit ; for grace is a rarer thing than most of us have supposed it to be.

Yet I must needs say, that it is not all that I intend. To the praise of grace be it spoken, we have some among us here, and I doubt not but it is so in other parts, that are eminent in humility, and lowliness, and condescension, and exemplary herein to their flocks and to their brethren ; and it is their glory, and shall be their glory ; and maketh them truly honourable and amiable in the eyes of God and themselves : and



oh that the rest of us were but such ! But, alas ! this is not the case of all.

Oh that the Lord would lay us at His feet, in the tears of unfeigned sorrow for this sin ! Brethren, may I take leave a little to expostulate this case with my own heart and you, that we may see the shame of our sin, and be reformed ? Is not pride the sin of devils, the firstborn of hell ? Is it not that wherein Satan's image doth much consist ? and is it tolerable evil in a man that is so engaged against him and his kingdom as we are ? The very design of the gospel doth tend to self-abasing ; and the work of grace is begun and carried on in humiliation. Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature : it is a contradiction to be a sanctified man, or a true Christian, and not humble. All that will be Christians must be Christ's disciples, and come to Him to learn ; and their lesson is, to be meek and lowly. Oh, how many precepts and admirable examples hath our Lord and Master given us to this end ! Can we once conceive of Him as purposely washing and wiping His servants' feet, and yet be stout and lordly still ! Shall He converse with the meanest, and we avoid them as contemptible people, and think none but persons of riches and honour to be fit for our society ! How many of us are oftener found in the houses of gentlemen, than in the poor cottages of those that have most need of our help ! There are many of us that would think it base to be daily with the most needy and beggarly people to instruct them in the matters of life, and supply their wants, as if we had taken charge only of the souls of the rich ! Alas ! what is it that we have to be proud of ? Of our

bodies? Why, are they not made of the like materials as the brutes, and must they not shortly be as loathsome and abominable as the dung? Is it of our graces? Why, the more we are proud of them, the less we have to be proud of. And when so much of the nature of grace is in humility, it is a great absurdity to be proud of it. Is it of our learning, knowledge, abilities, and gifts? Why, surely if we have any knowledge at all, we must needs know much reason to be humble; and if we know more than others, we must know more reason than others do to be humble. How little is it that the most learned know, in comparison of that which yet they are ignorant of? And to know that things are past your reach, and to know how ignorant you are, one would think should be no great cause of pride! However, do not the devils know more than you? And will you be proud of that which the devils do excel you in? Yea, to some I may say, as Salvian, lib. 4, de Gubern., p. 98, "Quid tibi blandiris, O homo quisquis es, Credulitate, quæ sine timore atque obsequio Dei nulla est? aliquid plus Dæmones habent. Tu enim unam rem habes tantummodo; illi duas. Tu credulitatem habes; non habes timorem: illi et credulitatem habent pariter et timorem." Our very business is to teach the great lesson of self-denial and humility to our people, and how unfit is it then that we should be proud ourselves! We must study humility, and preach humility, and must we not possess and practise it? A proud preacher of humility, is at least a self-condemning man.

What a sad case is it, that so vile a sin is no more easily discerned by us! But many that are most proud, can blame it in others, and take no notice of it in

themselves. The world takes notice of some among us that they have aspiring minds, and seek for the highest rooms, and must be rulers, and bear the sway wherever they come, or else there is no standing before them. No man must contradict them that will not partake of the fruits of their indignation. In any consultations, they come not to search after truth, but to dictate to others that perhaps are fit to teach them. In a word, they have such arrogant, domineering spirits, that the world rings of it; and yet they will not see it in themselves.

Brethren, I desire to deal closely with my own heart and yours. I beseech you consider, whether it will save us to speak well of the grace that we are without; or to speak against the sin that we live in? Have not many of us cause to inquire once and again, whether sincerity can consist with such a measure of pride? When we are telling the drunkard that he cannot be saved unless he become temperate; and the fornicator, that he cannot be saved unless he become chaste, (an undoubted truth :) have we not as great reason if we are proud, to say of ourselves, that we cannot be saved unless we become humble? Certainly, pride is a greater sin than whoredom, or drunkenness; and humility is as necessary as chastity and sobriety. Truly, brethren, a man may as certainly, and more slyly and dangerously make haste to hell in a way of profession, and earnest preaching of the gospel, and seeming zeal for a holy life, as in a way of drunkenness and filthiness; for what is true holiness but a devotedness to God, and a living to Him? And what is a wicked and damnable state, but a devotedness to our carnal selves, and a living to ourselves? And

doth any man live more to himself, or less to God, than the proud? And may not pride make a preacher study for himself, and pray, and preach, and live for himself, even when he seemeth to outgo others in the work, if he therefore outgo them, that he may have the glory of it from men? It is not the work without the principle and end that will prove us upright: the work may be God's, and yet we do it not for God, but for ourselves. I confess I feel such continual danger in this point, that if I do not watch against it, lest I should study for myself, and preach for myself, and write for myself, rather than for Christ, I should soon miscarry; and after all, I justify not myself, when I must condemn the sin. Consider, I beseech you, brethren, what baits there are in the work of the ministry, to entice a man to be selfish; that is, to be carnal and impious, even in the highest work of piety! The fame of a godly man is as great a snare as the fame of a learned man: and woe to him that takes up with the fame of godliness instead of godliness. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. When the times were all for learning and empty formalities, then the temptation of the proud did lie that way; but now through the unspeakable mercy of God, the most lively, practical preaching is in credit, and godliness itself is in credit: and now the temptation to proud men is here, even to pretend to be zealous preachers and godly men. Oh, what a fine thing doth it seem to have the people crowd to hear us, and to be affected with what we say, and that we command their judgments and affections! What a taking thing is it to be cried up as the ablest and godliest man in the country, and to be famed through the land for the highest spiritual excellencies! Alas! brethren, a little grace will serve

turn to make you to join yourselves with the forwardest of those men, that have these inducements or encouragements. To have the people plead for you as their felicity, and call you the pillars of the Church of God; and their fathers, the chariots and horsemen of Israel, and no lower language than excellent men, and able divines, and to have them depend upon you, and be ruled by you; though this may be no more than their duty; yet I must again tell you, that a little grace may serve to make you seem zealous men for this. Nay, pride may do it without any special grace. Oh, therefore, be jealous of yourselves, and in all your studies be sure to study humility. "He that exalteth himself shall be brought low, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." I observe commonly, that almost all men good and bad do loathe the proud, and love the humble: so far doth pride contradict itself, unless it be where it purposely hideth itself, and, as conscious of its own deformity, doth borrow the homely dress of humility. And we have cause to be the more jealous, because it is the most radicated vice, and as hardly as any extirpated from the soul. "Nam sæpe sibi de se mens ipsa mentitur, et fingit se de bono opere amare quod non amat: de mundi autem gloria, non amare quod amat;" inquit Gregor. M. de cura Pastor, p. l. c. 9. When it was a disgrace to a man to be a godly, zealous preacher, then had not pride such a bait as now. As the same Gregory saith, *ibid.*, p. 21, c. 8, "Eo tempore quo quisquis plebibus præerat primus ad Martyris tormenta ducebatur; Tunc laudabile fuit Episcopatum quærere, quando per hunc quemque dubium non erat ad supplicia majora pervenire."

But it is not so now, as he saith in another place,

cap. l. initio : “Sed quia authore Deo ad Religionis reverentiam omne jam præsentis seculi culmen inclinatur, sunt nonnulli qui intra sanctam Ecclesiam per speciem regiminis gloriam affectant honoris ; Videri Doctores appetunt, transcendere cæteros concupiscunt, atque attestante veritate, primas salutationes in foro, primos recubitus in cœnis, primas cathedras in conventibus quærunt, qui susceptum curæ Pastoralis officium ministrare digne tanto magis nequeunt, quanto ad hujus humilitatis magisterium ex sola elatione pervenerunt ; ipsa quippe in Magisterio lingua confunditur, quando aliud discitur, et aliud docetur.” (Hactenus Gregorius, et ipse nimis magnus.)

But I have stood longer upon this sin than is proportionable to the rest of my work. I shall be the shorter in the confession of some of the rest.

2. Another sin the ministers of England, and much more of many other Churches, are sadly guilty of, is *undervaluing the unity and peace of the whole Church*. Though I scarcely ever met with any that will not speak for unity and peace, or at least that will expressly speak against it, yet is it not common to meet with those that are addicted to promote it ; but too commonly do we find men averse to it, and jealous of it, if not themselves the instruments of division. The Papists have so long abused the name of the Catholic Church, that in opposition to them, many do either put it out of their creeds, or only fill up room with the name, while they understand not or consider not the nature of the thing, or think it enough to believe that there is such a body, though they behave not themselves as sensible members of it. If the Papists will idolise the Church, shall we therefore deny it, dis-

regard it, or divide? It is a great and common sin through the Christian world to take up religion in a way of faction, and instead of a love and tender care of the Universal Church, to confine that love and respect to a party. Not but that we must prefer in our estimation and communion the purer parts before the impure, and refuse to participate with any in their sins, but the most infirm and diseased part should be compassionated and assisted to the utmost of our power, and communion must be held as far as is lawful, and nowhere avoided but upon the urgency of necessity. As we must love those of our neighbourhood that have the plague or leprosy, and afford them all the relief we can, and acknowledge all our just relations to them, and communicate to them, though we may not have local communion with them; and in other diseases which are not so infectious we may be the more with them for their help, by how much the more they need it. Of the multitude that say they are of the Catholic Church, it is too rare to meet with men of a catholic spirit; men have not a universal consideration of and respect to the whole Church, but look upon their own party as if it were the whole. If there be some called Lutherans, some Calvinists, some, among these, of subordinate divisions, and so of other parties among us, most of them will pray hard for the prosperity of their party, and rejoice and give thanks accordingly when it goes well with them; but if any party suffer, they little regard it, as if it were no loss at all to the Church. If it be the smallest parcel that possesseth not many nations, no, nor cities on earth, they are ready to carry it as if they were the whole Church, and as if it went well with the Church in the

Romish pale, and no doubt but this is an abominable schism; but alas! how many do imitate them too far while we reprove them! And as they foist the word *Roman* into their creed, and turn the Catholic Church into the Roman Catholic Church, as if there were no other Catholics, and the Church were of no larger extent; so it is with many others, as to their several parties. Some will have it to be the Lutheran Catholic Church, as if it were all reformed; some the Anabaptist Catholic Church, and so of some others. And if they differ not among themselves, they are little troubled at differing from others, though it be from almost all the Christian world. The peace of their party they take for the peace of the Church. No wonder, therefore, if they carry it no further.

How rare is it to meet with a man that smarteth or bleedeth with the Church's wounds, or sensibly taketh them to heart as his own, or that ever had solicitous thoughts of a cure! No, but almost every party thinks that the happiness of the rest consisteth only in turning to them; and because they be not of their mind, they cry, "Down with them," and are glad to hear of their fall, as thinking that is the way to the Church's rising—that is, their own. How few are there that understand the true state of controversies between the several parties, or that ever well discerned how many of them are but verbal, and how many are real! And if those that understand it do, in order to right information and accommodation, disclose it to others, it is taken as an extenuation of their error and a carnal compliance with them in their sin. Few men grow zealous of peace till they grow old, or have much experience of men's spirits and principles,



and see better the true state of the Church and several differences than they did before. And then they begin to write their "Irenicons," and many such are extant at this day. Pareus, Junius, and many more, have done their parts; as our Davenant, Morton, Hall—whose excellent treatise called "The Peacemaker," and his "Pax Terris," deserve to be transcribed upon all our hearts—Hattonus, Amyraldus, also have done. But "*recipiuntur ad modum recipientis*," as a young man in his heat of lust and passion was judged to be no fit auditor of moral philosophy, so we find that those same young men who may be zealous for peace and unity, when they are grown more experienced, are zealous for their factions against these in their youthful heat. And therefore, such as these before mentioned, and Duræus, who hath made it the business of his life, do seldom do much greater good than to quiet their own consciences in the discharge of so great a duty, and to moderate some few and save them from further guilt, and to leave behind them when they are dead a witness against a wilful, self-conceited, and unpeaceable world.

Nay, commonly it bringeth a man under suspicion either of favouring some heresy, or abating his zeal, if he do but attempt a pacificatory work: as if there were no zeal necessary for the great fundamental verities for the Church's unity and peace, but only for parties and some particular truths.

And a great advantage the devil hath got this way, by employing his own agents, the unhappy Socinians, in writing so many treatises for catholic and arch-catholic unity and peace, which they did for their own ends, and would have done it on insufficient terms;

by which means the enemy of peace hath brought it to pass, that whoever maketh motion for peace, is presently under suspicion of being one that hath need of it for an indulgence of his own errors. A fearful case, that heresy should be credited, as if none were such friends to unity and peace as they ; and that so great and necessary a duty, upon which the Church's welfare doth so depend, should be brought into such suspicion or disgrace !

Brethren, I speak not all this without apparent reason. We have as sad divisions among us in England, considering the piety of the persons, and the smallness of the matter of our discord, as most nations under heaven have known. The most that keeps us at odds is but about the right form and order of church-government. Is the distance so great that Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Independent might not be well agreed ? Were they but heartily willing and forward for peace, they might—I know they might. I have spoken with some moderate men of all the parties, and I perceive by their confessions it were an easy work. Were men's hearts but sensible of the Church's case, and unfeignedly touched with love to one another, and did they but heartily set themselves to seek it, the settling of a safe and happy peace were an easy work. If we could not in every point agree, we might easily find out, and narrow our differences, and hold communion upon our agreement in the main ; determining of the safest way for the managing of our few and small agreements, without the danger or trouble of the Church. But is this much done ? It is not done. Let each party flatter themselves now as they please, it will be recorded to the shame of the ministry of

England, while the gospel shall abide in the Christian world. What will be recorded? What! Why, this: That learned and godly ministers in England did first disagree among themselves, and head and lead on their people in those disagreements! That they proceeded in them for the space of fourteen years already; how much more will be, God knows, and in all that time had as great advantages and opportunities for agreement as any people in the world. They had the sad experience of the conflagration of the Commonwealth, and were scourged to it by a calamitous war. They saw the fearful confusions of the Church; and the perverting of multitudes of seduced souls, some to be Seekers, some Socinians, some Ranters, Quakers, or Infidels. They saw the continual exasperation of minds, and the jealousies and bitterness that their distance bred, and how it was the fuel of a daily course of sin: and yet for all these, they were moved little to them. They had magistrates that did not hinder them from the work; but gave them full liberty to have consulted and endeavoured a full agreement. They lived near together, and might have easily met together for the work: and if one or two or an hundred meetings could not have accomplished it, they might have held on till it was done. And yet for all this there is no such thing done, nor any considerable attempt yet made. And, oh, what heinous aggravations do accompany this sin! Never men since the apostles' days, I think, did make greater profession of godliness: the most of them are bound by solemn oaths and covenants, for unity and reformation. They all confess the worth of peace; and most of them will preach of it, and talk

for it, while they sit still and neglect it, as if it were not worth the looking after. They will read and preach on those texts that command men to follow peace with all men, and as much as in us lieth, if it be possible, to live peaceably with them; and yet we are so far from following it, and doing all that we possibly can for it, that too many will snarl at it, and malign and censure any that endeavour it, as if all zeal for peace did proceed from an abatement of our zeal for holiness; and as if holiness and peace were so fallen out, that there were no reconciling them; when yet they have found, by long experience, that concord is a sure friend to piety, and piety always moves to concord. We have seen how errors and heresies breed by discord, as discord is bred and fed by them. We have seen to our sorrow that where the servants of God should live together as one, of one heart, and one soul, and one lip, and should promote each other's faith and holiness, and admonish and assist each other against sin, and rejoice together in the hope of their future glory, we have contrarily lived in mutual jealousies, and drowned holy love in bitter contendings; and have studied to disgrace and undermine one another, and to increase our own parties by right or wrong; and we that were wont to glory of our love to the brethren, as the certain mark of our sincerity in the faith, have now turned it into a love of the party only, and those that are against that party have more of our spleen, and envy, and malice, than love. I know this is not so with all, nor prevalently with any true believer, but yet it is so common that it may cause us to question the sincerity of many that are thought by themselves and others to be most sincere. And it is not ourselves

only that are scorched in this flame, but we have drawn our people into it, and cherished them in it, so that most of the godly in the nation are fallen into several parties, and have turned much of their ancient piety into vain opinions, and vain disputes, and envyings, and animosities. Yea, whereas it was wont to be made the certain mark of a graceless wretch to deride the godly, how few are there now that stick at secret deriding and slandering those that are not of their opinion! A pious, prelatical man can reverently scorn and slander a Presbyterian; and some of them an Independent; and an Independent both. And which is the worst of all, the common ignorant people take notice of all this, and do not only deride us, but are hardened by us against religion; and when we go about to persuade them to be religious, they see so many parties that they know not which to join with, and think that it is as good be of none at all, as of any, when they are uncertain which is right; and thus thousands are grown into contempt of all religion by our divisions; and poor, carnal wretches begin to think themselves in the better case of the two, because they hold to their old formalities, when we hold to nothing. Yea, and these pious contenders do more effectually plead the devil's cause against one another, than any of the ignorant people can do. They can prove one another deceivers, and blasphemers, and what not; and this by secret slanders among all that they can handsomely vent them to; and, perhaps, also by public disputation, and printed slanderous books. So that when the obstinate drunkards are at a loss, and have nothing to say of their own, against a man that would drive them from their sin, they are prompted by the

railing books or reports of factious, zealous malice; then they can say, "I regard him not, nor his doctrine; such a man hath proved him a deceiver and a blasphemer; let him answer him if he can." And thus the lies and slanders of some, (for that is no news,) and the bitter, opprobrious speeches of others, have more effectually done the devil's service, under the name of Orthodoxy and Zeal for Truth, than the malignant scorers of godliness could have done it. So that the matter is come to that pass, that there are few men of note of any party, but the reproaches of the other parties are so publicly upon them that the ignorant and wicked rabble that should be converted by them, have learnt to be orthodox, and to vilify and scorn them. Mistake me not: I do not slight orthodoxy, nor jeer at the name; but disclose the pretences of devilish zeal in pious, or seemingly pious men. If you are offended with me for my harsh language, because I can tell you that I learnt it of God, I dare be bold, therefore, to tell you further, that you have far more cause to be offended at your satanical practices. The thing itself is surely odious, if the name be so odious as to turn your stomachs. How should the presence and guilt of it terrify you, if the name make you start! I know that many of the reverend calumniators do think that they shew that soundness in the faith, and love to the truth, which others want. But I will resolve the case in the words of the Holy Ghost, "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying (or zealoussness) and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not

against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying (or bitter zeal) and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." (James iii.) I pray you read these words again and again, and study them.

Oh, doleful case to think of! that a while ago we were afraid of nothing, but lest Papists and deoboist persons should have swallowed up the gospel and our liberty, and destroyed us together; and now when the work hath been put into the hands of those men, that were joined in these fears, and are joined in the strictest profession of piety, and are of one judgment in all the articles of the faith, they cannot, or will not unanimously join in carrying on the work; but they either fall upon one another, or live at a distance, and cast their work upon an hundred disadvantages by the bitter disagreements that are among themselves! Oh, what a nation might England have been ere now, if it had not been for the proud and obstinate contentions of godly ministers! What abundance of good might we have done! Nay, what might we not have done, if our perverseness had not marred our work! Did we but agree among ourselves, our words would have some authority with the people; but when they see us some of one mind, and some of another, and snarling and reviling at each other, they think they may well enough do so too. "Why may not we call them sectaries or deceivers," say they, "when they call one another

so ?” Nay, if we were not all of a mind in some smaller matters, yet if we did but hold communion and correspondence, and join together in the main, and do as much of God’s work as we can in concurrent unanimity, the people would far more regard us, and we might be in a greater capacity to do them good. But when we are single, they slight us; and when we disagree and divide, they despise us; and who can marvel at it, when we despise one another! “What!” say they, when a minister doth his duty alone, “must we be ruled by every singular man? Are you wiser than all the ministers in the country? Are not such and such as learned as you?” But when we go hand in hand, it stops their mouths. They think either themselves may be wiser than one or two ministers, or at least other ministers may be wiser than they; but common modesty will not suffer them to think that they are wiser than all the ministers in the country, or in the world. I know that matters of faith are not to be received upon our credit alone; but yet our credit may do much to remove prejudice, and to unblock the entrance into men’s minds, and procure the truth a more equal hearing, and therefore is necessary to our people’s good.

Nay, more than all this—I know it—I see and hear it—that there are some ministers that are glad when they perceive the people despise their brethren that differ from them in some lesser things; they would have it so, and they foment it as far as they can for shame; and they secretly rejoice when they hear the news of it. This is next to prelatical silencing them, and casting them out of the Church. And I confess, I cannot but suspect that such men would go near to



silence them, if they had their will and way; for he that would have a minister under disgrace, would have him useless, which is next to silencing him, and tendeth to the same end. You will say, "We do not desire that he should be disabled to do good, but to do hurt." I answer, But the question is, whether his error be so great, that the holding or propagating it doth more hurt than all his preaching, and the labours of that whole party which you would disgrace, is likely to do good? If so, then I think it is a desirable work to disgrace him, and silence him in a just measure, and by just means, and I would concur therein; but if it be otherwise, we are bound to keep up that reputation with others, which is necessary ordinarily to the success of their labours.

I may not here, without wrong to my conscience, pass over the late practices of some of our brethren of the new prelatival way, for those of the ancient prelacy are more moderate. I know it will be displeasing to them, and I have no mind to displease them; but yet I will more avoid the treacherous or unfaithful silence which may wrong them, than the words of faithful friendship, which may displease them; and I will say no more to them, than, if I know myself, I should say if I were resolved for prelacy. It is the judgment of these men that I now speak of, that a prelate is essential to a church, and there is no church without them; and that their ordination is of necessity to the essence of a presbyter; and that those that are ordained without them (though some will except a case of necessity) are not ministers of Christ. Hereupon they conclude that our congregations, here in England, are no true churches, except where the presbyter dependeth

on some prelate, and the ministers ordained by presbyters only are no true ministers; and they will not allow men to hear them, or communicate with them, but withdraw from our congregations like Separatists or Recusants. And the same note many of them brand upon all the Reformed Churches abroad, that have no prelates, as they do on us: so that the Church of Rome is admirably gratified by it; and instead of demanding where our Church was before Luther, they begin to demand of us where it is now? And, indeed, had it been no more visible in the ages before Luther, than a reformed prelatical church is now, they would have a fairer pretence than now they have, to call upon us for the proof of its visibility. Suppose that the presbyters who rejected prelacy were guilty of all that schism and other sin, as they are ordinarily accused of, (for I will now go on such suppositions,) must the people therefore turn their backs on the assemblies and ordinances of God? Is it better for them to have no preaching, and no sacraments, and no public communion in God's worship, than to have it in an assembly that hath not a prelate over it, or from a minister ordained without his consent? I confess I would not for the world stand guilty before God of the injury that this doctrine hath already done to men's souls, much less of what it evidently tendeth to. They lay out themselves faithfully for the healing of that ignorance and common profaneness which got so much head under their careless or drunken predecessors. They desire nothing more than the saving of souls; they preach sound doctrine; they live in peace; and it is the greatest of their grief that many of their hearers remain so ignorant and obstinate still. And

see what a help these poor impenitent sinners have for their cure! They are taught to turn their backs upon their teachers; and whereas before they heard them but with disregard, they are now taught not to hear them at all; and if we privately speak to them, they can tell us that it is the judgment of such and such learned men that we are not to be heard, nor our churches to be communicated with, nor we to be at all regarded as Christ's ministers. And thus drunkards, and swearers, and worldlings, and all sorts of sensualists, are got out of gun-shot, and beyond the reach of our teaching or reproof; and those that do not (for shame of the world) obey their doctrine to stay from the assembly, yet do they there hear us with prejudice and contempt, and from the communion of the Church in the Lord's Supper they commonly abstain. Were it only the case of these few civil persons that conscientiously go this way, and address themselves to these kind of men for government and sacraments, I would never have mentioned the thing; for it is not them that I intend. For what care I what minister they hear or obey, so it be one that leadeth them in the ways of truth and holiness? Let them follow Christ, and forsake their sins, and go to heaven, and I will never contend with them for the forsaking of my conduct. But it is the common sort of profane and sensual men that are everywhere hardened against the ministry, and they have nothing but the reputation of the prelatical divines to countenance it with. If their teachers do but differ in a gesture from these men, they vilify them and reject their guidance, having nothing but the authority of such men to support them. Fain would we reach our consciences to awaken them

from their security; for it pitieth us to see them so near unto perdition. But we can do no good upon them, for our ministry is in contempt because of the contrary judgment of these men. Not that the poor people care any more for a prelate, as such, than for an ordinary minister: for if prelates would have troubled them as much with their preaching, and reproofs, and discipline, they would have hated them as much as they do the ministers. But because they found by experience that under their government they might sin quietly, and make a scorn of godliness without any danger or trouble, and that to this day the men of that way are so much against those precise ministers, that will not let them go quietly to hell, therefore are they all for prelacy, and make this the great shelter for their disobedience and unreformed lives. So that I confess I think that the hurt that Separatists and Anabaptists do in England at this day is little to the hurt that is done by these men: for I count that the greatest hurt which hardeneth the greatest number in the state and way of greatest danger. An Anabaptist may yet be a penitent and godly person, and be saved; but the sensual and impenitent worldlings can never be saved in that condition. I see by experience, that if separation infect two or three, or half a score in a parish, or if Anabaptistry infect as many, and perhaps neither of them mortally, this obstinate contempt of ministerial exhortation, encouraged by the countenance of the contrary minded, doth infect them by the scores or hundreds. If we come to them in a case where they have no countenance from the ministry, how mute or tractable, comparatively, do we find them! But if it be a case where they can but say

that the prelatical divines are of another judgment, how unmoveable are they, though they have nothing else to say! Try, when we come to set on foot this work that we are now upon of catechising and private instruction, whether this will not be one of our greatest impediments, though in a work of unquestioned lawfulness and necessity: even because they are taught that we are none of their pastors, and have no authority over them. I know that some of these men are learned and reverend, and intend not such mischievous ends as these: the hardening of men in ignorance is not their design, but this is the thing effected. To intend well in doing ill, is no rarity. Who can, in reverence to any men on earth, sit still and hold his tongue, while he seeth the people thus run to their own destruction, and the souls of men be undone by the contendings of divines for their several parties and interests? The Lord, that knows my heart, knows that, if I know it myself, as I am not of any one of these parties, so I speak not a word of this in a factious partiality for one party, or against another, as such; much less in spleen against any person; but if I durst in conscience, I would have silenced all this, for fear of giving them offence whom I much honour. But what am I but a servant of Christ? and what is my life worth, but to do Him service? and whose favour can recompense for the ruin of the Church? and who can be silent while souls are undone? Not I, for my part, while God is my Master, His Word my rule, His work my business, and the success of it, for the saving of men, my end. Who can be reconciled to that which so lamentably crosseth his Master's interest and His main end? Nor yet would I have spoken any of this, if it

had been only in respect to my own charge; yet I bless God the sore is but small in comparison of what it is in many other places. But the observation of some neighbour congregations, and others more remote, methinks should make the very contrary-minded divines relent, if they were present with them.

Would it be a pleasant hearing to them, to hear a crowd of scandalous men to reproach their ministers that would draw them to repentance, and to tell them they have no authority over them, and all this under the pretence and shelter of their judgments? Had they rather men went to hell, than be taught the way to heaven by presbyters that had not their imposition of hands? Is that point of order more necessary than the substance of the work, or the end itself? Nay, I must needs in faithfulness say yet more, that it is no credit to the cause of those reverend men, nor ever was, that the generality of the most wicked men, and haters and contemners of all devotion, are the great friends and maintainers of it; and the befriending of such a party did more to gain their love, than to save their souls; and the engaging such a party for them, hath not been the least cause of their fall. This is true, however it be taken.

And what a case would the churches of England be in, if we should yield to the motions of these reverend men! Supposing that men's judgments are not at their own wills, and therefore many cannot see the reasons for prelacy, must we all give up our charges as no true ministers, and desert the congregations as no true churches? Why, whom will they then set over them in our stead? First, it is known that they cannot, if they had fit men, procure them what

liberty their way requires, because of the discountenance of authority: and it is known that they have not fit men for one congregation of very many. And had they rather that the doors were shut up, and God had no public worship, nor the people any public teaching or sacraments, than any but they should have a hand in the performance of it? Or if the ministers keep their places, can they wish all the congregation to stay at home, and live like heathens? Nay, are they not angry with us for casting out a grossly ignorant, insufficient, scandalous sort of ministers, who were the great means of the perdition of the people whose souls they had taken charge of? As for the casting out any able, godly men upon mere differences about the late troubles and state affairs, I speak not of it, I approve not of it; if any such thing were done, let them maintain it if they can that did it, for I neither can nor will. But it is a very sad case, that any men of judgment and piety would not only be indifferent in matters of such moment, but should think it a persecution, and an injury to their party and cause, to have hundreds of unworthy wretches to be ejected, when it was a work of so great necessity to the Church.

And indeed, by all this they plainly shew what a condition they would reduce this nation into again, if it were in their power. Surely they that would have the people disown and withdraw from them as being no ministers, and turn their backs on the word and sacraments, would silence them if they could: I think there is no doubt of that. And surely they that are so offended that the insufficient and scandalous ones are cast out, would have them in again if they could. And

if this be the change that they desire, let them not blame men that believe the Scripture, and value men's salvation, if they have no mind of their change. If it were a matter of mere opinion, we should be more indifferent with them ; or if the question were only whether men would be conducted in ways of holiness by a prelate, or by mere presbyters only, we should think it of less moment than the matter that is before us : but when it comes to this pass, that the prince of darkness must be so gratified, and so much of the Church of Christ delivered overmuch into his power, and the people led by multitudes to perdition, and all for the upholding of our own parties, or interests, or conceits, we cannot make light of such matters as these : these are not mere speculations, but matters that are so obvious to sense and Christian experience, that they must not think much that serious, experienced Christians are against them.

But that I be not mistaken, it is far from my thoughts to speak what I have done of any peaceable man of the prelatical way, or to meddle in the controversy of the best way of government : nor do I speak to any of the new prelatical way, but only those who are guilty of the miscarriages which I have spoken of ; and for them I had rather bear their indignation than the Church should bear the fruits of their destructive, intemperate conceits.

The most common cause of our divisions and unpeaceableness, is men's high estimation of their own opinions. And it ordinarily worketh these two ways : sometimes by setting men upon novelties, and sometimes by a censorious condemning of all that differ from the party that they are of.



Some are as busy in their inquiries after new doctrines, as if the Scripture were not perfect, or Christ had not told us all that is necessary; or the way to heaven were not in all ages one and the same, from Christ to the end of the world; or the Church were not still the same thing. And they look not only after new discoveries in lesser things, but they are making us new Articles of Faith, and framing out new ways to heaven. The body of Popery came in at this door; their new fundamentals were received on these terms; their new Catholic Church, which their forefathers knew not, was thus set up. Before, it consisted of all Christians throughout the world; and now it must consist of none but the Pope's subjects. So it is with the Anabaptists; they must now, in the end of the world, have a new church for Christ, even in the natural capacity of the matter! Never since the creation can it be proved that God had anywhere a church on earth where infants were excluded from being members, if there were any among them. They were members before the law, under the promise, under the law, and under the gospel, through the Christian world, to this day; and yet they would needs make Christ a church now without them,—as if Christ had missed it in the forming of His Church till now; or as if He begun to be weary of infants in His Church now at last; or as if the providence of God did now begin to be awakened to have a rightly formed church in the conclusion of the world, and to eject those infants as incapable, who till now have been in the bosom of His family!

Yea, this disturbing vice doth also work by setting a higher rate of necessity upon some truths than the

Church of Christ had ever done; when we will needs make that to be of absolute certainty, which hath been either not before received, or but as a dark and doubtful thing, and we will make that to be of necessity to salvation, which the former ages did hold but as a point of a far lower nature, which some were for and some against, without any great disagreement or mutual censure. I confess I do hold some points of doctrine myself to be true, which I cannot find that the Church, or any in it, did hold of many ages after the apostles; but then I cannot lay such a stress on them as to think them of necessity to the welfare of the Church and the saving of souls; as the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all the justified, and some few more. If I may think that Austin, Prosper, and all the Church in those ages, did err therein, (as I think they did;) yet to think that they erred fundamentally, were to think that Christ had no church. I will not take the judgment or practice of the Church, in any age since the apostles', as my rule of faith and life; but I will suppose that they had all things, in the most defiled age, that were of absolute necessity to salvation. I know that we must be justified in the same way as they were, and upon the same terms. Faith is the same thing now as it was then, and hath the same object to apprehend for our justification, and the same office in order to our justification. Many new notions are brought in by disputers, which must not be made matters of necessity to the soundness or integrity of the Church's faith. We may talk of peace as long as we live, but we shall never obtain it but by returning to the apostolical simplicity. The Papists' faith is too big for all men

to agree upon; or all their own, if they enforced it not with arguments drawn from the fire, the halter, and the strappado. And many Anti-Papists do too much imitate them in the tedious length of their subscribed confessions and novelty of impositions, when they go furthest from them in the quality of the things imposed. I shall speak my mind to these in the words of Vincentius Lirinensis, cap. 26:—"Mirari satis nequeo tantam quorundum hominum vœsaniam, tantam excœcatæ mentis impietatem; tantam postremo errandi libidinem, ut contenti non sint traditâ semel et acceptâ antiquitus credendi regulâ; sed nova ac nova in diem quærunt, semperque aliquid gestiant religioni addere, mutare, detrahere: Quasi non cœleste dogma sit quod semel revelatum esse sufficiat, sed terrena institutio, quæ aliter perfici nisi assidua emendatione, immo potius reprehensione non possit." When we once return to the ancient simplicity of faith, then, and not till then, we shall return to the ancient love and peace.

But the pride of men's hearts doth make them so overvalue their own conceptions, that they expect all men else should be of their mind, and bow down to those reasons which others can see through, while they are as confident as if there were no room for doubting. Every sect is usually confident in their own way, and as they value themselves, so they do their reasons. And hereupon arise such breaches in affections and communion as there are, while most men cry down the divisions of others, but maintain the like. Some will have no communion with our churches, because we have some members that they take to be ungodly, and do not pull up the tares in doubt-

ful, unproved cases, where we cannot do it without pulling up the wheat. Others are so confident that infants should be unbaptized, and out of the Church, that they will be of no church that hath infant members, till these scandalous infants be (I say not excommunicated, for that supposeth a prior right, but) taken as such that have no part or fellowship in the business, they will not join with such a society. Christ tells us, that except we become as little children, we shall not enter into His kingdom; and they say, except little children be kept out of the Church, they will not enter or abide in it. Is not this extreme height of spirit to be so confident, as to avoid communion upon it, in a case where the Church hath been in all ages, or almost all, by their own confession, so much against them? Would they not have separated from the whole Church on the same ground, if they had lived in these times? Others, as is before said, are so confident that we are no ministers or churches for want of prelatical ordination and government, that they separate also, or deny communion with us. And thus every party in the height of their self-conceitedness is ready to divide, and condemn all others that are not of their mind.

And it usually falls out that this confidence doth but betray men's ignorance, and that too many make up that in passion and wilfulness which they want in reason. How many have I heard zealously condemning what they little understand? It is a far easier matter to say that another man is erroneous, or heretical, or rail at him as a deceiver or blasphemer, than to give a sound account of our belief. And as I remember twenty years ago, I have observed it the

common trick of a company of ignorant, formal preachers, to get the repute of that learning which they wanted, by railing at the Puritans as being all unlearned; so it is now the trick of some that can scarcely give a sound reason for any controverted part of their belief.

The truth is, most ministers in the world do take up their opinions in compliance with their several parties; and they look more who believeth it, than what is believed, and on what ground; or they have nothing but what is spoken by the men that they must concur with: and thus too many take up their religion in a faction, even the truth itself; and therefore they must speak against those that they hear that party speak against. As Prosper said of the detractors of Austin, *Præf. ad capit. Gall.*, “*Injustis opprobriis Catholici prædicatoris memoria carpitur; in quod peccatum cadunt, qui aliena instigatione commoti; scriptorem celeberrimi nominis promptius habent culpæ, quam nosse.*” And as Salvian saith in his Preface ad Salonium: ad *Cathol. Eccles.*, “*Tam imbecilia sunt judicia hujus temporis, ac pene tam nulla, ut qui legunt, non tam considerant quid legant, quam cujus legant: nec tam dictionis vim atque virtutem quam dictatoris cogitant dignitatem.*” How many a hot dispute have I heard of several subjects, which the disputants have been forced to manifest that they understood not! And yet they will drive all to damnatory conclusions, when the parties understand not one another’s meaning, and take not the subject of the dispute in the same sense, or, at least, not the several predications. One disputeth for free will, another against it; and call them to give you their

definition of free will, and you shall see to what purpose it was. And so in many other cases.

And thus do we proceed in a contentious zeal to divide the Church, and censure our brethren, and make our differences seem greater than they are, while we know not well what they are ourselves, who so eagerly manage them.

3. The next sin that I shall mention that we are lamentably guilty of is this : we do not so seriously, unreservedly, and industriously lay out ourselves in the work of the Lord as beseemeth men of our profession and engagements. I bless the Lord that there are so many that do this work with all their might ! But, alas ! for the most part, even of those that we take for godly ministers, how reservedly and how negligently do we go through our work ! How few of us do so behave ourselves in our office as men that are wholly devoted thereto, and have devoted all that they have to the same ends ! And because you shall see my grounds for this confession, I shall mention to you some of the sinful discoveries of it, which do too much abound.

(1.) It is common with us to be negligent in our studies. Few men will be at that pains that is necessary for the right informing of their understandings, and fitting them for their further work. Some men have no delight in their studies, but take only now and then an hour, as an unwelcome task which they are forced to undergo, and are glad when they are from under the yoke. Will neither the natural desire of knowing, nor the spiritual desire of knowing God and things divine, nor the consciousness of our great ignorance and weakness, nor the sense of the weight of our

ministerial work—will none of all these keep us closer to our studies, and make us more painful in seeking after the truth? This diligence is now the more necessary for ministers, because the necessity of the Church doth draw so many from the universities so young, that they are fain to teach and learn together; and for my part, I would not discourage such young ones, so be it they be but competently qualified and quickened with earnest desires of men's salvation, and are drawn out by the present necessities sooner than they would go if the Church could longer wait for their preparation, and will but study hard in the country. For I know, that as theology is a practical science, so the knowledge of it thriveth best in a practical course. Laying out here is a means of gathering in; and a hearty endeavour to communicate and do good, is not the smallest help to our own proficiency. Many men have not been ashamed to confess how young and raw they were at their entrance, who yet have grown to eminent parts. Vigilius the Martyr was made Bishop of Trent at twenty years old. Ambrose, *de Offic.*, li. c. 1, saith thus: "Homines discunt priusquam docent, et ab illo accipiunt quod aliis tradant: Quod ne ipsum quidem mihi accidit: Ego enim de tribunalibus atque administrationis infulis ad sacerdotium captus, docere vos cœpi quod ipse non didici. Itaque factum est, ut prius docere inciperem quam discere. Discendum igitur mihi simul et docendum est, quoniam non vacavit ante discere. Et quantum libet quisque profecerit, nemo est qui doceri non egeat dum vivit."

Oh, what abundance of things are there that a minister should understand, and what a great defect is it to be ignorant of them, and how much shall we miss

such knowledge in our work ! Many ministers study only to compose their sermons, and very little more, when there are so many books to be read, and so many matters that we should not be unacquainted with. Nay, in the study of our sermons we are too negligent, gathering only a few naked heads, and not considering of the most forcible expressions by which we should set them home to men's hearts. We must study how to convince and get within men, and how to bring each truth to the quick, and not leave all this to our extemporary promptitude, unless it be in cases of necessity. Certainly, brethren, experience will teach you, that men are not made learned or wise without hard study and unwearied labours and experience.

(2.) If ministers were set upon the work of the Lord, it would be done more vigorously than by the most of us it is. How few ministers do preach with all their might ; or speak about everlasting joy or torment in such a manner as may make men believe that they are in good sadness ! It would make a man's heart ache to see a company of dead and drowsy sinners sit under a minister, and not have a word that is likely to quicken or awaken them. To think with ourselves, " Oh, if these sinners were but convinced and awakened, they might yet be converted and live ! " And, alas ! we speak so drowsily or gently, that sleepy sinners cannot hear ; the blow falls so light, that hard-hearted persons cannot feel it. Most ministers will not so much as put out their voice, and stir up themselves to an earnest utterance. But if they do speak loud and earnestly, how few do answer it with earnestness of matter ; and then the voice doth little good ; the people will take it but as mere bawling, when the



matter doth not correspond. It would grieve one to hear what excellent doctrines some ministers have in hand, and let it die in their hands for want of close and lively application ; what fit matter they have for convincing sinners, and how little they make of it ; and what a deal of good it might do if it were set home, and yet they cannot or will not do it. O sirs, how plainly, how closely, and how earnestly should we deliver a message of such a nature as ours is, when the everlasting life or death of men is concerned in it ! Methinks we are nowhere so wanting as in this seriousness. There is nothing more unsuitable to such a business than to be slight and dull. What ! speak coldly for God, and for men's salvation ! Can we believe that our people must be converted, or condemned, and yet can we speak in a drowsy tone ! In the name of God, brethren, labour to awaken your hearts before you come, and when you are in the work, that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners. Remember that they must be awakened, or damned ; and a sleepy preacher will hardly awaken them. If you give the holy things of God the highest praises in words, and yet do it coldly, you will seem in the manner to unsay what you said in the matter. It is a kind of contempt of great things, especially so great, to speak of them without great affection and fervency : the manner as well as the words must set them forth. If we are commanded, whatever our hand findeth to do, to do it with all our might, then certainly such a work as preaching for men's salvation should be done with all our might. But, alas ! how few, how thin are such men ! Here one and there one, even among good ministers, that have an earnest, persuading, working

way, or that the people can feel him preach when they hear him.

(3.) If we are all heartily devoted to the work of God, why do we not compassionate the poor, unprovided congregations about us, and take care to help them to able ministers; and in the meantime, step out now and then to their assistance, when the business of our own particular charge will give us leave? A lecture in the more ignorant places purposely for the work of conversion, performed by the most lively-working preachers, might be a great help where constant means are wanting.

(4.) The negligent execution of acknowledged duties, doth shew that we be not so wholly devoted to the work as we should be. If there be any work of reformation to be set on foot, how many are there that will go no further than they are drawn; and it were well if all would do but that much.

If any business for the Church be on foot, how many neglect it for their own private business: when we should meet and consult together for the unanimous and successful performance of our work, one hath this business of his own, and another that, which must be preferred before God's business.

And when a work is likely to prove difficult and costly, how backward are we to it, and make excuses, and will not come on! For instance: What hath been more talked of, and prayed for, and contended about in England for many years past, than the business of discipline? And there are but few men (the Erastians) but they seem zealous in disputing for one side or other: some for the Prelatical way, and some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Congregational.

And yet, when we come to the practice of it, for ought I see, we are most of us for no way. It hath made me admire sometimes to look on the face of England, and see how few congregations in the land have any considerable execution of discipline, and to think withal what volumes they have written for it; and how almost all the ministry of the nation are engaged for it—how zealously they have contended for it, and made many a just exclamation against the opposers of it; and yet for all this will do little or nothing in the exercise of it. I have marvelled what should make them so zealous in siding for that which their practice shews that their hearts are against: but I see a disputing zeal is more natural than a holy, obedient, practising zeal. How many ministers in England are there that know not their own charge, who plead for the truth of their particular churches, and know not which they are, or who are the members of them; and who never cast out one obstinate sinner; no, nor brought one to public confession, and expression of repentance and promise of reformation; nor yet admonished one publicly to call him to such repentance. But they think they do their duty if they give them not the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when it is perhaps avoided voluntarily by themselves, and thousands will keep themselves away without our prohibiting them; and in the meantime we have them stated members of our churches, and grant them all other communion with the Church, and call them not to personal repentance for their sin. Read Albaspineus, a sober Papist, in his Observations, 1, 2, 3, after his Annot. on Optatus, and see whether church-communion in former times was taken to consist only in co-partaking of the Lord's

Supper. Either these hundreds that we communicate not with in the Supper, are members of our churches, or not : if not, then we are Separatists, while we so much disclaim it ; for we have not cast them out, nor have we called them to any profession, whether they own or disown their membership, but only whether they will be examined in order to a sacrament ; nor do we use to let them know that we take their refusal of examination for a refusal of church-membership, and exclusion of themselves. It follows therefore, that we have gathered churches out of churches before they were unchurched, or before we took God's way to cast any of them, much less all of them, out. But if they are taken for members, how can we satisfy our consciences to forbear all execution of discipline upon them ? Is it not God's ordinance that they should be personally rebuked and admonished, and then publicly called to repentance, and be cast out if they remain impenitent ? If these be no duties, why have we made such a noise and stir about them in the world as we have done ? If they be duties, why do we not practise them ? If none of all these persons be scandalous, why do we not admit them to the Lord's Supper ? If they keep away themselves, is not that a sin which a brother should not be permitted to remain in ? Is it not a scandal for them to avoid the ordinances of God and the communion of the Church for so many years together as they do ? Yea, and many a one of them avoideth also the very hearing of the word. The ancient discipline was stricter, when the sixth General Council at Trull, in Constantinople, ordained Can. 80, that " whosoever was three days together from the church, without urgent necessity, was to be excommunicated."

Brethren, for my part, I desire not to offend any party, nor to bring the least dishonour to them; but I must needs say, that these sins are not to be cloaked over with excuses, extenuations, or denials. We have long cried up discipline, and every party their several ways. Would you have people value your way of government, or not? No doubt but you would; why, if you would have them value it, it must be for some excellency; shew them then that excellency. What is it, and wherein doth it consist? And if you would have them believe you, shew it them not only in paper, but in practice; not only in words, but in deeds. How can the people know the worth of bare notions and names of discipline, without the thing? Is it a name and a shadow that you have made all this noise about? How can they think that that is good which doth no good? Truly, I fear we take not the right way to maintain our cause, but even betray it while we are hot disputers for it. Speak truly; is it not these two things that keep up the reputation of the long-contended-for discipline among men; viz., with the godly, the *mere reputation of the ministers that stand for it*; and with many of the ungodly, *the non-execution of it*, because they find it to be toothless, and not much troublesome to them? Verily, brethren, if we get the late prelates' carnal wisdom, and go their way to work, by ingratiating our way of government with the ungodly multitude, by the mere neglect of practice, and the befriending of their sins, we may well look for the same blessing and issue as the prelates had. If once our government come to be upholden by the votes of those who should be corrected or ejected by it, and the worst men be friends to it, because it is a friend to them

in their ungodliness, we then engage it against the Lord, and He will appear as engaged against us. Set all the execution of discipline together that hath been practised in a whole country ever since it was so contended for, and I doubt it will not appear so observable as to draw godly people into a liking of it for the effects. How can you wonder if many that desired deeds and not words, reformation and not the mere name of reformation, do turn over to the separate congregations, when you shew them nothing but the bare name of discipline in yours? All Christians value God's ordinances, and think them not vain things; and therefore are unwilling to live without them. Discipline is not a needless thing to the Church: if you will not difference between the precious and the vile by discipline, people will do it by separation. If you will keep many scores or hundreds in your churches that are notoriously scandalous, and contemners of church-communion, and never openly, nor perhaps privately, reprove them, nor call them to repentance, nor cast them out, you cannot marvel if some timorous souls do run out of your churches as from a ruinous edifice, that they fear is ready to fall upon their heads. I pray you consider, if you should do in the same manner with them in the sacrament as you do in the discipline, and should only shew the bread and wine, and never let them taste of it, could you expect that the name of a sacrament should satisfy them, or that they would like your communion? Why should you think, then, that they will be satisfied with the empty sound of the word *church government*? And consider but what a disadvantage you cast your cause upon in all your dispu-

tations with men of another way. If your principles be more right than theirs, and their practice be more right than yours, the people will suppose that the question is, whether the name or the thing, the shadow or the substance, be more desirable? And they will take your way to be a mere delusory formality, because they see you but formal in the use of it, yea, that you use it not at all. I speak not against your government, but for it, all this while, and tell you that it is you that are against it that seem so earnest for it; while you more disgrace it for want of exercise than you credit it by your bare arguments: and you will find before you have done, that faithful execution will be your strongest argument. Till then, the people will understand you as if you openly proclaimed, "We would have no public admonitions, confessions, or excommunications; our way is to do no good, but to set up the naked name of a government." Doubtless it was a fault more past all disputation for the prelates to destroy discipline and to do little or nothing in it, than for them to be prelates; and if they had but done the good that discipline is ordained for, Prelacy might have stood to this day for ought I know; I am sure it would have had no opposition from many hundred godly people that have opposed it; and again, I say, if you will run into the error, you may expect their fate.

And what are the hindrances now that keep the ministers of England from the execution of that discipline which they have so much contended for? I hear not all speak; but I hear some, and see more. The great reason, as far as I can learn, is—"The difficulty of the work, and the trouble or suffering that we are likely

to incur by it: we cannot publicly reprehend one sinner but he will storm at it, and bear us a deadly malice. We can prevail with very few to make a public profession of true repentance. If we proceed to excommunicate them, they will be raging mad against us; they will be ready to vow revenge against us, and to do us a mischief. If we should deal as God requireth with all the obstinate sinners in the parish, there were no living among them; they would conspire in hatred against us to the hazard of our lives. We should be so hated of all, that as our lives would be uncomfortable, so our labours would become unprofitable; for men would not hear us when they are possessed with a hatred of us; therefore duty ceaseth to be duty to us, because the hurt that would follow would be greater than the good, and the affirmative bind not 'ad semper.'"

These are the great reasons for the non-execution of discipline, together with the great labour that private admonition of each offender would cost us. And to these I answer—

[1.] Are not these reasons as valid against Christianity itself, in some times and places, as now against discipline? Christ came not to send us peace; we shall have His peace, but not the world's, for He hath foretold us that they will hate us. Might not Bradford, or Hooper, or any that were burnt in Queen Mary's days, have alleged more than this against duty? They might have said, "It will make us hated if we own the Reformation, and it will expose our lives to the flames." How is he concluded by Christ to be no Christian who hateth not all that he hath, and his own life, for Him; and yet we can take the hazard of



our life as a reason against His work ! What is it but hypocrisy to shrink from sufferings, and take up none but safe and easy works, and make ourselves believe that the rest are no duties ? Indeed, this is the common way of escaping sufferings, to neglect the duty that would expose us thereunto. If we did our duty faithfully, ministers should find the same lot among professed Christians as their predecessors have done among the infidels. But if you could not suffer for Christ, why did you put your hand to His plough, and did not first sit down and count your costs ? This makes the ministerial work so unfaithfully done, because it is so carnally undertaken ; and men enter upon it as a life of ease, and honour, and respect from men, and therefore resolve to attain their ends, and have what they expected by right or wrong. They looked not for hatred and suffering, and they will avoid it, though by the avoiding of their work.

[2.] And as for the making yourselves incapable to do them good, I answer, That reason is as valid against plain preaching, reproof, or any other duty which wicked men will hate us for. God will bless His own ordinances to do good, or else He would not have appointed them. If you admonish, and publicly rebuke the scandalous, and call men to repentance, and cast out the obstinate, you may do good to many that you reprove, and possibly to the excommunicated : I am sure it is God's means, and it is His last means, when reproofs will do no good ; it is therefore perverse to neglect the last means, lest we frustrate the foregoing means, when as the last is not to be used but upon supposition that the former were all frustrated before. However, those within and those without may receive

good by it, if the offender do receive none ; and God will have the honour, when His Church is manifestly differenced from the world, and the heirs of heaven and hell are not totally confounded, nor the world made to think that Christ and Satan do but contend for superiority, and that they have the like inclination to holiness or to sin.

[3.] And I would know, whether on the grounds of this objection before mentioned, all discipline should not be cast out of the Church, at least ordinarily ; and so is not this against the thing itself, rather than against the present season of it? For this reason is not drawn from anything proper to our times, but common to all times and places. Wicked men will always storm against the means of their public shame ; and the use of church censures is purposely to shame them, that sin may be shamed, and disowned by the Church. What age can you name since the days of the apostles wherein you would have executed the discipline that you now refuse, if you go on these grounds, supposing that it had not been by magisterial compulsion? If, therefore, it be discipline itself that hath such intolerable inconveniences, why have you so prayed for it, and perhaps sought for it, and disputed for it as you have done? What! must all Dissenters bear your frowns and censures, and all for a work which you yourselves judge intolerable, and dare not touch with one of your fingers? When do you look to see all these difficulties over, that you may set upon that which you now avoid? Will it be in your days? or will you wait till you are dead, and leave it as a part of your epitaph to posterity, that you so deeply engaged and contended for that which you so abhorred

to the death, that you would never be brought to the practice of it! And doth not this objection of yours plainly give up your cause to the Separatists; and even tell them that your contending is not for your way of discipline, but that there may be none, because it will do more harm than good? Certainly, if this be true, it would have been better to speak it out at first, before all our wars, and tears, and prayers, and contentions, than now in the conclusion to tell the world, that we did all this but for a name or word, that the thing is so far from being worth our cost, that it is not tolerable, much less desirable.

[4.] But yet let me tell you, that there is not such a lion in the way as you do imagine; nor is discipline such a useless thing. I bless God upon the small and too late trial that I have made myself of it, I can speak by experience, it is not vain; nor are the hazards of it such as may excuse our neglect.

But I know the pinching reason is behind. They say, that, "When we pleaded for discipline, we meant a discipline that should be established and imposed by the secular power; and without them what good can we do, when every man hath leave to despise our censures, and set us at naught? And therefore we will not meddle with it," say they, "without authority." To which I answer, [1.] I thought it once a scornful indignity that some fellows attempted to put upon the ministry, that denied them to be the ministers of Christ, and would have had them called the ministers of the State, and dealt with accordingly. But it seems they did not much cross the judgments of some of the ministry themselves, who are ready to put the same scorn upon their own calling. We are sent as Christ's

ambassadors, to speak in His name, and not in the prince's; and by His authority we do our work, as from Him we have our commission; and shall any of His messengers question the authority of His commands? The same power that you have to preach without, or against the magistrate's command, the same have you to exercise pastoral guidance and discipline without. And shall all ministers refuse preaching if the magistrate bid them not? yea, or if they forbid them? [2.] What mean you, when you say, you will not do it without authority? Do you mean the *love* or the *countenance* and approbation, or the *command* upon yourselves? or do you mean a *force* or *penalty* on the people to obey you? The magistrate's leave we have; who hindereth or forbiddeth you to set up discipline, and exercise it faithfully? Doth the secular power forbid you to do it, or threaten or trouble you for not doing it? No, they do not. To the shame of the far greatest part of the ministers of England it must be spoken—for we have so opened our own shame that it cannot be hid—we have had free liberty to do the work of Christ which we have desired and pleaded for, and yet we would not do it. What might not the ministers of England have done for the Lord, if they had been but willing! They had no prohibition, nor any man to rise up against them, of all the enemies whose hearts are against their work; and yet they would not do it. Nay more, for aught you know, you have no approbation of authority. You have the commands of former powers yet not repealed. You have the protection of the laws and present governors: if any one seek revenge against you for the sake of discipline, you have not only laws, but as many willing

magistrates to restrain and punish them, as ever you knew, I think, in England. And what would you have more? Would you have a law made to punish you if you will not do your duty? What! dare you tell God that you will not do this work unless the magistrate drive you to it with scourges? I confess, if I had my will, it should be so; and that man should be ejected as a *negligent* pastor, that will not rule his people by discipline—though yet, I might allow him to be a preacher to the unchurched—as well as he is ejected as a negligent preacher that will not preach. For ruling is as essential a part of a pastor's office as preaching, I am sure. And therefore seeing these men would fain have the magistrate interpose, if he did eject them for unfaithful, negligent pastors, (were it not for the necessity of the Church that hath not enough better,) I know not well how they could blame him for it. It is a sad discovery of our carnal hearts, when men can do so much more with us than God, that we would obey the commands of men, and will not obey the commands of Christ. Is he fit to be Christ's officer, that will not take His command as obligatory?

But I know the thing expected is, that all the people should be forced under a penalty to submit to our discipline. I confess, I think that the magistrate should be the hedge of the Church, and defend the ministry, and improve his power to the utmost to procure a universal obedience to Christ's laws, and restrain men from the apparent breach of them, especially from being false teachers and seducers of others. How far I am against the two extremes of universal licence, and persecuting tyranny, I have frequently manifested on

other occasions. But I shall now say but this : [1.] Doth not this further discover the carnal frame of our hearts, when we will not do our duty unless the magistrate will do his to the full, and all we conceive may be his duty? What! will his neglect excuse yours? Hath Christ bid you use the keys of the kingdom, and avoid a scandalous sinner upon condition that the magistrate will punish him with the sword? Is not this your meaning, if you would speak it out, that you find a great deal of difficulty in your work, and you would have the magistrate by terrifying offenders make it easy to you? For if it be not safe, and cheap, and easy, you are resolved you will not do it; and of such servants Christ may have enough. Nay, is not your meaning, that you would have the magistrate to do your work for you? Just as your pious people have long cried and prayed for discipline, and called upon ministers to do it, but we cannot get them to reprove offenders, and deal with them seriously and lovingly for their good, and inform the church-officers of them that are obstinate; so do we toward the magistrates: the Word of God is so much beholden to us, that we would all have it done, but few will do it. We can easier censure and talk against others for not doing it, than do it ourselves. Oh, the guilt and hypocrisy of our hearts!

[2.] But further, What is it that you would have the magistrate to do? I pray you consider, how you will answer it before God, that you should wilfully neglect your own duty, and then make it your religion to quarrel with others. Is it not a fearful deceit of heart for a man to think himself a godly minister for finding fault with them that are less faulty than himself?

I say less faulty; for tell me truly, whether the magistrate do more of his part in government, or you in yours? I am no more a flatterer of the magistrate than of you; nor was ever taken for such, that I could understand: but we must deal justly by all men. Would you have the magistrate to punish men "eo nomine," because excommunicated, without any particular cognisance of the fact and case? 1st, That were unjust; then he must do wrong whenever we mistake and do wrong. If an honest man were an hangman, he would be willing to know that he hanged not a man that was unjustly condemned. However, the magistrate is not the mere executioner of the ministers, but a judge; and therefore must be allowed the use of his reason to know the cause, and follow his own judgment, and not punish men against it. 2d, And excommunication is so great a punishment of itself, that I hope you do not think it nothing unless the magistrate add more. If so, then the temporal punishment might serve turn, and what need of yours? But I suppose that this is not your sense, but you are so just, that you would have the magistrate to punish a man as an offender, and not as excommunicated. And if so, I think it is not nothing that he doth. Are all the penalties against swearers, cursers, drunkards, peace-breakers, Sabbath-breakers, &c., nothing? Certainly the laws of the land do punish much sin against God. Well, what do you as church-governors against these same sins? The magistrate fineth and imprisoneth them; that is his part. It is your part to bring them to open repentance, or to cast them out. Have you done this as often as he hath done his part? Doth not the magistracy of England punish ten,

twenty, what if I say, an hundred swearers, drunkards, or Sabbath-breakers by the sword, for one that the elders of the Church do punish by censures, or bring to public repentance for the satisfaction of the Church? Brethren, these things seem strange to me; that the case should stand thus as it doth, and yet that the deceit of our hearts should be so great, and that we should go on to account ourselves such blameless, godly men, whom magistrates and people are bound to reverence, and to speak against the magistrate so much as we do. I believe they are all slack and faulty; but are not we much more faulty? What if they should pay us in our own coin? What language might they give the ministers, that after so many years' talk of discipline will do nothing in it! I say nothing in most places: to meet together for consultation is no exercise of discipline, nor reformation of the Church, which our meetings should conduce to.

[3.] And I give you this further answer: What had the Church of Christ done till the days of Constantine the Great, if it had no better pastors than you, that will not govern it without the joined compulsion of the magistrate? Discipline, and severe discipline, was exercised for three hundred years together, where the prince did not give them so much as a protection, nor toleration, but persecuted them to death. Then was the Church at the best, and discipline most pure and powerful; say not then any more for shame, that it is to no purpose without a magistrate, when it hath done so much against their wills! Oh, what an aggravation is it of our sin, that you cannot be content to be negligent and unfaithful servants, but you must also fly in the face of your Lord and Master, and obliquely



lay the blame on Him! What do you else, when you blame church-censure as ineffectual, when you should blame your lazy, self-seeking hearts, that shift off the use of them? Hath Christ put a leaden sword into your hands, when He bids you smite the obstinate sinner? Or are you cowardly and careless, and then blame your sword instead of using it, as thinking that the easier task? Are the keys of Christ's kingdom so unmeet and useless, that they will not open and shut without the help of the sword? or are you unskilful and lazy in the use of them? If they have contracted any rust, by which they are made less fit for service, next to the prelates, we may thank ourselves, that let them lie so long unused.

[4.] And I must tell you, that too much interposition of the sword with our discipline, would do more harm than good. It would but corrupt it by the mixture, and make it become a human thing. Your government is all to work upon the conscience, and the sword cannot reach that. It is not a desirable thing to have repentance so obscured by mere forced confessions, that you cannot know when men mean as they speak; and so it will be the sword that doth all, by forcing men to dissemble; and you will not discern the power of the word and ordinance of Christ. I confess since I fell upon the exercise of some discipline, I find by experience, that if the sword interpose and force all those public confessions of sin, and professions of repentance, which I have persuaded men to by the light of the Word of God, it would have left me much unsatisfied concerning the validity of such confessions and promises, whether they might indeed be satisfactory to the Church: and I find that the godly people do no

further regard it than they perceive it hearty and free; and if it were forced by magistrates, they would take him for no penitent person, nor be any whit satisfied, but say, "He doth it because he dare do no otherwise."

And I must add this word of plainer dealing yet. You blame the magistrate for giving so much liberty; and is it not long of yourselves that he do so? You will scarcely believe that such enemies to liberty of conscience are the causes of it. I think that you are; and that the keenest enemies have been the greatest causes. For you would run too far to the other extreme, and are so confident in every controversy that you are in the right, and lay such a stress upon many opinions of your own, as if life or death did lie upon them, (when, perhaps, the difference may prove more verbal than real, if it were searched to the quick,) that this occasioneth magistrates to run too far the other way; and if they look on such as —, and dare not trust the sword in such hands, you may thank yourselves. Truly, brethren, I see by experience, that there is among many of the most injudicious of us such a blind, confused zeal against all that is called error by their party, that without being able to try and make a difference, they let fly pell-mell at all alike, and make a great outcry against errors, when either we know not what they are, nor how to confute them, nor which be tolerable in the Church, and which intolerable; nor how far we may hold or break communion with the owners of them, and perhaps are the erroneous persons ourselves. The observation of this hath made the magistrates so over-jealous of us, that they think if they set in with a party in each contention, we shall never be without blood and misery.

And I confess I see in some ministers so little of the fire of Divine love, and Christian charity, and compassion, not heavenly-mindedness, nor an humble sense of their own infirmities ; and so much of the zeal that James describeth, (James iii. 14, 15,) which is kindled from another fire, that makes them full of suspicions and jealousies, and keen and eager against their brethren, censuring, defaming, and unconscionably backbiting them, and straining an ill sense out of their well-meant words and actions, and living towards them in plain envy and malice, instead of Christian love and peace : I say, I see so much of this in many that affect the reputation of orthodox, while they are indeed factious, that I am the less sorry that the magistrate doth so little interpose. For were the sword in such envious, angry hands, there would be little quiet to the Church : for there are no two men on earth but differ in something, if they know or believe anything. And these men must square the world to their own judgments, which are not always the wisest in the world. They that dare so rail at others as blasphemers, when they know not what they say themselves, durst surely smite them as blasphemers, if they had power. This may possibly make the magistrate think meet (seeing we are so quarrelsome and impatient) to let us fight it out by the bare fists, and not to put swords into our hands till we are more sober, and know better how to use them ; for if every passionate man, when he hath not wit enough to make good his cause, should presently borrow the magistrate's sword to make it good, truth would be upon great disadvantage in the world ! Magistrates are commonly the most tempted and abused men ; and,

therefore, I know not why we should call so loud to have them become the arbitrators in all our quarrels, lest error have two victories where truth gets one. I could wish the magistrate did more; but if he do but give us protection and liberty, especially if he will but restrain deceivers from preaching against the great unquestionable truths of the gospel, and give public countenance and encouragement to those master-truths, I shall not fear, by the grace of God, but a prudent, sober, unanimous ministry will ere long shame the swarm of vanities that we think so threatening.

But I have been too long on this. I shall only conclude it with this earnest request to my brethren of the ministry, that they would speedily and faithfully put in execution, at least all the unquestionable part of the discipline, that they have so much contended for. When we are so offended with the Parliament for their enumeration of scandals, as too defective, and a protestation was published that we acted only on supposition that it was defective, surely we little thought then that we, that were so earnest to have had more power, would use none; and we that must needs have authority, to reject more than the Parliament did enumerate, would censure so few even of them as we have done, since we have had more liberty to do it.

But one objection is common, which I forgot; they say, we are but single pastors, and therefore cannot excommunicate men alone, unless we should make every pastor a pope in his parish, or a bishop at least.

*Ans.* For my part I have no mind to obtrude my own opinion on such, (for the power of a single person to excommunicate.) I have sufficiently already proved

myself a novelist, and singular with some, by asserting ancient and most common truths. But yet, [1.] I could wish these men so much moderation, as to be sure that they are in this as much wiser than the contrary-minded, as their confidence doth import, before they proceed in calling them popes ; lest, as the cunning of the times is by making many antichrists, to make none, so these men should, contrary to their intention, credit the pope, by making so many popes, and the prelates too, by making such kind of prelates.

[2.] A pope is the pretended head of the Catholic Church, and a universal bishop to govern it. Are single ruling pastors such ? A diocesan bishop is the ruler of all the pastors and churches in a diocese ; is such a pastor one of these ?

[3.] Why do you in your disputes against the prelates maintain that every minister is a bishop of his own church, and do you now abhor it ?

[4.] What if you might not excommunicate ; may you not therefore do the rest ? May you not personally and publicly reprove them, pray for them, &c. ?

[5.] Must not the people avoid a notorious drunkard, &c., whether you bid them or not ? If not, why hath God commanded it ? If yea, why may you not bid them do that which is their duty ?

[6.] Have you none in your parish, not one or two, to make ruling elders of, that by their conjunction you may be authorised to do more than now you do ? I mean according to your own principles, for I confess it is not according to mine.

[7.] And what hindereth but you may join together if you will ? If it must needs be many pastors con-junct that must exercise any act of discipline, why is

it not so done? Doth any forbid them, or threaten them if they do it? If you say, "I am alone, because no neighbouring minister will join with me," you speak hardly of all the ministers about you. What! are they all so negligent? Blame us not then to reprove them. But it is an incredible thing that they should be all so bad that are of your judgment, that no one or two will be persuaded to assist you. And I think you will confess that two or three may do it authoritatively, though no one else in the county do it. I could wish that the prelates had not such an argument given them as this. No one presbyter hath the power of the keys, by their own confession; therefore two or three have not; lest they go further in proving the consequence than you expect. But if it must be so, I could yet wish that no single pastor, for the excusing of himself, would lay such a reproachful charge upon all the ministers in the country that be of his own judgment, as to say that discipline is cast aside, because they can get none to join with them in the execution! At least, till they have thoroughly tried whether it be so indeed or not.

(5.) Another sad discovery, that we have not so devoted ourselves and all we have to the service of God as we ought, is, *The prevalence of worldly, fleshly interests too much against the interest and work of Christ.* And this I shall further manifest in these three instances following:—Our temporising; our too much minding worldly things, and shrinking from duties that will hinder our commodity; our barrenness in works of charity, and in the improving of all that we have to our Master's use.

[1.] I would not have any to be contentious with

those that govern them, nor to be disobedient to any of their lawful commands. But it is not the least reproach upon the ministry, that the most of them for worldly advantage still suit themselves with the party that is most likely to suit their ends. If they look for secular advantages, they suit themselves to the secular power; if for the air of ecclesiastical applause, then do they suit themselves to the party of ecclesiastics that is most in credit. This is not a private, but an epidemical malady. In Constantine's days how prevalent were the orthodox! In Constantius's days they almost all turned Arians, so that there were very few bishops at all that did not apostatise or betray the truth, even of the same men that had been in the Council of Nice. And when not only Liberius, but great Osius himself fell, who had been the president, or chief, in so many orthodox councils, what better could be expected from weaker men? Were it not for secular advantage, or ecclesiastic faction and applause, how could it come to pass that ministers in all the countries in the world are either all, or almost all, of that religion and way that is in most credit, and most consistent with their worldly interest? Among the Greeks, they are all of the Greek profession; and among the Abassines, the Nestorians, the Maronites, the Jacobites, the ministers generally go one way. And among the Papists, they are almost all Papists. In Saxony, Sweden, Denmark, &c., almost all Lutherans; in Holland, France, Scotland, almost all Calvinists. It is strange that they should be all in the right in one country, and all in the wrong in another, if carnal advantages and reputation did not sway much. When men fall upon a conscientious search, the variety of intellectual capacities

causeth unavoidably a great variety of conceits about some hard and lower things; but let the prince and the stream of men in credit go one way, and you shall have the generality of ministers too often change their religion with the prince in this land. Not all, as our Martyrology can witness, but the most. I purposely forbear to mention any latter change. If the rulers of a university should be corrupt, who have the disposal of preferments, how much might they do with the most of the students, where mere arguments would not take! And the same tractable distemper doth so often follow them into the ministry, that it occasioneth the enemies to say, that reputation and preferment is our religion and our reward.

[2.] How common is it with ministers to drown themselves in worldly business! Too many are such as the sectaries would have them be, who tell us that we should go to plough and cart, and labour for our living, and preach without so much study; and this is a lesson easily learned. Men take no care to cast off and prevent care, that their souls and the Church may have their care. How commonly are those duties neglected, that are likely, if performed, to diminish our estates! For example: Are there not many that dare not, that will not set up the exercise of any discipline in their churches, not only on the fore-mentioned accounts, but especially because it may hinder the people from paying them their dues? They will not offend sinners with discipline, lest they offend them in their estates; yea, though the law secure their maintenance. I find money is too strong an argument for some men to answer, that can proclaim the love of it to be the root of all evil, and can



make large orations of the danger of covetousness. I will say no more now to these but this : If it were so deadly a sin in Simon Magus to offer to buy the gift of God with money, what is it to sell His gifts, His cause, and the souls of men, for money? and what reason have such to fear lest their money perish with them ?

[3.] But the most that I have to say is to the third discovery. If worldly and fleshly interest did not much prevail against the interest of Christ and the Church, surely most ministers would be more fruitful in good works, and would more lay out what they have to their Master's use. Experience hath fully proved that the works of charity do most potently remove prejudice, and open the ears to words of piety. If men see that you are accustomed to do good, they will the more easily believe that you are good, and the more easily believe that it is good that you persuade them to. When they see that you love them, and seek their good, they will the more easily trust you; and when they see that you seek not the things of this world, they will the less suspect your intentions, and the more easily be drawn by you to seek that which you seek. Oh, how much good might ministers do, if they did set themselves wholly to do good, and would dedicate all their faculties and substance to that end ! Say not that it is a small matter to do good to men's bodies, and that this will but win them to us, and not to God, nor convert the soul; for it is prejudice that is a great hindrance of men's conversion, and this will remove it. We might do men more good, if they were but willing to learn of us; and this will make them willing, and then our further diligence may profit them.

Brethren, I pray you do not think that it is ordinary charity that is expected from you, any more than ordinary piety. You must, in proportion to your talents, go much beyond others. It is not to give now and then twopence to a poor man; others do that as well as you. But what singular thing do you with your estates for your Master's use? I know you cannot give away that which you have not; but, methinks, all that you have should be for God. I know the great objection is, "We have wife and children to provide for: a little will not serve them at present, and we are not bound to leave them beggars." To which I answer—1st, There are few texts of Scripture more abused than that of the apostle, "He that provideth not for his own, and especially those of his family, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." This is made a pretence for gathering up portions, and providing a full estate for posterity, when the apostle speaketh only against them that cast their poor kindred and family on the Church, to be maintained out of the common stock, when they were able to do it themselves. As if one that hath a widow in his house, that is his mother or daughter, and would have her to be kept on the parish, when he hath enough himself. His following words shew that it is present provision, and not future portions, that the apostle speaketh of, when he bids "them that have widows administer to them, or give them what is sufficient." 2d, You may educate your children as other persons do, that they may be able to get their own livings, in some honest trade or employment, without other great provisions. I know that your charity and care must begin at home, but it must not

end there. You are bound to do the best you can to educate your children, so as they may be capable of being most serviceable to God, but not to leave them rich, or a full estate, nor to forbear other necessary works of charity, merely for a larger provision for them. There must be some proportion kept between our provision for our families, and for the Church and poor. A truly charitable, self-denying heart, that hath devoted itself, and all that he hath, to God, would be the best judge of the due proportions, and would see which way of expense is likely to do God the greatest service, and that way he would take. 3d, I confess I would not have men to lie too long under endangering strong temptations to incontinence, lest they wound themselves and their profession by their falls; but yet, methinks, it is hard that men can do no more to mortify the concupiscence of the flesh, that they may live in a single, freer condition, and have none of these temptations from wife and children, to hinder them from furthering their ministerial ends by charitable works. If he that marrieth not doth better than he that doth, surely ministers should labour to do that which is best; and if he that can receive this saying must receive it, we should endeavour after it. This is one of the highest points of the Romish policy, which they pretend to be a duty of common necessity, that all the bishops, priests, and other religious orders, must not marry, by which means they have no posterity to drain the Church's revenues, nor to take up their care; but they make their public cause to be their interest, and they lay out themselves for it while they live, and leave all that they have to it when they die: so that their Church's wealth doth daily increase,

as every bishop, abbot, Jesuit, or other person, doth gather more in their lifetime, and usually add it to their common stock. It is a pity that, for a better cause, we can no more imitate them in wisdom and self-denial, where it might be done. 4th, But they that must marry, should take such as can maintain themselves and their children, or maintain them at the rate as their temporal means will afford, and devote as much of the Church means to the Church's service as they can.

I would put no man upon extremes; but in this case flesh and blood doth make even good men so partial, that they take their duties, and duties of very great worth and weight, to be extremes. If worldly vanities did not blind us, we might see when public or other greater good did call us to deny ourselves and our families. Why should we not live more sparingly and poor in the world, rather than leave those works undone, which may be of greater use than our plentiful provisions? But in matters of duty we consult with flesh and blood; and what counsel it will give us, we may easily know. It will tell us we must have a competency; and many pious men's competency is but little below the rich man's rates. If they be not clothed with the best, and fare not deliciously every day, they have not a competency. A man that preacheth an immortal crown of glory must not seek much after transitory vanity; and he that preacheth the contempt of riches must himself contemn them, and shew it by his life; and he that preacheth self-denial and mortification must practise these in the eyes of them that he preacheth to, if ever he would have his doctrine prosper. All Christians are sanctified, and, therefore,

themselves and all that they have are consecrated and dedicated to their Master's use; but ministers are doubly sanctified: they are devoted to God, both as Christians and ministers, and therefore they are doubly obliged to honour Him with what they have.

O brethren, what abundance of good works are before us, and how few of them do we put our hands to! I know the world expecteth more from us than we have: but if we cannot answer the expectations of the unreasonable, let us do what we can to answer the expectations of God, and conscience, and all just men. It is the will of God that with well-doing we should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Especially those ministers that have larger maintenance must be larger in doing good.

I will give but one instance at this time, which I mentioned before. There are some ministers that have £150 or £200 or £300 per annum of church means; and have so great parishes that they are not able to do a quarter of the ministerial work, nor once in a year to deal personally with half their people for their instruction, and yet they will content themselves with public preaching, as if that were all that were necessary, and leave almost all the rest undone, to the everlasting danger or damnation of multitudes, rather than they will maintain one or two diligent men to assist them. Or, if they have an assistant, it is but some young man to ease them about baptizings, or burials, or such work, and not one that will faithfully and diligently watch over the flock, and afford them that personal instruction which is so necessary. If this be not a serving ourselves of God, and not a serving God, and a selling men's souls for our fuller maintenance in the world,

what is? Methinks such men should fear, lest while they are accounted excellent preachers and godly ministers by men, they should be accounted cruel soul-murderers by Christ; and lest the cries of those souls whom they have betrayed to damnation should ring in their ears for ever. Will preaching a good sermon serve the turn, while you never look more after them, but deny them that closer help that you find to be necessary, and alienate that maintenance to your own flesh which should provide relief for so many souls? How can you open your mouths against oppressors, when yourselves are so great oppressors, not only of men's bodies, but their souls? How can you preach against unmercifulness, while you are so unmerciful? And how can you talk against unfaithful ministers, while you are so unfaithful yourselves? The sin is not therefore small, because it is unobserved, and not become odious in the eyes of men; nor because the charity which you withhold is such as the people blame you not for withholding. Satan himself, their greatest enemy, hath their consent all along in the work of their perdition. It is no extenuation, therefore, of your sin that you have their consent; for that you may sooner have for their hurt than for their good.

I shall proceed no further in these confessions and discoveries, but beseech you to take what is said into consideration, and see whether this be not the great and lamentable sin of the ministers of the gospel, that *they are not fully devoted to God*, and give not up themselves and all they have to the carrying on of the blessed work which they have undertaken? And whether flesh-pleasing and self-seeking interests distinct from that of Christ, do not make us neglect much

of our duty, and walk too unfaithfully in so great a trust, and reservedly serve God in the cheapest and most applauded part of His work, and withdraw from that which would put us upon cost and sufferings? and whether this do not shew that too many are earthly that seem to be heavenly, and mind the things below while they preach for the things above, and idolise the world, while they call men to condemn it? And, as Salvian saith, (li. 4, ad Eccles. Cath., p. 454,) “Nullus salutem plus negligit quam qui Deo aliquid anteponit.” Despisers of God will prove despisers of their own salvation.

And now, brethren, what remaineth, but that we all cry guilty, of too much of these fore-mentioned sins, and humble our souls in the lamentation of our mis-carriages before the Lord! Is this *taking heed to ourselves, and to all the flock?* Is this like the pattern that is given us in the text? If we should now prove stout-hearted and unhumiliated men, and disregard these confessions, as tending to our disgrace, how sad a symptom would it be to ourselves and to the Church! The ministry hath been often threatened here, and is still maligned by many sorts of adversaries; though all this may shew their impious malice, yet may it also intimate to us God's just indignation. Believe it, brethren, the ministry of England is not the least or last in the sin of the land. They have encouraged the common profaneness; they have led the people into divisions, and are now backward to bring them out; and as sin hath been found in them, so judgments have been found and laid upon them. It is time, therefore, for us to take our part of that humiliation which we have been calling our people to so long. If

we have our wits about us, we may perceive that God hath been offended with us, and that the voice that called this nation to repentance, did speak to us as well as others. He, therefore, that hath ears let him hear the voice of railing enemies of all sorts, the voice of them that cry, "Down with us, even to the ground;" all calling to us to try our ways, and to reform. He that hath eyes to see, let him see the precepts of repentance written in so many admirable deliverances and preservations, and written in so many lines of blood. By fire and sword hath God been calling even us to humiliation; and as judgment hath begun at the house of God, so, if humiliation begin not there too, it will be a sad prognostic to us, and to the land. What! shall we deny, or excuse, or extenuate our sins, while we call our people to such free confessions? Is it not better to give glory to God by a full and humble confession, than in tenderness of our own glory to seek for fig-leaves to cover our nakedness; and to put God to it, to build His glory which we denied Him, upon the ruins of our own, which we preferred before Him; and to distract for that by a yet sorer judgment, which we denied voluntarily to surrender to Him? Alas! if you put God to get His honour as He can, He can get it to your greater sorrow and dishonour. If any of our hearers in a day of humiliation, when sin is fully confessed and lamented, should be offended at the confession, and stand up against it, and say, "You wrong me; I am not so bad! You should have told me of this in private, and not have disgraced me before the congregation;" what could we think of such a man, but that he was a hardened, impenitent wretch, and as he would have no part in the confession, so he should



have none in the remission? And shall we do that which we scarcely ever see the most hardened sinner do? Shall we say, "This should not have been spoken of us in the ears of the people, but we should have been honoured before them!" Certainly, sins openly committed are more dishonourable to us when we hide them, than when we confess them. It is the sin, and not the confession, that is our dishonour. And we have committed them before the sun, so that they cannot be hid. Attempts to cloak them, do increase the guilt and shame; there is no way to repair the breaches in our honour, which our sin hath made, but by free confession and humiliation. I durst not but make confession of my own; and if any be offended that I have confessed theirs, let them know, that I do but what I have done by myself. And if they dare disown the confession of their sin, let them do it at their peril. But as for all the truly humble ministers of the gospel, I doubt not but they will rather be provoked more solemnly in the face of their several congregations, to lament their sins, and promise reformation.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE USE OF EXHORTATION.

HAVING disclosed and lamented our miscarriages and neglects, our duty for the future lies before us. God forbid that we should now go on in the sin that we have confessed, as carelessly as we did before. Then would the exclamation of Salvian fall upon us, (de Gubern., l. 3, p. 87,) "Novum siquidem monstri genus est; eadem pene omnes jugiter faciunt, quæ fecisse plangunt. Et qui intrant Ecclesiasticam domum, ut mala antiqua defleant, exeunt; et quid dico exeunt? In ipsis pene hoc Orationibus suis ac supplicationibus moliantur: Aliud quippe ora hominum, aliud corda agunt: Et dum verbis præterita mala plangunt, sensu futura meditantur: ac si oratio eorum rixa est magis criminum quam exoratrix; ut vere illa in eis Scripturæ maledicto compleatur, ut de oratione ipsa exeunt condemnati, et oratio eorum fiat in peccatum."

Be awakened, therefore, I beseech you, brethren, by the loud and manifold voice of God, to set more seriously to the work of God, and to do it for the future with all your might, and to *take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock*. The reasons why you should take heed to yourselves, I gave you in the beginning. The reasons why you should take heed to all the flock, I shall give you now, as motives to enforce this exhortation; and the Lord grant that

they may work with us according to their truth and weight!

I. The first quickening consideration which the text here affordeth us, is taken from our relation to all the flock. We are *overseers* of it. In this I shall further shew you these subordinate particulars, which will manifest the force of this consideration.

1. The nature of the office requireth us to *take heed*. What else are we overseers for? "Episcopus est nomen quod plus oneris quam honoris significat," saith Polid. Virgil, p. 240; and a father before him. To be a bishop or pastor is not to be set up as idols for the people to bow to, or as idle, slow bellies, to live to our fleshly delight and ease. The particulars of our duty we have somewhat touched before, and more shall do anon. It is a sad case that men should be of a calling that they know not the nature of, and undertake they know not what. Do these men know and consider what they have undertaken, that live at ease and pleasure, and have time to take their superfluous recreations, and to spend an hour and more at once in loitering and vain discourses, when so much work doth lie upon their hands? Why, brethren, do you consider where you stand, and what you have taken upon you? You have undertaken the conduct, under Christ, of a band of His soldiers, against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. You must lead them on to the sharpest conflicts; you must acquaint them with the enemies' stratagems and assaults; you must watch yourselves, and keep them watching. If you miscarry, they and you may perish. You have a subtle enemy, and therefore must be wise; you have a vigilant enemy, and therefore must be

vigilant ; a malicious, and violent, and unwearied enemy, and therefore you must be resolute, courageous, and unwearied. You are in a crowd of enemies, compassed with them on every side, and if you heed one and not all, you will quickly fall. And, oh, what a world of work have you to do ! Had you but one ignorant old man or woman to teach, though willing to learn, what a tedious task were it ; but if they be as unwilling as ignorant, how much more difficult ! But to have such a multitude of these, as most of us have, what work will it find us ! Who that ever tried it, knoweth it not by experience ! What a pitiful life is it to reason with men that have almost lost the use of reason, and to talk with obstinate, wilful people, that know what they will and resolve, but not why they do it ; and to argue the case with them that neither understand themselves nor you, and yet think that no man hath understanding that contradicteth them, and that are confident they are in the right, when they can shew nothing but that confidence to make them so ! Their will is the reason of their judgments and lives : it satisfies them, and it must satisfy you. O brethren, what a world of wickedness have we to contend against, even in one soul, and what a number of those worlds ! What rooting have their sins ! With what disadvantage must truth come upon their ears ! How strange are they to the heavenly message that we bring them ; and know not what you say when you speak in that only language that they understand ! And when you think you have done something, you leave your seed among the fowls of the air ; wicked men are at their elbows to rise up and contradict all that you have

said. They will cavil, and carp, and slander you, that they may disgrace your message, draw them away from Christ, and quickly extinguish the good beginnings that you hoped you had seen. They use, indeed, weaker reasons than yours, but such as come with more advantage, being near them, and familiarly and importunately urged, and such as are fetched from things that they see and feel, and which are befriended by their own flesh. You speak but once to a sinner, for ten or twenty times that the messengers of Satan speak to them; moreover, how easily do the cares and businesses of the world devour and choke the seed which you have sown! And if it had no enemy but what is in themselves, how easily will a frozen, carnal heart extinguish those sparks which you have been long in kindling! and for want of fuel and further help, they will go out of themselves. What abundance of distempers, and lusts, and passions do you cast your gracious words amongst! and what entertainment such companions will afford them, you may easily conjecture. And when you think your work doth happily succeed, and have seen men under troubles and complaints, confessing their sins, and promising reformation, and living as new creatures and zealous converts; alas! after all this, they may prove unsound and false at the heart, and such as were but superficially changed, and took up new opinions, and new company, without a new heart. How many are after a notable change, deceived by the profits and honours of the world, and fallen away while they think they stand! How many are entangled again in their former sensuality; and how many do but change a disgraceful way of flesh-pleas-

ing, for a way that is less dishonourable, and maketh not so great a noise in their consciences! How many grow proud before they reach to a settled knowledge, and greedily snatch at every error that is presented to them, under the name of truth; and in confidence of the strength of their unfurnished intellects, despise them that they were wont to learn of, and become the greatest grief to their teachers, that before rejoiced in their hopeful beginning! and like chickens that straggle from the hen, they are carried away by that infernal kite, while they proudly despise the guidance and advice of those that Christ hath set over them for their safety. O brethren, what a field of work is there before us! not a person that you can see but may find you work. In the saints themselves, how soon do their graces languish if you neglect them; and how easily are they drawn into scandalous ways, to the dishonour of the gospel, and their own loss and sorrow! If this be the work of a minister, you may see what a life he hath to lead. Up, then, and let us be doing with all our might. Difficulties must quicken, and not discourage in a possible and necessary work. If we cannot do all, let us do what we can; for if we neglect it, woe to us and them! Should we pass over all these needful things, and by a plausible sermon only think to prove ourselves faithful ministers, and to put off God and man with such a shell and formal visor, our reward would prove as superficial as our work.

2. Consider also, that it is your own voluntary undertaking and engagement that all this work is laid upon you. No man forced you to be overseers

of the Church; and doth not common honesty bind you to be true to your trust?

3. Consider also, that you have the *honour* to encourage you to the *labour*; and a great honour indeed it is to be the ambassadors of God, and the instruments of men's conversion and salvation, "to save men's souls from death, and cover a multitude of sins;" indeed, the honour is the attendant of the work. To do, therefore, as the prelates of the Church, in all ages, have done,—to strive for precedency, and fill the world with vile contentions about the dignity and superiority of their seats,—doth shew that they much forget the nature and work of that office which they strive about. I seldom see men strive so furiously who shall go first to a poor man's cottage to teach him and his family the way to heaven; or who shall first endeavour the conversion of a sinner; or first become the servant of all. Strange, that for all the plain expressions of Christ, men will not understand the nature of their office! If they did, would they strive who would be the pastor of a whole county and more, when there are ten thousand poor sinners in it that cry for help, and they are not so eager to engage for their relief; nay, when they can patiently live in the houses with riotous, profane persons, and not follow them seriously and incessantly for their change? They would have the name and honour of the work of a county, who are unable to do all the work of a parish, when the honour is but the appendix of the work. Is it names and honour, or the work and end, that these desire? Oh, if they would faithfully, humbly, and self-denyingly lay out themselves for

Christ and His Church, and never think of titles and reputation, they should then have honour whether they would or not; but by gaping after it, they lose it. For this is the case of virtue's shadow, "Quod sequitur fugio, quod fugit ipse sequor."

4. Consider also, you have many other excellent privileges of the ministerial office to encourage you to the work. If you will not, therefore, do the work, you have nothing to do with the privileges. It is something that you are maintained by other men's labours, and live on the commonwealth's allowance. This is for your work, that you may not be taken off it, but, as Paul requireth, may wholly give yourselves to these things, and not be forced to neglect men's souls whilst you are providing for your own bodies. Either do the work then, or take not the maintenance.

But you have far greater privileges yet than this. Is it nothing to be bred up to learning, when others are bred at the plough and cart; and to be furnished with so much delightful knowledge, when the world lieth in ignorance? Is it nothing to converse with learned men, and talk of high and glorious things, when others must converse with almost none but silly ignorants?

But especially, what an excellent life is it to live in studying and preaching Christ; to be still searching into His mysteries, or feeding on them; to be daily in the consideration of the blessed nature, or works, or ways of God! Others are glad of the leisure of the Lord's day, and now and then an hour besides, when they can lay hold of it; but we may keep a continual Sabbath. We may do nothing else almost but study and talk of God and glory, and call upon Him, and



drink in His sacred, saving truths. Our employment is all high and spiritual. Whether we be alone or with others, our business is for another world. Oh, were but our hearts more suitable to this work, what a blessed, joyful life should we live! How sweet would the pulpit be, and what a delight would our conference of these things afford! To live among so many silent, wise companions, whenever we please, and of such variety: all these, and much more such privileges of the ministry, bespeak our unwearied diligence in the work.

5. You are related to Christ as well as to the flock; and He being also related to you, you are not only advanced, but secured by the relation, if you be but faithful in the work that He requireth. You are the stewards of His mysteries, and rulers of His household, and He that hath entrusted you will maintain you in His work. But then, "It is required of a steward that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. iv. 2.) Be true to Him, and never doubt but He will be true to you. Do you feed His flock, and He will sooner feed you, as He did Elias, than forsake you. If you be in prison, He will open the doors; but then you must relieve imprisoned souls. He will give you a tongue, and wisdom that no enemy shall resist; but then you must use it faithfully for Him. If you will put forth your hand to relieve the distressed, and willingly put it to His plough, He will wither the hand that is stretched out against you. The ministers of England, I am sure, know this by large experience. Many a time hath God rescued them from the jaws of the devourer. Oh, the admirable preservations and deliverances that they have had from cruel Papists, from tyrannical

persecutors, from malicious sectaries, and misguided, passionate men! Brethren, in the fear of God, consider why it is that God hath done all this! Is it for your persons, or for His Church? What are you to Him more than other men, but for His work and people's sake? Are you angels, or men? Is your flesh of any better mettle than your neighbours? Are you not of the same generation of sinners, and need His grace as much as they? Up, then, and work as the redeemed of the Lord; as those that are purposely rescued from ruin for His service. Oh, do not prepare a remediless overthrow for the English ministry, by your ingratitude, after all these deliverances! If you believe that God hath rescued you for Himself, live to Him then, as being unreservedly His that hath delivered you.

II. The first motive mentioned in the text we have spoken of, which is from the consideration of our office itself. The second is from *the efficient cause*. It is God, by His Spirit, that makes us overseers of His Church, therefore it concerneth us to take heed to ourselves and it. I did before shew you how the Holy Ghost is said to make bishops or pastors of the Church in three several respects: By qualifying them for the office; by directing the ordainers to discern their qualifications, and know the fittest men; and by directing them, the people, and themselves, for the affixing them to a particular charge. All these were done then in an extraordinary sort, by inspiration, at least very often. The same are all done now by the ordinary way of the Spirit's assistance. But it is the same Spirit still; and men are made overseers of the Church (when they are rightly called) by the Holy

Ghost now as well as then. It is a strange conceit therefore of the Papists, to think that ordination by the hands of the man is of more absolute necessity in the ministerial office than the calling of the Holy Ghost. God hath determined in His Word that there shall be such an office, and what the work and power shall be, and what sort of men, as to their qualifications, shall receive it. None of these can be undone by man, or made unnecessary. God also giveth men the qualifications which He requireth. So that all that the Church hath to do, whether pastors or people, ordainers or electors, is but to discern and determine which are the men that God hath qualified, and to accept of them that are so provided, and upon consent to install them solemnly in this office. But I purposely cut short the controvertible part.

What an obligation, then, is laid upon us by our call! If our commission be sent from heaven, it is not to be disobeyed. When Paul was called by the voice of Christ, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; when the apostles were called by Christ from their secular employments, they presently leave friends, and house, and trade, and all, and follow Him. Though our call be not so immediate or extraordinary, yet it is from the same Spirit. It is no safe course to imitate Jonah, in turning our back upon the commands of God. If we neglect our work, He hath a spur to quicken us, and if we overrun it, He hath messengers enough to overtake us, and fetch us back, and make us do it; and it is better to do it at first than at last. This is the second motive.

III. The third motive in the text, is from *the dignity of the object*. It is the Church of God which we must

oversee and feed. It is that Church for which the world is much upheld, which is sanctified by the Holy Ghost, which is united to Christ, and is His mystical body ; that Church which angels are present with, and attend upon as ministering spirits, whose very little ones have their angels beholding the face of God in heaven. Oh, what a charge have we undertaken ! And shall we be unfaithful ? Have we the stewardship of God's own family, and shall we neglect it ? Have we the conduct of those saints that must live for ever with God in glory, and shall we neglect them ? God forbid ! I beseech you, brethren, let this thought awaken the negligent ! You that draw back from painful, displeasing, suffering duties, and will put off men's souls with ineffectual formalities, do you think this is an honourable usage of Christ's spouse ? Are the souls of men thought meet by God to see His face, and live for ever in His glory, and are they not worthy of your utmost cost and labour ? Do you think so basely of the Church of God, as if it deserved not the best of your care and help ? Were you the keepers of sheep or swine, you might better let them go, and say, they be not worthy the looking after ; and yet you would scarcely do so if they were your own. But dare you say so by the souls of men, even by the Church of Christ ? Christ walketh among them. Remember His presence, and keep all as clean as you can. The praises of the most high God are in the midst of them. They are a sanctified, peculiar people, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a choice generation, to shew forth the praises of Him that hath called them ; and yet dare you neglect them ? What a high honour is it to be but one of them, yea, but a door-

keeper in the house of God ; but to be the priest of these priests, and the ruler of these kings,—this is such an honour as multiplieth your obligations to diligence and fidelity in so noble an employment.

IV. The last motive mentioned in my text is, *the price paid for the Church which we oversee*. God the Son did purchase it with His own blood. Oh, what an argument is here to quicken the negligent ; and what an argument to condemn those that will not be quickened to their duty by it ! “Oh,” saith one of the ancient doctors, “if Christ had but committed to my keeping one spoonful of His blood in a fragile glass, how curious should I preserve it, and how tender should I be of that glass !” If, then, He have committed to me the purchase of His blood, should I not as carefully look to my charge ? What, sirs ! shall we despise the blood of Christ ? shall we think it was shed for them that are not worthy of our utmost care ? You may see here, it is not a little fault that negligent pastors are guilty of. As much as in them lieth, the blood of Christ should be shed in vain : they would lose Him those souls whom He hath so dearly bought !

Oh, then, let us hear those arguments of Christ, whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless : “Did I die for them, and wilt not thou look after them ? Were they worth my blood, and are they not worth thy labour ? Did I come down from heaven to earth, to seek and to save that which was lost ; and wilt not thou go to the next door, or street, or village to seek them ? How small is thy labour and condescension as to mine ? I debased myself to this, but it is thy honour to be so employed. Have I done and suffered so much for their salvation ; and was I willing

to make thee a co-worker with me, and wilt thou refuse that little that lieth upon thy hands?" Every time we look upon our congregations, let us believingly remember, that they are the purchase of Christ's blood, and therefore should be regarded accordingly by us.

And think what a confusion it will be at the last day to a negligent minister, to have this blood of the Son of God to be pleaded against him, and for Christ to say, "It was the purchase of my blood that thou didst so make light of, and dost thou think to be saved by it thyself?" O brethren, seeing Christ will bring His blood to plead with us, let it plead us to our duty, lest it plead us to damnation.

I have done with the motives which I find in the text itself: there are many more that might be gathered from the rest of this exhortation of the apostle; but we must not stay to mention all. If the Lord will set home but these few upon your hearts, I dare say we shall see reason to mend our pace: and the change will be such on our hearts, and in our ministry, that ourselves and our congregations will have cause to bless God for it. I know myself unworthy to be your monitor; but a monitor you must have; and it is better for us to hear of our sin and duty from anybody than from none at all. Receive the admonition, and you will see no cause in the monitor's unworthiness, to repent of it; but if you reject it, the unworthiest messenger may bear that witness against you that will confound you. But before I leave this exhortation, as I have applied it to our general work, so I shall carry it a little further to some of the special parts and modes of our duty which were before expressed.

I. And first, and above all, *see that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought on your own souls.* It is a fearful case to be an unsanctified professor, but much more to be an unsanctified preacher. Doth it not make you tremble when you open the Bible lest you should read there the sentence of your own condemnation? When you pen your sermons, little do you think that you are drawing up indictments against your own souls! When you are arguing against sin, you are aggravating your own. When you proclaim to your hearers the riches of Christ and grace, you publish your own iniquity in rejecting them, and your unhappiness in being without them. What can you do in persuading men to Christ, in drawing them from the world, in urging them to a life of faith and holiness, but conscience, if it were but awake, might tell you that you speak all this to your own confusion? If you mention hell, you mention your own inheritance; if you describe the joys of heaven, you describe your misery that have no right to it. What can you devise to say, for the most part, but it will be against your own souls? Oh, miserable life, that a man should study and preach against himself, and spend all his days in a course of self-condemnation! A graceless, unexperienced preacher is one of the most unhappy creatures upon earth; and yet is he ordinarily most insensible of his unhappiness: for he hath so many counterfeits that seem like the gold of saving grace, and so many splendid stones that seem like the Christian's jewel, that he is seldom troubled with the thoughts of his poverty; but thinks he is rich, and wanteth nothing, when he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. He is acquainted with the Holy

Scripture ; he is exercised in holy duties ; he liveth not in open disgraceful sin ; he serveth at God's altar ; he reproveth other men's faults ; and preacheth up holiness both of heart and life : and how can this man choose but be holy ? Oh, what an aggravated misery is this, to perish in the midst of plenty, and to famish with the bread of life in our hands, while we offer it to others, and urge it on them !—that those ordinances of God should be the occasions of our delusion, which are instituted to be the means of our conviction and salvation !—and that while we hold the looking-glass of the gospel to others, to shew them the true face of the state of their souls, we should either look on the back of it ourselves, where we can see nothing, or turn it aside, that it may misrepresent us to ourselves ! If such a wretched man would take my counsel, he should make a stand, and call his heart and life to an account, and fall a-preaching awhile to himself before he preach any more to others : he should consider whether food in the mouth will nourish that goeth not into the stomach ; whether it be a Christ in the mouth or in the heart that will save men ; whether he that nameth Him should not depart from iniquity ; whether God will hear their prayers, if they regard iniquity in their hearts ; whether it will serve the turn at that day of reckoning to say, “ Lord, we have prophesied in thy name,” when they shall hear, “ Depart from me, I know you not ;” and what comfort it will be to Judas when he is gone to his own place to remember that he preached with the rest of the apostles, or that he sat with Christ, and was called by Him “ friend ;” and whether a wicked preacher shall stand in the judgment, or sinners in the assembly of



the just. When such thoughts as these have entered into his soul, and kindly worked awhile upon his conscience, I would advise him next to go to the congregation, and there preach over Origen's sermon on Ps. l. 16, 17: "But unto the wicked saith God, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and hast cast my words behind thee." And when he has read this text, to sit down, and expound and apply it by his tears; and then to make a free confession of his sin, and lament his case before the assembly, and desire their earnest prayers to God for pardoning and renewing grace; and so to close with Christ in heart, who before admitted him no further than into the brain, that hereafter he may preach a Christ whom he knows, and may feel what he speaks, and may commend the riches of the gospel by experience.

Verily, it is the common danger and calamity of the Church to have unregenerate and inexperienced pastors, and to have so many men become preachers before they are Christians; to be sanctified by dedication to the altar as God's priests, before they are sanctified by hearty dedication to Christ as His disciples; and so to worship an unknown God, and to preach an unknown Christ, an unknown Spirit, an unknown state of holiness and communion with God, and a glory that is unknown, and likely to be unknown to them for ever. He is likely to be but a heartless preacher, that hath not the Christ and grace that he preacheth in his heart. Oh that all our students in the university would well consider this! What a poor business is it to themselves, to spend

their time in knowing some little of the works of God, and some of those names that the divided tongues of the nations have imposed on them, and not to know the Lord himself, nor exalt Him in their hearts, nor to be acquainted with that one renewing work that should make them happy. They do but walk in a vain show, and spend their lives like dreaming men, while they busy their wits and tongues about abundance of names and notions, and are strangers to God and the life of saints. If ever God awaken them by saving grace, they will have cogitations and employments so much more serious than their unsanctified studies and disputations were, that they will confess they did but dream before. A world of business they make themselves about *nothing*, while they are wilful strangers to the primitive, independent, necessary Being who is all in all. Nothing can be rightly known, if God be not known; nor is any study well managed, nor to any great purpose, where God is not studied. We know little of the creature, till we know it as it standeth in its order and respects to God; single letters and syllables uncomposed are nonsense. He that overlooketh the Alpha and Omega, and seeth not the beginning and end, and Him in all who is the *All* of all, doth see nothing at all. All creatures are as such broken syllables; they signify nothing as separated from God. Were they separated *actually*, they would cease to be, and the separation would be an annihilation; and when we separate them in our *fancies*, we make *nothing* of them to ourselves. It is one thing to know the creatures as Aristotle, and another thing to know them as a Christian. None but a Christian can read one line of his "Physics" so

as to understand it rightly. It is a high and excellent study, and of greater use than many do well understand; but it is the smallest part of it that Aristotle can teach us. When man was made perfect, and placed in a perfect world, where all things were in perfect order, and very good, the whole creation was then man's book, in which he was to read the nature and will of his great Creator; every creature had the name of God so legibly engraven on it, that man might run and read it. He could not open his eyes, but he might see some image of God, but nowhere so fully and lively as in himself: and therefore it was his work to study the whole volume of nature; but first and chiefly to study himself. And if man had held on in this prescribed work, he would have continued and increased in the knowledge of God and himself; but when he would needs know and love the creature and himself, in a way of separation from God, he lost the knowledge of all, both of the creature, himself, and God, so far as it could beautify and was worth the name of knowledge; and, instead of it, he hath got the unhappy knowledge which he affected, even the empty notions and fantastical knowledge of the creature and himself as thus separated. Thus, he that lived to the Creator, and upon Him, doth now live to, and as upon the other creatures and himself; and thus, "every man at his best estate (the learned as well as the illiterate) is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain." (Psal. xxxix. 5, 6.) It must be well observed, that as God laid not by the relation of a Creator by becoming our Redeemer, nor the right of His propriety and government of us in that relation,

but the work of redemption standeth in some subordination to that of creation, and the law of the Redeemer to the law of the Creator; so also the duties that we owed God as Creator are not ceased, but the duties that we owe to the Redeemer as such are subordinate thereto. It is the work of Christ to bring us back to God, whom we fell from, and to restore us to our perfection of holiness and obedience; and as He is the way to the Father, so faith in Him is the way to our former employment and enjoyment of God. I hope you perceive what all this driveth at, viz., that to see God in His creatures, and to love Him, and converse with Him, was the employment of man in his upright state; that this is so far from ceasing to be our duty, that it is the work of Christ by faith to bring us back to it; and therefore the most holy men are the most excellent students of God's works, and none but the holy can rightly study or know them. His works are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein; but not for themselves, but for Him that made them. Your study of physics and other sciences is not worth a rush, if it be not God by them that you seek after. To see and admire, to reverence and adore, to love and delight in God appearing to us in His works, and purposely to peruse them for the knowledge of God, this is the true and only philosophy, and the contrary is mere foolery, and is called so again and again by God himself. This is the sanctification of your studies, when they are devoted to God, and when He is the life of them all, and they all intend Him as their end and principal object.

Therefore I shall presume to tell you by the way, that it is a grand error, and of dangerous consequence

in the Christian academies, (pardon the censure from one so unfit for it, seeing the necessity of the case commandeth it,) that they study the creature before the Redeemer, and set themselves to physics, and metaphysics, and mathematics, before they set themselves to theology; whenas, no man that hath not the vitals of theology is capable of going beyond a fool in philosophy; and all that such do is but doting about questions, and opposition of science, falsely so called. And as by affecting a separated creature-knowledge Adam fell from God, so those that mind these *βεβήλους κενοφωνίας, καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως*, they miss the end of all right studies, *περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἠστούχησαν* while they will needs prefer these, they miss that faith which they pretend to aim at. Their pretence is, that theology being the end, and the most perfect, must be the last, and all the subservient sciences must go before it. But, 1. There is somewhat of natural knowledge indeed pre-requisite, and somewhat of art, before a man can receive theology; but that is no more than their mothers can teach them before they go to school. 2. And it is true, that all right natural knowledge doth tend to the increase of theological knowledge; but that which is a means to its perfection, may be the effect or consequent of its beginning. 3. The end must be first known, because it must be intended before the choice, or use of means. 4. The Scripture revealeth to us the things of God himself in the most easy way, and therefore He must be first learnt there. 5. The book of the creatures is not to shew us more of God than the Scripture doth; but by representing Him to us in more sensible appearances, to make our knowledge of Him the more

intense and operative, and being continually before our eyes, God also would be continually before them, if we could aright discern Him in them. It is evident, therefore, that theology must lay the ground, and lead the way in all our studies, when we are once acquainted with so much of words and things as is needful to our understanding the sense of its principles. If God must be searched after in our search of the creature, and we must affect no separated knowledge of them, then tutors must read God to their pupils in all; and divinity must be the beginning, the middle, the end, the life, the all of their studies; and our physics and metaphysics must be reduced to theology, and nature must be read as one of God's books, which is purposely written for the revelation of Himself. The Holy Scripture is the easiest book. When you have first learnt God and His will there, in the necessary things, address yourselves cheerfully to the study of His works, that you may there see the creature itself as your alphabet, and their order as the connexion of syllables, words, and sentences, and God as the subject-matter of all, and the respect to Him as the sense or signification; and then carry on both together, and never more play the mere scrivener; stick no more in your letters and words, but read every creature as a Christian or a divine. If you see not yourselves and all things as living, and moving, and having being in God, you see nothing, whatever you think you see. If you perceive not in your perusals of the creatures, that God is all, and in all, and see not *ἐξ αὐτοῦ, καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα*, (Rom. xi. 36,) you may think perhaps that you know something, but you know nothing as you ought to know. (1 Cor. viii.

2.) But he that seeth and loveth God in the creature, the same is known and loved of Him. (Ver. 3.) Think not so basely of the works of God and your physics, as that they are only preparatory studies for boys. It is a most high and noble part of holiness to search after, behold, admire, and love the great Creator in all His works. How much have the saints of God been employed in it! The beginning of Genesis, the books of Job, and the Psalms, may acquaint us that our physics are not so little akin to theology as some suppose. I do therefore, in zeal to the good of the Church, and their own success in their most necessary labours, propound it to the consideration of all pious tutors, whether they should not as timely, and as diligently read to their pupils, or cause them to read, the chief parts of practical divinity, (and there is no other,) as any of the sciences; and whether they should not go together from the very first. It is well that they hear sermons; but that is not enough. If they have need of private help in philosophy besides public lectures, much more in theology. If tutors would make it their principal business to acquaint their pupils with the doctrine of life, and labour to set it home upon their hearts, that all might be received according to its weight, and read to their hearts as well as to their heads, and so carry on the rest of their instructions, that it may appear they make them but subservient unto this, and that their pupils may feel what they drive at in all, and so that they would teach all their philosophy "in habitu theologico," this might be a happy means to make happy souls, and a happy Church and commonwealth. The same I mean also respecting schoolmasters to their scholars. But when

languages and philosophy have almost all their time and diligence, and instead of reading philosophy like divines, they read divinity like philosophers, as if it were a thing of no more moment than a lesson of music, or arithmetic, and not the doctrine of everlasting life ; this is it that blasteth so many in the bud, and pestereth the Church with unsanctified teachers ! Hence it is that we have so many worldlings to preach of the invisible felicity, and so many carnal men to declare the mysteries of the Spirit, and I would I might not say, so many infidels to preach Christ, or so many atheists to preach the living God ; and when they are taught philosophy before, or without religion, what wonder if their philosophy be all or most of their religion ; if they grow up in admiration of their unprofitable fancies, and deify their own deluded brains, when they know no other God ; and if they reduce all their theology to their philosophy, like Campanella, White, and other self-admirers ; or if they take Christianity for a mere delusion, and fall with Hobbes to write “ Leviathans,” or with Lord Herbert to write such Treatises “ de Veritate ” as shall shew the world how little they esteem of verity : or at best, if they turn Paracelsian Behmenists, and spin them a religion from their own inventions ! Therefore I address myself to all them that have the education of youth, especially in order to preparation for the ministry. You that are schoolmasters and tutors, begin and end with the things of God. Speak daily to the hearts of your scholars those things that must be wrought into their hearts, or else they will be undone. Let some piercing words fall frequently from your mouths, of God, and the state of their souls, and



the life to come. Do not say, they are too young to understand and entertain them. You little know what impressions they may make which you discern not. Not only that soul of the boy, but a congregation, or many souls therein, may have cause to bless God for your zeal and diligence, yea, for one such reasonable word. You have a great advantage above others to do them good. You have them before they are grown to the worst, and they will hear you when they will not hear another. If they are destined to the ministry, you are preparing them for the special service of God; and must they not first have the knowledge of Him whom they must serve? Oh, think with yourselves, what a sad thing it will be to their own souls, and what a wrong to the Church of God, if they come out from you with common and carnal hearts, to so holy, and spiritual, and great a work! Of a hundred students that be in one of your colleges, how many may there be that are serious, experienced, godly men: some talk of too small a number. If you should send one half of them on a work that they are unfit for, what cruel work will they make in the churches or countries! Whereas, if you be the means of their thorough sanctification, how many souls may bless you, and what greater good can you do the Church! When once their hearts are savingly affected with the doctrine which they study and preach, they will study it heartily, and preach it heartily. Their own experience will direct them to the fittest subjects, and will furnish them with matter, and quicken them to set it home. I observe, that the best of our hearers can feel and savour such experimental preachers, and usually do less regard others, whatever may be their

accomplishments. See, therefore, that you make not work for sequestrators, nor for the groans and lamentation of the Church, nor for the great tormentor of the murderers of souls.

II. My second particular exhortation is this: Content not yourselves to have the main work of grace, but *be also very careful that your graces be kept in life and action, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons that you study, before you preach them to others.* If you did this for your own sakes, it would not be lost labour; but I am speaking to you upon the public account, and that you would do it for the sake of the Church. When your minds are in a heavenly, holy frame, your people are likely to partake of the fruits of it. Your prayers, and praises, and doctrine will be heavenly and sweet to them. They will feel when you have been much with God. That which is on your hearts most, is likely to be most in their ears. I confess I must speak it by lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the distempers of my soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching will be so: and so I can observe too often in the best of my hearers, that when I have a while grown cold in preaching, they have cooled accordingly; and the next prayers that I have heard from them have been too much like my preaching. We are the nurses of Christ's little ones. If we forbear our food, we shall famish them; they will quickly find it in the want of milk; and we may quickly see it again in them, in the lean and dull discharge of their several duties. If we let our love go down, we are not likely to raise up theirs. If we abate our holy care and fear, it will appear in our doc-

trine. If the matter shew it not, the manner will. If we feed on unwholesome food, either errors or fruitless controversies, our hearers are likely to fare the worse for it. Whereas if we could abound in faith, and love, and zeal, how would it overflow, to the refreshing of our congregations, and how would it appear in the increase of the same graces in others!

O brethren, watch, therefore, over your own hearts! Keep out sinful passions and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith and love; be much at home; and be much with God. If it be not your daily, serious business to study your own hearts, and subdue corruptions, and live as upon God—if you make it not your very work which you constantly attend, all will go amiss, and you will starve your auditors; or if you have but an affected fervency, you cannot expect such a blessing to attend it. Above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. There you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices. Remember you cannot decline and neglect your duty to your own hurt alone; many will be losers by it as well as you. For your people's sake, therefore, look to your hearts. If a pang of spiritual pride should overtake you, and you should grow into any dangerous or schismatical conceits, and vent your own overvalued inventions to draw away disciples after you, what a wound might this prove to the Church that you are set over! and you might become a plague to them instead of a blessing, and they might wish they had never seen your faces. Oh, therefore, take heed of your own judgments and affections! Error and vanity will slyly insinuate, and seldom come without fair pretences. Great distempers and apostasies have usually

small beginnings. The prince of darkness doth frequently personate the angels of light, to draw children of light again into his darkness. How easily also will distempers creep into our affections, and our first love, and fear, and care abate! Watch, therefore, for the sake of yourselves and others.

More particularly: a minister should take some special pains with his heart before he goes to the congregation. If it be then cold, how is it likely to warm the hearts of the hearers? Go, therefore, then especially to God for life, and read some rousing, awakening book, or meditate on the weight of the subject that you are to speak of, and on the great necessity of your people's souls, that you may go in the zeal of the Lord into His house.

III. My next particular exhortation is this, *Stir up yourselves to the great work of God, when you are upon it, and see that you do it with all your might.* Though I move you not to a constant loudness, (for that will make your fervency contemptible,) yet see that you have a constant seriousness; and when the matter requireth it, as it should do, in the application at least of every doctrine, then lift up your voice, spare not your spirits, and speak to them as to men that must be awakened either here or in hell. Look upon your congregations believingly, and with compassion, and think in what a state of joy or torment they must all be for ever; and then, methinks, it will make you earnest, and melt your heart in the sense of their condition. Oh, speak not one cold or careless word about so great a business as heaven or hell! Whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest. Truly, brethren, they are great works that are to be

done, and you must not think that trifling will despatch them. You cannot break men's hearts by jesting with them, or telling them a smooth tale, or patching up a gaudy oration. Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures upon a drowsy request of one that seemeth not to mean as he speaks, or to care much whether his request be granted. If you say, "The work is God's, and He may do it by the weakest means," I answer, It is true, He may do so; but yet His ordinary way is to work by means, and to make not only the matter that is preached, but also the manner of preaching, to be instrumental to the work: or else it were a small matter whom He should employ that would but speak the truth. If grace made as little use of the ministerial persuasions as some conceive, we need not so much mind a reformation, nor cast out the insufficient.

A great matter also, with the most of our hearers, lies in the very pronunciation and tone of speech. The best matter will scarcely move them, if it be not movingly delivered. Especially, see that there be no affectation, but that we speak as familiarly to our people as we would do if we were talking to any of them personally. The want of a familiar tone and expression is as great a defect in most of our deliveries as anything whatsoever, and that which we should be very careful to amend. When a man hath a reading or declaiming tone, like a schoolboy saying his lesson or an oration, few are moved with anything that he saith. Let us, therefore, rouse up ourselves to the work of the Lord, and speak to our people as for their lives, and save them as by violence, pulling them out of the fire. Satan will not be charmed out of his pro-

fession. We must lay siege to the souls of sinners, which are his garrisons, find out where his chief strength lieth, and lay the battery of God's ordnance against it, and ply it closely till a breach be made; and then suffer them not by their shifts to make it up again, but find out their common objections, and give them a full and satisfactory answer. We have reasonable creatures to deal with, and as they abuse their reason against truth, so they will accept better reason for it before they will obey. We must, therefore, see that our sermons be convincing, and that we make the light of Scripture and reason shine so bright in the faces of the ungodly, that it may even force them to see, unless they wilfully shut their eyes. A sermon full of mere words, how neatly soever it be composed, while there is wanting the light of evidence, and the life of zeal, is but an image, or a well-dressed carcase. In preaching, there is intended a communion of souls, and a communication of somewhat from ours unto theirs. As we and they have understandings, and wills, and affections, so must the bent of our endeavours be to communicate the fullest light of evidence from our understandings unto theirs; and to warm their hearts by kindling in them holy affections, as by a communication from ours. The great things which we have to commend to our hearers have reason enough on their side, and lie plain before them in the Word of God; we should, therefore, be so furnished with all store of evidence, as to come as with a torrent upon their understandings, and bear down all before us, and with our dilemmas and expostulations to bring them to a nonplus, and pour out shame upon all their vain objections, that they may be forced to yield to

the power of truth, and see that it is great, and will prevail.

IV. Moreover, if you would prosper in your work, be sure to *keep up earnest desires and expectations of success*. If your hearts be not set on the end of your labours, and you long not to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and do not study and preach in hope, you are not likely to see much fruit of it. It is an ill sign of a false, self-seeking heart, that can be content to be still doing, and see no fruit of their labour. So I have observed that God seldom blesseth any man's work so much as his whose heart is set upon success. Let it be the property of such as Judas to have more regard to the bag than to their business, and not to care much for what they pretend to care; and to think if they have their tithes, and the love and commendations of the people, that they have enough to satisfy them. But let all that preach for Christ and men's salvation, be unsatisfied till they have the thing they preach for. He had never the right motives of a preacher that is indifferent whether he do obtain them, and is not grieved when he misseth them, and rejoiced when he sees the desired issue. When a man doth only study what to say, and how with commendation to spend the hour, and looks no more after it, unless it be to know what people think of his own abilities, and thus holds on from year to year, I must needs think that this man preaches for himself, and drives on a private trade of his own, and does not preach for Christ even when he preaches Christ, how excellent soever he may seem to do it. No wise or charitable physician is content to be still giving physic, and see no amendment among his

patients, but have them all to die upon his hands; nor will any wise and honest schoolmaster be content to be still teaching, though his scholars profit not; but either of them would grow weary of the employment. I know that a faithful minister may have comfort when he wants success; and though Israel be not gathered, our reward is with the Lord, and our acceptance is not according to the fruit, but according to our labour; and as Greg. M. saith, "Et Æthiops etsi balneum niger intrat, et niger egreditur, tamen balneator nummos accipit." If God set us to wash blackamoors, and cure those that will not be cured, we shall not lose our labour, though we perform not the cure. But then, he that longeth not for the success of his labours can have none of his comfort, because he was not a faithful labourer; this is only for them that I speak of, that are set upon the end, and grieved if they miss it. This is not the full comfort that we must desire, but only such a part as may quiet us, though we miss the rest. What if God will accept a physician though the patient die? He must work in compassion, long for a better issue, and be sorry if he miss it, for all that; for it is not only our own reward that we labour for, but other men's salvation. I confess, for my part, I marvel at some ancient, reverend men, that have lived twenty, forty, or fifty years with an unprofitable people, where they have seen so little fruit of their labours that it was scarcely discernible, how they can with so much patience still go on! Were it my case, though I durst not leave the vineyard nor quit my calling, yet I should suspect that it was God's will I should go somewhere else, and another take my place, that might be fitter for them; and I should



not be easily satisfied to spend my days in such a manner.

V. *Do well*, as well as *say well*. Be zealous of good works. Spare not for any cost, if it may promote your Master's work.

1. Maintain your innocence, and walk without offence. Let your lives condemn sin, and persuade men to duty. Would you have your people be more careful of their souls than you will be of yours? If you would have them redeem their time, do not you misspend yours. If you would not have them vain in their conversations, see that you speak yourselves the things which may edify, and tend to minister grace to the hearers. Order your own families well, if you would have them do so by theirs. Be not proud and lordly, if you would have them to be lowly. There is no virtue wherein your example will do more, at least to abate men's prejudice, than humility, and meekness, and self-denial. Forgive injuries, and be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Do as your Lord, who when He was reviled, reviled not again. If sinners be stubborn, and stout, and contemptuous, flesh and blood will persuade you to take up their weapons, and to master them by their carnal means; but that is not the way, further than necessary self-preservation or public good requireth it, but overcome them with kindness, and patience, and gentleness. The former may shew that you have more worldly power than they, wherein yet they are ordinarily too hard for the faithful; but it is the latter only that will tell them that you overtop them in spiritual excellence, and in the true qualifications of a saint. If you believe that Christ was more imitable

than Cæsar, or Alexander, and that it is more glory to be a Christian than to be a conqueror, yea, to be a man than a beast, which often exceed us in strength, then contend with charity, and not with violence, and set meekness, and love, and patience against force, and not force against force. Remember you are obliged to be the servants of all. Condescend to men of low estate. Be not strange to the poor of your flock. They are apt to take your strangeness for contempt. Familiarity, improved to holy ends, is exceedingly necessary, and may do abundance of good. Speak not stoutly or disrespectfully to any one, but be courteous to the meanest as your equal in Christ. A kind and winning carriage is a cheap way of advantage to do men good.

2. Remember what I said before on works of charity. Go to the poor, and see what they want, and shew at once your compassion to soul and body. Buy them a catechism, and some small books that are most likely to do them good, and bestow them on your neighbours, and make them promise you to read them, and especially, to spend that part of the Lord's day therein, which they can spare from greater duties. Stretch your purse to the utmost, and do all the good you can. Think not of being rich; seek not great things for yourselves or posterity. What if you do impoverish yourselves to do a greater good; will it be loss or gain? If you believe that God is your safest purse-bearer, and that to expend in His service is the greatest usury, and the most thriving trade, shew them that you believe it. I know that flesh and blood will cavil before it will lose its prey, and will never want somewhat to say against that duty that is

against its interest. But mark what I say, and may the Lord set it home upon your hearts: *That man who has anything in the world so dear to him, that he cannot spare it for Christ, if He call for it, is no true Christian.* And because a carnal heart will not believe that Christ calls for it, when he cannot spare it, and therefore makes that his self-deceiving shift; I say further, that *That man that will not be persuaded that duty is duty, because he cannot spare that for Christ, which is therein to be expended, is no true Christian;* for a false heart corrupteth the understanding, and that again increaseth the delusions of the heart. Do not take it therefore as an undoing, to make you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and to lay up a treasure in heaven, though you leave yourselves but little on earth. “*Nemo tam pauper potest esse quam natus est; Aves sine patrimonio vivunt, et in diem pecua pascuntur; et hoc nobis tamen nata sunt; quæ omnia si non concupiscimus possidemus,*” inquit Minutius Felix, p. (mih) 397. You lose no great advantage for heaven by becoming poor; “*Quia viam terit, eo fælicior quo levior incedit.*” (Id.)

I know where the heart is carnal and covetous, words will not wring their money out of their hands. They can say all this, and more to others; but saying is one thing, and believing is another. But with those that are true believers, methinks such considerations would prevail. Oh, what abundance of good might ministers do, if they would but live in a contempt of the world, and the riches and glory of it, and expend all they have for their Master's use, and pinch their flesh that they might have wherewith to do

good! This would unlock more hearts to the reception of their doctrine than all their oratory will do; and without this, singularity in religion will seem but hypocrisy, and it is likely that it is so. “Qui innocentiam colit, Domino supplicat—qui hominem periculo surripit, opinam victimam cædit; hæc nostra sacrificia; hæc Dei sacra sunt; sic apud nos relegiosior est ille qui justior,” inquit idem Minutius Felix. (Ib.) Though we need not do as the Papists, that will betake them to monasteries, and cast away property, yet we must have nothing but what we have for God.

VI. The next branch of my exhortation is, That you would *maintain your Christian and brotherly unity and communion, and to do as much of God's work as you can in unanimity, and holy concord.* Blessed be the Lord that it is so well with us in this county, in this regard, as it is! We lose our authority with the people when we divide. They will yield to us when we go together, who would resist and condemn the best of us alone. Two things, in order to this, I beseech you to observe :

1. Still maintain your meetings for communion; incorporate, and hold all Christian correspondence; grow not strange to one another; do not say that you have business of your own to do, when you should be at any such meeting or other work for God. It is not only the mutual edification that we may receive by lectures, disputations, or conferences, though that is not to be disregarded, but it is especially for consultations for the common good, and the maintaining of our communion, that we must thus assemble. Though your own person might be without the benefit of such meetings, yet the Church and our common work

require them. Do not, then, shew yourselves contemners or neglecters of such necessary work. Distance breedeth strangeness, and fomenteth dividing flames and jealousies, which communion will prevent or cure. It will be our enemies' chief plot to divide us, that they may weaken us. Conspire not, therefore, with the enemies, and take not their course. Indeed, ministers have need of one another, and must improve the gifts of God in one another; and the self-sufficient are the most deficient, and commonly proud and empty men. Some there be that come not among their brethren to do or receive good, nor afford them any of their assistance in consultations for the common good; and their excuse is, "We love to live privately." To whom I say—Why do you not, on the same grounds, forbear going to church, and say you love to live privately? Is not ministerial communion a duty as well as common Christian communion? and hath not the Church always thought so, and practised accordingly? If you mean that you love your own ease or convenience better than God's service, say so, and speak your minds. But I suppose there are few of them so silly as to think that it is any just excuse, though they will give us no better. Somewhat else lieth at the bottom. Indeed, some of them are empty men, and afraid their weakness should be known, when, as they cannot conceal it by their solitariness, they might do much to heal it by communion. Some of them are careless and scandalous men; and for them we have no desire of their communion, nor shall admit it, but upon public repentance and reformation. Some of them are so in love with their parties and opinions, that they will not hold communion with us,

because we are not of their party and opinion ; whereas by communication they might give or receive better information, or, at least, carry on so much of God's work in unity as we are agreed in. But the mischief of schism is to make men censorious and proud, and take others to be unmeet for their communion, and themselves to be the only Church, or pure Church, of Christ.

The Papists will have no Catholic Church but the Romish, and unchurch all besides themselves. The Separatists and many Anabaptists say the like of their parties. The new Prelatical party will have no Catholic Church but Prelatical, and unchurch all except their party, and so avoid communion with others ; and thus turning Separatists and Schismatics, they imitate the Papists, and make an opposition to schism their pretence. First, all must be accounted Schismatics that be not of their opinion and party, (when yet we find not that opinion in the creed,) and they must be avoided because they are Schismatics. But we resolve, by the grace of God, to adhere to more catholic principles and practices, and to have communion with all godly Christians that will have communion with us, so far as they force us not to actual sin. And for the separating brethren, as by distance they are like to cherish misinformations of us, so if by their wilful estrangedness and distance, any among us do entertain injurious reports of them, and think worse of them, and deal worse by some of them, than there is cause, they may partly thank themselves.

Sure I am, by such means as these, we are many of us grown so hardened in sin, that men make no great

matter what they say one against another, but stand out of hearing and sight, and vent their spleen against each other behind their backs. How many jeers and scorns have they among their companions for those that are against their party! And they easily venture, be the matter never so safe. A bad report of such is easily taken to be true, and that which is true is easily made worse, when, as Seneca saith, “*multus absolvens, si cœperimus ante judicare quam irasci: nunc autem primum impetum sequimur.*” It is passion that tells the tale, and that receiveth it.

2. The second thing, therefore, that I entreat of you is, that you would be very tender of the unity and peace of the Catholic Church; not only of your own party's, but of the whole. And to this end these things will prove necessary:—Do not too easily introduce any novelties into the Church, either of faith or practice. I mean not that which seems a novelty to men that look no further than yesterday; for so the restoring of ancient things will seem novelty to those that know not what was anciently, and the expulsion of prevailing novelties will seem a novelty to them that know not what is such indeed. So the Papists censure us as novelists for casting out many of their innovations; and our common people tell us we bring up new customs if we do not kneel at the receiving of the Lord's Supper—a notorious novelty. Even in the sixth General Council at Trull. in Constantinople, this was the ninth canon: “*Ne Dominicis diebus genua flectamus, à divinis Patribus nostris Canonicè accepimus: Quare post vespertinum ingressum Sacerdotum in Sabbato ad altare, ut more observatum est, nemo genu flectit usque ad sequentem vesperem post domi-*

nicam." It is that which is indeed novelty that I dissuade you from, and not the demolishing of novelties. Some have already introduced such new phrases, at least, even about the great points of faith, justification, and the like, that there may be reason to reduce them to the primitive patterns.

A great stir is made in the world about the test of a Christian and true church, with whom we may have communion, and about that true centre and cement of the unity of the Church, in and by which our common calamitous breaches must be healed. And, indeed, the true cause of our continued divisions and misery is for want of discerning the centre of our unity, and the terms on which it must be done ; which is a great pity, when it was once so easy a matter, till the ancient test was thought insufficient. If any of the ancient creeds might serve, we might be soon agreed. If Vincentius Lirinens.'s test might serve, we might yet make some good shift—viz., To believe explicitly all that "quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est." For, as he addeth, "hoc est etenim verè proprièque Catholicum." But then we must see, that the first age may not be excluded which gave the rule to the rest ; and that this extend not to every ceremony which never was taken for unalterable, but to matters of faith ; and that the acts and canons of councils which were not about such matters of faith, but mere variable order, and which newly constituted those things, which the apostolic age knew not, and therefore were not properly "credita," much less "semper, et ab omnibus," may have no hand in this work. I say, if either the ancient western or eastern creed, or this catholic faith of Vincentius, might be



taken as the test for explicit faith, or else rather all those Scripture texts, that express the "Credenda" with a note of necessity, and the whole Scripture, moreover, be confessed to be God's Word, and so believed in other points at least implicitly; this course might produce a more general communion and agreement: and more lines would meet in this centre, than otherwise are likely to meet. And, indeed, till men can be again content to make the Scripture the sufficient rule, in necessities to be explicitly believed, and in all the rest implicitly, we are never likely to see a catholic, Christian, durable peace. If we must needs make the Council of Trent, or the Papal judgment our test; or if we must make a blind bargain with the Papists, to come as near them as ever we dare, and so to compose another interim, and make that a test, (when God never made it so, and all Christians will never be of a mind in it, but some dare go nearer Rome than others dare, and that in several degrees;) or if we must thrust in all the canons of the former councils about matters of order, discipline, and ceremonies into our test, or gather up all the opinions of the fathers for the three or four first ages, and make them our test; none of all these will ever serve to do the business, and a catholic union will never be founded in them. It is an easy matter infallibly to foretell this. Much less can the writings of any single man, as Austin, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Beza, &c., or the late Confessions of any Churches that add to the ancient test, be ever capable of this use and honour.

I know it is said, that a man may subscribe the Scripture and the ancient creeds, and yet maintain Socinianism, or other heresies. To which I answer, So

he may another test which your own brains shall contrive ; and while you make a snare to catch heretics, instead of a test for the Church's communion, you will miss your end, and the heretic by the slipperiness of his conscience will break through, and the tender Christian may possibly be ensnared. And by your new creed the Church is likely to have new divisions, if you keep not close to the words of Scripture. In such cases, when heretics contradict the Scripture which they have subscribed, this calls not for a new or more sufficient test, but the Church must take notice of it, and call him to account, and if he be impenitent, exclude him their communion. What ! must we have new laws made every time the old ones are broken ? as if the law were not sufficient because men break it ! Or rather, must not the penalty of the violated law be executed ? It is a most sad case that such reasons as these should prevail with so many learned men to deny the sufficiency of Scripture as a test for church-communion, and to be still framing new ones that depart at least from Scripture-phrase, as if this were necessary to obviate heresies ! Two things are necessary to obviate heresies—the law, and good execution. God hath made the former, and His rule and law are both for sense and phrase translated sufficient ; and all their additional inventions, as to the aforesaid use, are as spiders' webs. Let us but do our part in the due execution of the laws of Christ, by questioning offenders in orderly synods, for the breaking of these laws, and let us avoid communion with the impenitent ; and what can the Church do more ? The rest belongs to the magistrate to restrain him from seducing his subjects, and not to us.

Well! this is the thing that I would recommend therefore to all my brethren, as the most necessary thing to the Church's peace, That you *unite in necessary truths, and tolerate tolerable failings; and bear with one another in things that may be borne with; and do not make a larger creed and more necessaries than God hath done.* And to that end, let no man's writings, nor the judgment of any party, though right, be taken as a test, or made that rule. And, (1.) Lay not too great a stress upon controverted opinions, which have godly men, and especially whole Churches, on both sides. (2.) Lay not too great a stress on those controversies that are ultimately resolved into philosophical uncertainties, (as some unprofitable controversies are about free-will, and the manner of the Spirit's operation of grace, and the Divine decrees, and pre-determination.) (3.) Lay not too great a stress on those controversies that are merely verbal, and if they were anatomised, would appear to be no more. Of which sort are far more, I speak it confidently upon certain knowledge, that now make a great noise in the world, and tear the Church, than almost any of the eager contenders that ever I spoke with seem to discern, or are likely to believe. (4.) Lay not too much stress on any point of faith which was disowned of, or unknown to the whole Church of Christ in any age since the Scriptures were delivered us. (5.) Much less should you lay too much on those which any of the more pure or judicious ages were wholly ignorant of. (6.) And lest of all should you lay too much on any point which no one age since the apostles did ever receive, but all commonly hold the contrary. For to make such an error which all the Church held, to be

such as is damning, were to unchurch all the Church of Christ ; and to make it such as must exclude them from our communion, doth make the whole Church excommunicable, which is absurd, and doth shew that if we had lived in that age, you would it seems have separated from the whole Church. To give an instance of the differences among errors : That any elect person shall fall away totally and finally, is a palpable, condemned error, of dangerous consequence. But that there are some justified ones not elect, that shall fall away and perish, is an error of a lower nature, which may not break the communion of Christians ; for otherwise we must renounce communion with the Catholic Church in Augustine's days, and much more before, as is said before. What then ? Shall I take this therefore for a truth which the Church then held ? Some will think me immodest to say no ; as if I were wiser than all the Church, and that in so learned an age, if not for so many : but yet I must be so immodest, as long as Scripture seemeth to me to warrant it. Why might not Augustine, Prosper, and all the rest, mistake in such a thing as that ? but then I am not so immodest, nor unchristian, as to unchurch all the Church on that account : nor would I have separated from Austin, and all the Church, if I had then lived : nor will do now from any man on that account. Both sides will be displeased with this resolution ; one, that I suppose all the Church to err, and ourselves to be in the right ; and the other, that I take it for no greater an error. But what remedy ? It will and must be so : read Prosper's *Resp. ad Capit. Gall.*, and you may quickly know both Austin's mind and his.

He that shall live to that happy time, when God

will heal His broken Churches, shall see all this that I am now pleading for reduced to practice, and this moderation take place of the new dividing zeal, and Scripture-sufficiency take place, and all men's confessions and comments to be valued only as subservient helps, and not to be the test of church-communion, any further than they are exactly the same with Scripture. And till the healing age come, we cannot expect that healing truths be entertained, because there are not healing spirits in the leaders of the Church. But when the work is to be done, the workmen will be fitted for it; and blessed will be the agents of so glorious a work!

But because the love of unity and verity, peace and purity, must be conjunctly manifested, we must avoid the extremes both in doctrine and communion. The extremes in doctrine are on one side by innovating additions; on the other side, by envying or hindering the progress of the light. The former is the most dangerous; of which men are guilty these ways:—(1.) By making new points of faith or duty. (2.) By making those points to be fundamental, or necessary to salvation, that are not so. (3.) By pretending of prophetic and other obscurer passages of the Scriptures, that they have a greater objective evidence, and we a greater certainty of their meaning, than indeed is so.

As I have met with some so confident of their right understanding of the Revelation, (which Calvin durst not expound, and profess he understood it not,) that they have framed part of their Confessions or Articles of Faith out of it; and grounded the weightiest actions of their lives upon their exposition; and could confidently tell in our late changes and differences, which

side was in the right, and which in the wrong, and all from the Revelation ; and thence would fetch such arguments as would carry all, if you would but grant the soundness of their expositions ; but if you put them to prove that, you marred all.

And these corrupters of sacred doctrine by their additions are of two sorts : some that are the first inventors, and others that are the propagators and maintainers ; and these, when additions grow old, do commonly maintain them under the notion of ancient verities, and oppose the ancient verities under the notion of novelty, as is before said.

The other extreme about doctrine is by hindering the progress of knowledge ; and this is commonly on pretence of avoiding the innovating extreme. It must be considered, therefore, how far we may go, and not be culpable innovators. (1.) Our knowledge must increase extensively " ad plura ;" we must know more verities than we knew before, though we may not feign more. There is much of Scripture that will remain unknown to us when we have done our best. Though we shall find out no more articles of faith which must be explicitly believed by all that will be saved, yet we may find out the sense of more particular texts, and several doctrinal truths, not contrary to the former, but such as befriend them, and are connected with them. And we may find out more the order of truths, and how they are placed in respect to one another, and so see more of the true method of theology than we did, which will give us a very great light into the matter itself, and its consecutaries. (2.) Our knowledge also must grow subjectively, intensely, and in the manner, as well as in the matter of it.

And this is our principal growth to be sought after : To know the same great and necessary truths with a sounder and clearer knowledge than we did : which is done, (1.) By getting strong evidence and reasons, instead of the weak ones which we trusted to before, (for many young ones receive truths on some unsound grounds.) (2.) By multiplying our evidence and reasons for the same truth. (3.) By a clear and deeper apprehension of the same evidence and reasons which before we had but superficially received : for one that is strong in knowledge seeth the same truth as in the clear light, which the weak do see but as in the twilight. To all this must be added also, the fuller improvement of the truth received to its ends.

I shall give you the sum of my meaning in the words of that great enemy of innovation, Vincent. Lirinens., c. 28—"Sed forsitan dicit aliquis : Nullusne ergo in Ecclesia Christi profectus habebitur ? Religionis habeatur plane, et maximus : Nam quis ille est tam invidus hominibus, tam exosus Deo, qui istud prohibere conetur ? Sed ita tamen ut vere profectus sit ille fidei ; non permutatio. Siquidem ad perfectum pertinet, ut in semet ipsa unaquæque res amplificetur : ad permutationem vero ut aliquid ex alio in aliud transvertatur. Crescat igitur oportet et multum, vehementerque proficiat, tam singulorum quam omnium ; tam unius hominis quam totius Ecclesiæ ætatum ac seculorum gradibus intelligentia, scientia, sapientia ; sed in quo duntaxat genere, in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia."

And more plainly, and yet more briefly, cap. 30—"Jus est etenim, ut prisca illa cœlestis Philosophiæ

dogmata recessu temporis excurentur, limentur, poliantur ; sed nefas est, ut commutentur. Accipiant licet Evidentiam, Lucem, Distinctionem ; sed retineant necesse est plenitudinem, integritatem, proprietatem.” Let this mean then be observed, if we would perform both truth and peace.

About church-communion the common extremes are : on one side, the neglect or relaxation of discipline, to the corrupting of the Church, the encouragement of wickedness, and confounding the kingdom of Christ and Satan ; and on the other side, the unnecessary separation of proud men, either because the churches own not their own opinions, or because they are not so reformed and strict in discipline as they would have them, or as they should be. I have ever observed the humblest men very tender of making separations ; and the proudest most prone to it. Many corruptions may be in a church, and yet it may be a great sin to separate from it, so that we be not put upon an owning of their corruptions, nor upon any actual sin. There is a strange inclination in proud men to make the Church of Christ much narrower than it is, and to reduce it to almost nothing, and to be themselves the members of some singular society, as if they were loath to have too much company in heaven. And by a strange delusion, through the workings of a proud fancy, they are more full of joy in their separated societies, than they were while they kept in the union of the Church. At least such powers of ordinances, and presence of the Spirit, purity, and peace, is promised to the weak by the leaders that would seduce them, as if the Holy Ghost were more eminently among them than anywhere else



in the world. This hath ever been the boasting of heretics. As the aforesaid Vincentius saith, cap. 37—  
“Jam vero illis quæ sequuntur promissionibus miro modo incautos homines hæretici decipere consueverunt. Audent et enim polliceri et docere, quod in Ecclesia sua, id est, in Communionis suæ Conventiculo, magna et specialis ac plane personalis quædam sit Dei gratia, adeo ut sine ullo labore, sine ullo studio, sine ulla industria, etiamsi nec quærunt, nec petant, nec pulsant, quicunque illi ad numerum suum pertinent, tamen ita divinitus dispensentur,” &c. But their consolations and high enjoyments, being the effect of self-conceitedness and fancies, are usually so mutable and of short continuance, that either the heat of oppositions, or mutation to other sects, must maintain their life, or else they will grow stale and soon decay.

Having said thus much of the means, I return to the ends of this exhortation, beseeching all the ministers of Christ to compassionate the poor, divided Church, and to entertain such catholic principles and charitable dispositions, as tend to their own and the common peace. Hath anything in the world done more to lose our authority, and disable us for God's service, than our differences and divisions? If ministers could but be all of a mind, or, at least, concur in the substance of the work, so that the people that hear one might as it were hear all, and not have any of us to head a party for the discontented to fall into, or to object against the rest, we might then do wonders for the Church of Christ. But if our tongues and hearts be divided, what wonder if our work be spoiled, and prove more like a Babel than a temple of God! Get together, then, speedily, and consult for peace, and

cherish not heart-burnings, and continue not uncharitable distances and strangeness. If dividing hath weakened you, closing must recover your authority and strength. If you have any dislike of your brethren, or their ways, manifest it by a free debate to their faces, but do not unnecessarily withdraw from them. If you will but keep together, you may come to a better understanding of each other, or at least may chide yourselves. Friends, especially quarrel not upon points of precedency, or reputation, or any interest of your own. No man will have settled peace in his mind, nor be peaceable in his place, that proudly envieth the precedency of others, and secretly grudgeth at them that seem to cloud his parts and name. One or other will ever be an eyesore to such men. There is too much of the devil's image on this sin for an humble servant of Christ to entertain. Moreover, be not too sensible of injuries; and make not a great matter of every offensive word or deed. At least do not let it interrupt your communion and concord in God's work: for that were to wrong Christ and His Church because another hath wronged you. And if you be of this impatient humour, you will never be quiet; for we are all faulty, and cannot live together without wronging one another. "Ubique causæ supersunt nisi deprecator animus accessit," saith Seneca. And these proud, over-tender men are often hurt by their own conceits; like a man that hath a sore that he thinks doth smart more when he conceits that some one hits it. They will think a man jeereth them, or contemneth them, or meaneth them ill, when it never came into his thought! Till this *self* be taken down, we shall every man have a private interest, and of his

own, which will lead us all into several ways, and spoil the peace and welfare of the Church. While every man is for himself and his own reputation, and all mind their own things, no wonder if they mind not the things of Christ.

And as for those opinions which hinder our union, (alas, the great dividers of this age!) methinks, if I cannot change their minds, I might yet rationally expect of every party among us that profess themselves Christians, that they should value the whole before a part, and therefore not so perversely seek to promote their party as may hinder the common good of the Church, or so to propagate their supposed truths as to hinder the work of the main body of divine truths. And methinks a little humility should make men ashamed of that common conceit of unquiet spirits, viz., that the welfare of the Church doth so lie upon their opinions, that they must needs vent and propagate them whatever comes of it. If they are indeed a living part of the body, the hurt of the whole will be so much their own that they cannot desire it for the sake of any party or opinion. Were men but impartially to consider in every such case of difference how far their promoting their own judgment may help or hurt the whole, they might escape many dangerous ways that are now trod. If you can see nowhere else, look in the face of the Church's enemies how they rejoice and deride us. And as Seneca saith to demulce the angry, "*Vide ne inimicis iracundia tua voluptati sit.*" When we have all done, I know not which party of us will prove a gainer: so true are the old proverbs, "*Dissensio ducum hostium succum,*" and "*Gaudent prædones, dum discordant regiones.*" And is it not a

wonder that godly ministers, that know all this, how the common adversary derideth us all, and what a scandal our divisions are throughout the world, and how much the Church doth lose by it, should yet go on, and after all the loudest calls and invitations to peace, go on still, and few, if any, sound a retreat, and seriously call to their brethren for a retreat? Can an honest heart be insensible of the sad distractions and sadder apostasies that our divisions have occasioned? "Sæpe rixam conclamatum, in vicino incendium solvit," saith Seneca. What scolds so furious that will not give over when the house is on fire over their heads? Well, if the Lord hath given that evil spirit, whose name is Legion, such power over the hearts of any that yet they will sit still, yea, and quarrel at the pacificatory endeavours of others who hunger after the healing of the Church, and rather carp, and reproach, and hinder such works than to help them on, I shall say but this to them, How diligently soever such men may preach, and how pious soever they may seem to be, if this way tend to their everlasting peace, and if they be not preparing sorrow for themselves, then I am a stranger to the way of peace.

VII. The next branch of my exhortation is, *That you would no longer neglect the execution of so much discipline in your congregations, as is of confessed necessity and right.* I desire not to spur on any one to an unseasonable performance of the greatest duty. But will it never be a fit season? Would you forbear sermons and sacraments so many years on pretence of unseasonableness? Will you have a better season for it when you are dead? How many are dead already before they ever did anything in this work, that were

long preparing for it! It is now near three years since many of us now present did engage ourselves to this duty: and have we been faithful in the performance of that engagement? I know some have more discouragements and hindrances than others; but what discouragements can excuse us from such a duty? Besides the reasons that we then considered, let these few be further laid to heart:—

1. How sad a sign do we make it to be in our preaching to our people to live in the wilful, continued omission of any known duty! And shall we do so year after year, and all our days? If excuses will take off the danger of this sign, what man will not find them as well as you? Read Amesius Medul. cap. 37, de Disciplin. Eccles., et Gelespi's Aáron's Rod, with Rutherford, and many more that are written to prove the need and dueness of discipline. Saith Ames, *ib.*, sec. 5—"Immo peccat in Christum Authorem ac institutorem quisquis non facit quod in se est, ad hanc disciplinam, in Ecclesiis Dei constituendam et promovendam." And do you think it safe to live and die in such a known sin?

2. You gratify the present designs of dividers, whose business is to unchurch us and unchristian us, to prove our parishes no true churches, and ourselves no baptized Christians. For if you take them for people incapable of discipline, they must be incapable of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and other church-communion, and then they are no church. And so you will plainly seem to preach merely as they do, to gather churches where there were none before. And, indeed, if that be your case, that your people are not Christians, and you have no particular churches, and

so are no pastors, tell us so, and manifest it, and we shall not blame you.

3. We manifest plain laziness and sloth, if not unfaithfulness, in the work of Christ. I speak from experience ; it was laziness that kept me off so long, and pleaded hard against this duty. It is indeed a troublesome and painful work, and such as calls for some self-denial, because it will cast us upon the displeasure of the wicked. But dare we prefer our carnal ease, and quietness, and the love or peace of wicked men, before our service to Christ our Master ? Can slothful servants look for a good reward ? Remember, brethren, that we of this county have thus promised before God in the second article of our Agreement :—“ We agree and resolve by God’s help, that so far as God doth make known our duty to us, we will faithfully endeavour to discharge it, and will not desist through any fears or losses in our estates, or the frowns and displeasure of men, or any the like carnal inducements whatsoever.” I pray you study this promise, and compare your performance with it. And do not think that you are ensnared by thus engaging ; for God’s law hath laid an obligation on you to all the same duty before your engagement did it. Here is nothing but what others are bound to as well as you.

4. The ministry that are for the Presbyterian government, have already by their common neglect of the execution made those of the separating way believe that they do it in a mere carnal compliance with the unruly part of the people, that while we exasperate them not with our discipline, we might have them on our side. And we should do nothing needless that hath so great an appearance of evil, and is so scan-

dalous to others. It was the sin and ruin of many of the clergy of the last times, to please and comply with them that they should have reprov'd and corrected, by unfaithfulness in preaching, and neglect of discipline.

5. The neglect of discipline hath a strong tendency to the deluding of souls, by making them think they are Christians that are not, while they are permitted to live in the reputation of such, and be not separated from the rest by God's ordinance. And it may make the scandalous think their sin a tolerable thing, which is so tolerated by the pastors of the Church.

6. We corrupt Christianity itself in the eyes of the world, and do our part to make them believe that to be a Christian is but to be of such an opinion, and to have that faith which James saith the devils had, and to be *solifidians*, and that Christ is no more for holiness than Satan, or that the Christian religion exacteth holiness no more than the false religions of the world : for if the holy and unholy are all permitted to be the sheep of the same fold, without the use of Christ's means to difference them, we do our part to defame Christ by it, as if He were guilty of it, and as if this were the strain of His prescripts.

7. We keep up separation by permitting the worst to be uncensured in our churches, so that many honest Christians think they are necessitated to withdraw. I must profess that I have spoke with some members of the separated (or gathered) churches that were moderate men, and have argued with them against their way ; and they have assured me, "That they were of the Presbyterian judgment, or had nothing to say against it, but they joined themselves with other

churches upon mere necessity, thinking that discipline, being an ordinance of Christ, must be used by all that can, and therefore they durst no longer live without it when they may have it, and they could find no Presbyterian churches that executed discipline as they wrote for it ;” and they told me, “that they did thus separate only ‘pro tempore,’ till the Presbyterians will use discipline, and then they would willingly return to them again.” I confess I was sorry that such persons had any such occasion to withdraw, and the least ground for such a reason of their doings. It is not keeping them from the sacrament that will excuse us from the further exercise of discipline, while they are members of our churches.

8. We do too much to bring the wrath of God upon ourselves and our congregations, and so to blast the fruit of our labours. If the angel of the Church of Thyatira was reprov'd for suffering the seducers in the Church, we may be reprov'd on the same ground for suffering open, scandalous, impenitent ones. (Rev. ii. 20.)

9. We seem to justify the prelates, who took the same course in neglecting discipline, though in other things we differ.

10. We have abundance of aggravations and witnesses to rise up against us, which though I will purposely now pass over, lest I seem to press too hard in this point, I shall desire you to apply them hither, when you meet with them anon under the next branch of the exhortation.

I know that discipline is not essential to a church ; but what of that ? Is it not therefore a duty, and necessary to its well-being ? Yea, more ; the power of



discipline is essential to a particular political church ; and what is the power for, but for the work and use ? As there is no commonwealth that hath not “ *partem imperantem*,” as well as “ *partem subditam*,” so no such church that hath not “ *partem regentem* ” in one pastor or more.

VIII. The last particular branch of my exhortation is, *That you will now faithfully discharge the great duty which you have undertaken, and which is the occasion of our meeting here to-day, in personal catechising and instructing every one in your parishes that will submit thereto.* What our undertaking is you know, you have considered it, and it is now published to the world. But what the performance will be I know not ; but I have many reasons to hope well of the most, though some will always be readier to say than to do. And because this is the chief business of the day, I must take leave to insist somewhat the longer on it. And,

1. I shall give you some further motives to persuade you to faithfulness in the undertaken work, presupposing the former general motives which should move us to this as well as to any other part of our duty.
2. I shall give to the younger of my brethren a few words of advice for the manner of performance.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE *first* reasons by which I shall persuade you to this duty are taken from the benefits of it; the *second*, from the difficulty; and the *third*, from the necessity, and the many obligations that are upon us for the performance of it. And to these three heads I shall reduce them all.

I. And for the first of these: When I look before me, and consider what, through the blessing of God, this work well managed is likely to produce, it makes my heart to leap for joy. Truly, brethren, you have begun a most blessed work, such as your own consciences may rejoice in, your parishes rejoice in, the nation rejoice in; and children yet unborn, yea, thousands and millions, for aught we know, may have cause to bless God for it, when we have finished our course. And though it be our business here to humble ourselves for the neglect of it so long, as we have very great cause to do; yet the hopes of a blessed success are so great in me, that they are ready to turn it into a day of rejoicing. I bless the Lord that I have lived to see such a day as this, and to be present at so solemn an engagement of so many servants of Christ to such a work. I bless the Lord that hath honoured you of this county to be the beginners and awakers of the nation hereunto. It is not a controverted business, where the exasperated minds of divided men might pick quarrels with us, or malice itself be able

to invent a rational reproach; nor is it a new invention, where envy might charge you as innovators, or proud boasters of any new discoveries of your own, or scorn to follow in it because you have led the way. No; it is a well-known duty. It is but the more diligent and effectual management of the ministerial work, and the teaching of our principles, and the feeding of babes with milk. You lead indeed, but not in invention of novelty, but the restoration of the ancient ministerial work, and the self-denying attempt of a duty that few or none can contradict. Unless men do envy you your labours and sufferings, or unless they envy the saving of men's souls, I know not what they can envy you for in this. The age is so quarrelsome, that where there is any matter to fasten on, we can scarcely explain a truth, or perform a duty, but one or other, if not many, will have a stone to cast at us, and will speak evil of the things which they do not understand, or which their hearts and interests are against. But here, I think, we have silenced malice itself, and I hope we may do this part of God's work quietly. If they cannot endure to be told what they know not, or contradicted in what they think, or confounded by discoveries of what they have said amiss, I hope they will give us leave to do that which no man can contradict, and to practise that which all are agreed in. I hope we may have their good leave, or silent patience at least, to deny the ease and pleasure of our flesh, and to set ourselves in good earnest to help men to heaven, and to propagate the knowledge of Christ with our people. I take it for a sign of a great and necessary work, which hath such universal approbation—the commonly acknowledged truths and

duties being, for the most part, of greatest necessity and moment. A more noble work it is to practise faithfully the truths and duties that all men will confess, than to make new ones, or discover somewhat more than others have discovered. I know not why we should be ambitious of finding out new ways to heaven : to make plain, and to walk in the old way, is our work and our greatest honour.

And because the work in hand is so pregnant of great advantages to the Church, I will come down to the particular benefits which we may hope for, that when you see the excellency of it, you may be the more set upon it, and the more loath, by any negligence or failing, to destroy or frustrate it. For certainly he that hath the true intentions of a minister will rejoice in the appearances of any further hopes of attaining his ends, and nothing can be more welcome to him than that which will further the very business of his life; and that our present work is such, I shall shew you more particularly.

1. It will be the most hopeful advantage for the conversion of many souls that we can expect; for it hath a concurrence of those great things which must further such a work. (1.) For the matter of it, it is about most needful things—the principles or essentials of the Christian faith. (2.) For the manner of exercise, it will be by private conference, where we may have opportunity to set all home to the heart. (3.) The common concord of ministers will do much to bow their hearts to consent. Were it but a meeting to resolve some controverted questions, it would not have so direct a tendency to conversion. Were it but occasional, we could not handsomely fall on them so

closely; but when we make it the appointed business, it will be expected, and not so strangely taken. And if most ministers had singly set upon this work, perhaps but few of the people would have submitted; and then you might have lost your chief opportunities, and those that had most needed our help would have had least of it. Whereas now we may hope that, when it is a general thing, few will refuse it; and when they see that other neighbours do it, they will be ashamed to be so singular or openly ungodly as to deny.

The work of conversion consisteth of two parts:—  
(1.) The well informing of the judgment of the necessary points. (2.) The change of the will, by the efficacy of this truth. Now, in this work we have the most excellent advantage for both. For the informing of their understandings, it must needs be an excellent help to have the sum of all Christianity still in memory; and though bare words, not understood, will make no change, yet when the words are plain, he that hath the words is far more likely to know the meaning and matter than another; for what have we to make things known by, that are themselves invisible, but words and other subservient signs? Those, therefore, that will deride all catechisms and professions as unprofitable forms, had better deride themselves for talking and using the form of their own words to make known their minds to others; and they may deride all God's Word on the same account, which is a standing form for the guiding of preachers, and teaching all others the doctrine of eternal life. Why may not written words that are still before their eyes, and in their memories, instruct them, as well as the

transient words of a preacher? These forms, therefore, of wholesome words are so far from being unprofitable, as some fantastic persons imagine, that they are of admirable use to all.

We shall have the opportunity, by personal conference, to try them how far they understand it, and how far not; and also to explain it to them as we go, and to choose out and insist on those particulars which the persons that we speak to have most need to hear. So that these two conjunct, -a form of words with a plain explication, may do more than either of them could do alone.

Moreover, we have the best opportunity to imprint the same truths upon their hearts, when we can speak to each one's particular necessity, and say to the sinner, "Thou art the man;" plainly mention his particular case, and set home the truth with familiar importunity. If anything in the world is likely to do them good, it is this. They will understand a familiar speech, who hear a sermon as if it were nonsense, and they have far greater help for the application of it to themselves. And withal you will hear their objections, and know where it is that Satan hath most advantage over them; and what it is that stands up against the truth; and so may be able to shew them their errors, confute their objections, and more effectually convince them. We can better drive them to a stand, and urge them to discover their resolutions for the future, and to promise the use of means and reformation, than otherwise we could do. What need we more for this than our experience? I seldom deal with men purposely on this great business, in private, serious conference, but they go away with some seeming convictions, and promises

of new obedience, if not some deeper remorse, and sense of their condition. And I hope your own experiences are the same.

O brethren, what a blow may we give the kingdom of darkness by the faithful and skilful managing of this work! If, then, the saving of souls, of your neighbours' souls, of many souls from everlasting misery, be worth your labour, up and be doing! If the increase of the true Church of Christ be desirable, this work is excellent, which is so likely to promote it. If you would be the fathers of many that shall be new-born to God, and would see the travail of your souls with comfort, and would be able to say at last, "Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me;" up, then, and ply this blessed work. If it will do you good, to see your holy converts among the saints in glory, praising the Lamb before His throne—if you will be glad to present them blameless and spotless to Christ, be glad then of this singular opportunity that is offered you. If you be ministers of Christ indeed, you will long for the perfecting of His body, and the gathering in of His elect; and your hearts will be set upon it, and you will travail as in birth of them till Christ be formed in them. Then you will take such opportunities as your harvest-time, and as the sunshine days in a rainy harvest, in which it is unreasonable and inexcusable to be idle. If you have any spark of Christian compassion in you, it will surely seem worth your utmost labour to save so many souls from death, and to cover so great a multitude of sins. If you are indeed co-workers with Christ, set then to this work, and neglect not the souls for whom He died. Oh, remember, when you are talking with the uncon-

verted, that now there is an opportunity in your hands to save a soul, and to rejoice the angels of heaven, and to rejoice Christ himself, and that your work is to cast Satan out of a sinner, and to increase the family of God. What is your own hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not your saved people in the presence of Christ Jesus at His coming? Yea, doubtless, they are your glory and your joy. (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.)

2. The second happy benefit of our work, if well managed, will be the most orderly building up those that are converted, and the establishing them in the faith. It hazardeth the whole work, or at least much hindereth it, when we do it not in the order that it must be done. How can you build if you first lay not a good foundation? or how can you set on the top-stone while the middle parts are neglected? "*Gratia non facit saltum,*" any more than nature. The second order of Christian truths have such dependence upon the first, that they can never be well learned till the first are learned. This makes so many deluded novices, that are puffed up with the vain conceits of knowledge while they are grossly ignorant, and itch to be preaching before they well know what it is to be Christians; because they took not the work before them, but learned some lesser matters they heard most talked of, before they learned the vital principles. This makes many labour so much in vain, and are still learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth, because they would learn to read before they learn to spell, or to know their letters; and this makes so many fall away, and shaken with every wind of temptation, because they were not well settled in the fundamentals. It is these fundamentals that must lead



men to further truths; it is these they must bottom and build upon. It is these that they must live upon, and that must actuate all their graces, and animate all their duties; it is these that must fortify them against particular temptations: and he that knows these well, doth know so much as will make him happy; and he that knows not these, knows nothing; and he that knows these best, is the best and most understanding Christian. The most godly people, therefore, in your congregations will find it worth their labour to learn the very words of a catechism: and if you would safely edify them, and firmly establish them, be diligent in this work.

3. A third benefit that may be expected by the well-managing of this work, is this, It will make our public preaching to be better understood and regarded. When you have acquainted them with the principles, they will the better understand all you say. They will perceive what you drive at, when they are once acquainted with the main parts. This prepareth their minds, and openeth you a way to their hearts; when without this you may lose the most of your labour, and the more pains you take in accurate preparations, the less good you do. As you would not, therefore, lose your public labour, see that you be faithful in this private work.

4. And this is not a contemptible benefit, that by this course you will come to be familiar with your people, when you have had the opportunity of familiar conference; and the want of this with us, that have very numerous parishes, is a great impediment to the success of our labours. By distance and our being unacquainted, slanderers and deceivers have opportunity

to possess them with false conceits of you, which prejudice their minds against your doctrine; and by this distance and strangeness, abundance of mistakes between ministers and people are fomented. Besides that, familiarity itself doth tend to beget those affections which may open their ears to further teaching. And when we are familiar with them, they will be more encouraged to open their doubts, seek resolution, and deal freely with us. But when a minister knoweth not his people, or is as strange to them as if he did not know them, it must be a great hindrance to his doing them any good.

5. Besides, by the means of these private instructions, we shall come to be the better acquainted with each person's spiritual state, and so the better know how to watch over them, and carry ourselves towards them, ever after. We may know the better how to preach to them, when we know their temper, and their chief objections, and so what they have most need to hear. We shall the better know wherein to be jealous of them with a pious jealousy, and what temptations to help them most against. We shall the better know how to lament for them, and to rejoice with them, and to pray for them to God. For as he that will pray rightly for himself, will know his own sores and wants, and the diseases of his own heart; so he that will pray rightly for others, should know theirs as far as he may, and as is meet. If a man have the charge but of sheep or cattle, he cannot so well discharge his trust if he know them not, and their state and qualities. So it is with the master that will well teach his scholars, and parents that will rightly educate their children, and so with ministers who properly feed the Church of God.

6. And then this trial of and acquaintance with our people's state, will better satisfy us in the administration of the sacraments. We may the better understand how far they are fit or unfit. Though this give them not the state or relation of a member of that church whereof we are overseers, yet because the members of the Church Universal, though they are of no particular church, may in some cases have a right to the ordinances of Christ in those particular churches where they come, and in some cases they have no right, we shall by this means be the better informed how to deal with them, though they be no members of that particular church. And whereas many will question a minister that examineth his people in order to the Lord's Supper, by what authority he doth it, the same work will be done this way, in a manner beyond exception. Though I doubt not but a minister may require his flock to come to him at any convenient season, to receive instruction, and therefore he may do it in preparation to the sacrament; yet, because ministers have laid the stress of that examination upon the mere necessity of fitness for that ordinance, and not upon their common duty to see the estate and proficiency of each member of their flock at all fit seasons, and upon the people's duty to submit to the guidance and instruction of the pastors at all times, they have therefore occasioned people ignorantly to quarrel against their examinations, and call for the proof. Whereas it is an easy thing to prove that any scholar in Christ's school is bound at any time to be accountable to his teachers, and to obey them in all lawful things in order to their own edification and salvation; though it may be more difficult to prove a

necessity that a minister must so examine them in order to the Lord's Supper, any more than in order to a day of thanksgiving, or a Lord's day, or the baptizing of their children. Now, by this course we shall discern their fitness in an unquestionable way.

7. Another benefit will be this: We shall by this means be the better enabled to help our people against their particular temptations, and we shall much better prevent their entertainment of any particular errors or heresies, or their falling into schism to the hazard of themselves and the Church. For men will more freely open their thoughts and scruples to us; and if they are infected already, or inclined to any error or schism, they will be ready to discover it, and so may receive satisfaction before they are past cure; and familiarity with their teachers will the more encourage them to open their doubts to them at any other time. The common cause of our people's infections and heresies is the familiarity of seducers with them, and the strangeness of their own pastors. When they hear us only in public, and hear seducers frequently in private unsaying all that we say, and we never know it, or help them against it, this settleth them in heresies before we are aware of it. Alas! our people are most of them so weak, that whoever hath most interest in their estimations and affections, and most opportunity in frequent private conferences to instil his opinions into them, of that man's religion will they ordinarily be. It is a pity, then, that we should let deceivers take such opportunities to undo them, and we not be as industrious, and use our advantages to their good. We have much advantage against seducers in many

respects, if our negligence and their diligence did not frustrate them.

8. Another, and one of the greatest benefits of our work, will be this, it will better inform men of the true nature of the ministerial office, or awaken them to better consideration of it, than is now usual. It is now too common for men to think that the work of the ministry is nothing but to preach well, and to baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper, and visit the sick; and by this means the people will submit to no more, and too many ministers are negligently or wilfully such strangers to their own calling, that they will do no more. It hath often grieved my heart to observe some eminent and able preachers how little they do for the saving of souls, except in the pulpit, and to how little purpose much of their labour is by this neglect. They have hundreds of people to whom they never spoke a word personally for their salvation; and if we may judge by their practice, they take it not for their duty: and the principal thing that hardeneth men in this oversight, is the common neglect of the private part of the work by others. There are so few that do much in it, and the omission is grown so common among pious and able men, that they have abated the disgrace of it by their parts; and a man may now be guilty of it without any common observance or dishonour. Never doth sin so reign in a Church or State as when it hath gained reputation, or at least is no disgrace to the sinner, nor a matter of any offence to beholders. But I make no doubt, through the mercy of God, but the restored practice of personal oversight will convince many ministers that this is as truly their work as that

which they now do ; and may awaken them to see that the ministry is another kind of business than too many excellent preachers take it to be. Brethren, do but set yourselves closely to this work, and follow on diligently ; and though you do it silently, without any words to them that are negligent, I am in hope that most of you here may live to see the day that the neglect of private personal oversight of all the flock shall be taken for a scandalous and odious omission, and shall be as disgraceful to them that are guilty of it, as preaching but once a-day was heretofore. A schoolmaster must not only read a common lecture, but take a personal account of his scholars, or else he is likely to do little good. If physicians should only read a public lecture of physic, their patients would not be much the better for them ; nor would a lawyer secure your estate by reading a lecture of law. The charge of a pastor requireth personal dealing as well as any of these. Let us shew the world this by our practice ; for most men are grown regardless of bare words.

The truth is, we have been occasioned exceedingly to wrong the Church in this, by the contrary extreme of the Papists, who bring all their people to auricular confession ; for in the overthrowing of this error of theirs we have run into the contrary extreme, and led our people much further into it than we are gone ourselves. It troubled me to read in an orthodox historian, that licentiousness, and a desire to be from under the strict inquiries of the priests in confession, did much further the entertainment of the Reformed religion in Germany. And yet it is likely enough to be true, that they that were against reformation in other respects, yet partly for the change, and partly on that licentious account,

might join with better men in crying down the Romish clergy. But by this means, lest we should seem to favour the said auricular confession, we have too commonly neglected all personal instruction; except when we occasionally fall into men's company, few make it a stated part of their work. I am past doubt that the Popish auricular confession is a sinful novelty, which the ancient Church was unacquainted with. But perhaps some will think it strange that I should say that our common neglect of personal instruction is much worse, if we consider their confessions in themselves, and not as they respect their connexed doctrines of Satisfaction and Purgatory. Many of the southern and eastern churches do use a confession of sin to the priest; and how far Mr Thomas Hooker, in his "Soul's Preparation," and other divines, do ordinarily require it, as necessary or useful, is well known. If any among us should be guilty of this gross mistake, as to think when he hath preached he hath done all his work, let us shew him to his face by our practice of the rest, that there is much more to be done, and that taking heed to all the flock is another business than careless, lazy ministers do consider. If a man have the least apprehension that duty, and the chief duty, is no duty, he is likely to neglect it, and be impenitent in the neglect.

9. Another singular benefit which we may hope for from the faithful performance of this new work, is that it will help our people better to understand the nature of their duty towards their overseers, and consequently to discharge it better. Which were no matter if it were only for our sakes; but their own salvation is very much concerned in it. I am confident by sad experience, that it is none of the least

impediments to their happiness, and to a true reformation of the Church, that the people understand not what the work and power of a minister is, and what is their own duty towards them. They commonly think that a minister hath no more to do with them but to preach to them, and visit them in sickness, and administer sacraments, and that if they hear him, and receive the sacrament from him, they owe no further obedience, nor can he require any more at their hands. Little do they know that the minister is in the Church as the schoolmaster is in his school, to teach and take an account of every one in particular, and that all Christians ordinarily must be disciples or scholars in some such school. They think not that a minister is in the Church as a physician in a town, for all people to resort to, for personal advice for the curing of all those diseases that are fit to be brought to a physician : and that the priest's lips must preserve knowledge, and the people must ask the law at his mouth, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts : and that every soul in the congregation is bound for their own safety, to have personal recourse to him for resolving of their doubts, and for help against their sins, and for direction in duty, and for increase of knowledge and all saving grace : and that ministers are purposely settled in congregations to this end, to be still ready to advise and help the flock. If our people did but know their duty, they would readily come to us when they are desired, to be instructed, and to give an account of their knowledge, faith, and lives ; and they would come themselves without sending for, and knock oftener at our doors, and call for advice and help for their souls, and ask, "What shall we do to be saved?"



Whereas, now the matter is come to that sad pass, that they think a minister hath nothing to do with them, and if he admonish them, they will bid him look to himself, he shall not answer for them. If he call them to be catechised or instructed, or to be prepared for the Lord's Supper, or other holy ordinances, or would take an account of their faith and profiting, they will ask him, by what authority he doth these things ; and think that he is a busy and pragmatistical fellow, that loves to be meddling where he hath nothing to do ; or a proud fellow, that would bear rule over their consciences. When they may as well ask him, by what authority he preacheth, or prayeth for them, or giveth them the sacrament ; or they may as well ask a school-master, by what authority he calls his scholars to learn or say their lesson ; or a physician, by what authority he enjoineth them to take his medicines. People consider not that all our authority is but for our work ; even a power to do our duty, and our work is for them ; so it is but an authority to do them good. Hence they talk no wiser than if they were to quarrel with a man that would help to quench the fire in their thatch, and ask him by what authority he did it ; or that would give his money to relieve the poor, and they should ask him, by what authority do you require us to take this money ; or that had offered his hand to one that had fallen, to help him up ; or to one in the water to save him from drowning, and he should ask by what authority he did so. Truly we have no wiser nor more thankful dealing from these men ; nay, it is worse, in that we are doubly obliged, both by Christian charity and the ministerial office, to do them good. I know not of any simile that doth

more aptly express the ministerial power and duty, and the people's duty, than these two conjunct—viz., a physician in an hospital, that hath taken the charge of it, and a schoolmaster in his school, especially such as the philosophers, or teachers of any science or art, whose schools have the aged and voluntary members, as well as children. Such are ministers in the Church, and such is their work, and their authority to do it, and the duty of the people to submit thereto; allowing such differences as the subject requireth.

And what is it that hath brought people to this ignorance of their duty, but custom? It is along of us, brethren—to speak truly and plainly—it is along of us, that have not used them nor ourselves to any more than common public work. We see how much custom doth with the people. Where it is the custom, they stick not among the Papists at the confessing of all their sins to the priest; and because it is not the custom among us, they disdain to be questioned, catechised, or instructed at all. They wonder at it as a strange thing, and say, "Such things were never done before." And if we can but prevail to make this duty become as usual as other duties, they will much more easily submit to it than now. What a happy thing would it be if you might live to see the day that it should be as ordinary for people of all ages to come in course to their teachers for personal advice, and help for their salvation, as it is now usual for them to come to the church, or as it is for them to send their children thither to be catechised. Our diligence in this work is the way to do this.

10. Moreover, our practice will give the governors of the nation some better information about the nature

and burden of the ministry, and so may procure their further assistance. It is a lamentable impediment to the reformation of the Church and the saving of souls, that in most populous congregations, there is but one or two men to oversee many thousand souls, and so there are not labourers in any measure answerable to the work. Hence it becomes an impossible thing to them to do any considerable measure of that personal duty which should be done by faithful pastors to all the flock. I have often said it, and still must say it, that this is a great part of England's misery, and a great degree of spiritual famine which reigns in most cities and great towns through the land, even where they are insensible of it, and think themselves well provided. Alas! we see multitudes of carnal, ignorant, sensual sinners, round about us. Here is a family, and there a family, and there almost a whole street or village of them, and our hearts pity them; we see that their necessities cry aloud for our speedy and diligent relief, so that he that hath ears to hear must needs hear it: and if we would never so fain, we cannot help them; not only through their obstinacy, but also through our want of opportunity. We have experience, that if we could but have leisure to speak to them, and to open plainly to them their sin and danger, there were great hopes of doing good to many of those that receive little by our public teaching. But we cannot come at them: more necessary work prohibits us: we cannot do both at once: and the public must be preferred, because there we deal with many at once: and it is as much as we are able to do, to perform the public work, or some little more. If we take the time when we should eat or sleep, besides

the ruining of our weakened bodies by it, we shall not be able, after all, to speak to one of very many of them. So that we must stand by and see our people perish, and can but be sorry for them, and cannot so much as speak to them to endeavour their recovery. Is not this a sad case in a nation that glorieth of the fulness of the gospel? An infidel will say no; but methinks no man that believes an everlasting joy or torment, should say so. I will instance of my own case: We are together two ministers, and a third at a chapel, willing to bestow every hour of our time in Christ's work. Before we undertook this work that we are now upon, our hands were full, and now we are engaged to set apart two days every week from morning to night for private catechising and instruction; so that any man may see that we must leave undone all that other work that we were wont to do at that time; and we are necessitated to run upon the public work of preaching with small preparation, and so must deliver the message of God in such a raw and confused manner, and unanswerably to its dignity and the needs of men's souls, that it is a great trouble to our minds to consider it, and a greater trouble to us when we are doing it. And yet it must be so: there is no remedy. Unless we will omit this personal instruction, we must needs run thus unprepared into the pulpit; and to omit this we dare not, it is so great and necessary a work. When we have incurred all the forementioned inconveniences; and have set two whole days every week apart for the work that we have now undertaken, it will be as much as we shall be able to do, to go over the parish but once a year, there being in it about eight hundred families; and what is worse than that,

we shall be forced to cut it short, and do it less effectually than we ought, having above fifteen families to visit in a week. And, alas! how small a matter is it to speak to a man once only in a year, and that so cursorily as we must be forced to do, in comparison of what their necessities require! Yet are we in hope of some fruit of this much; but how much more might it be if we could but speak to them once a quarter, and do the work more fully and deliberately, as you that are in smaller parishes may do. Many ministers in England have ten times, if not more, the number of parishioners that I have; so that if they should undertake the work that we have done, they can go over the parish but once in ten years! Thus, while we are hoping for opportunities to speak to them, we hear of one dying after another; and, to the grief of our souls, are forced to go with them to their graves, before we could ever speak a word to them personally to prepare them for their change. And what is the cause of all this misery? Why, our rulers have not seen a necessity of any more ministers than one or two in such parishes, and so they have not allowed any maintenance to that end. Some have alienated much from the Church, (the Lord humble all them that consented to it effectually, lest it prove the consumption of the nation at last,) while they have left this famine in the chief parts of the land. It is easy to separate from the multitude, and gather distinct churches, and let the rest sink or swim, and if they will not be saved by public preaching, let them be damned; but whether this be the most charitable and Christian course, one would think should be no hard question. What is the cause that wise and godly rulers should be thus guilty of our

misery, and that none of our cries will awaken them to compassion? What! are they so ignorant as not to know these things? Are they grown cruel to the souls of men? or are they false-hearted to the interest of Christ, and have a design to undermine His kingdom? No; I hope it is none of these; but for aught I can find, it is even along of us, even of us the ministers of the gospel, whom they should thus maintain. For those ministers that have small parishes, and might do all this private part of the work, yet do it not, but very few of them, and will not do it; and those in great towns and cities, that might do somewhat, though they cannot do all, will do just nothing but what accidentally falls in their way, or next to nothing; so that magistrates are not awakened to an observance or consideration of the weight of our work. If it be not in their eyes, as well as in their ears, they will not regard it. Or if they do apprehend the usefulness of it, yet if they see that ministers are so careless and lazy that they will not do it, they think it in vain to provide them a maintenance for it—it would be but to cherish idle drones; and so they think that if they maintain ministers enough to preach in the pulpit, they have done their part; and thus are they involved in heinous sin, of which we are the occasion. Whereas, if we do but heartily all set ourselves to this work, and shew the magistrate to his face that it is a most weighty and necessary part of our business, and that we would do it thoroughly if we could, and that if there were hands enough at it, the work would go on; and withal, when they shall see the happy success of our labours, then, no doubt, if the fear of God be in them, and they have any love to His truth and men's

souls, they will put to their helping hand, and not let men perish because there is no man to speak to them to prevent it. They will one way or other raise a maintenance in such populous places for labourers proportioned to the number of souls, and greatness of the work. Let them but see us fall to the work, and see it prosper in our hands—as if it be well managed, through God's blessing, there is no doubt but it will—and then it will draw out our hearts to the promoting of it; and instead of laying parishes together to diminish the number of teachers, they will either divide them, or allow more teachers to a parish. But when they see that many carnal ministers do make a greater stir to have more maintenance to themselves, than to have more help in the work of God, they are tempted by such worldlings to wrong the Church, that particular ministers may have ease and fulness.

11. Another benefit that is likely to follow our work, is this: It may exceedingly facilitate the ministerial service to the next generation that shall succeed us, and prevent the rebellion of people against their teachers. As I said, custom is the thing that sways much with the multitude; and they that first break a destructive custom, must bear the brunt of their indignation. Somebody must do this. If we do it not, it will lie upon our successors; and how can we look that they should be more hardy, and resolute, and faithful than we? We have seen the heavy judgments of the Lord, and heard Him pleading by fire and sword with the land. We have been ourselves in the furnace, and should be the most refined. We are most deeply obliged by oaths and covenants, by wonderful deliverances, experiences, and mercies of all sorts; and

if we flinch and turn our back, and prove false-hearted; why should we expect better from those that have not been driven by such scourges, nor drawn by such cords? But if they do prove better than we, and will do it, the same odium and opposition must befall them which we avoid, and that with some increase, because of our neglect; for the people will tell them that we, their predecessors, did no such things. But if we would now break through, who are set in the front, and break the ice for them that follow us, their souls will bless us, our names shall be dear to them, and they will feel the happy fruits of our labours every week and day of their ministry. When the people shall willingly submit to their private instructions and examinations, yea, and to discipline too, because we have acquainted them with it, removed the prejudice, and broke the evil custom that our foregoers had been the cause of; and so we may do much to the saving of many thousand souls in all ages to come, as well as in the present age that we are working in.

12. Another benefit will be this: We shall keep our people's minds and time from much of that vanity that now possesseth them. When men are at work in their shops, almost all their talk is vanity; the children also learn foolish and ribald songs and tales; and with such filth and rubbish are their memories furnished. Many an hour is lost, and many thousands of idle thoughts and words are they guilty of. Whereas when they once know the catechisms must be learned, and that they must all give account, it will turn much of their thoughts and time that way.

13. Moreover, it will do much to the better ordering of families, and better spending of the Lord's day.



When we have once got the master of the family to undertake it, that he will once every Lord's day examine his family, and hear what they can say of the catechism, it will find them the most profitable employment; whereas otherwise, many of them would be idle, or ill employed; and many masters that know little themselves, may yet be brought to do this for others.

14. Moreover, it will do some good to many ministers that are apt to be too idle, and misspend their time in unnecessary discourses and businesses, as journeys, or recreations; and it will let them see that they have no time to spare for such things. And so when they are engaged in so much pressing employment, of so high a nature, it will be the best cure for all that idleness or loss of time; and withal, it will cut off that scandal which usually followeth thereupon; for people used to say, such a minister can sit in an alehouse or tavern, or spend his time at bowls, or other sports, or vain discourse; and why may not we do so as well as he? Let us set close to this part of our work, and then see what time we can find to spare, and live idly, or in a way of voluptuousness or worldliness.

15. And many personal benefits to ourselves are consequential to these. It will do much to exercise and increase our own graces, and to subdue our own corruptions. And besides our safety, it will breed much peace to our own consciences, and comfort us when our time and actions must be reviewed. (1.) To be much in provoking others to repentance and heavenly-mindedness, may do much to excite them in ourselves. (2.) To cry down the sin of others, and engage them against it, and direct them to overcome

it, will do much to shame us out of our own; and conscience will scarcely suffer us to live in that which we make so much ado to draw others from. And this very constant employment for God, and busying our minds and tongues against sin, and for Christ and holiness, will do much to habituate us, and to overcome our fleshly inclinations, both by direct mortification and by diversion, leaving our fancies no room nor time for their old employment. I dare say, that all austerities of monks and hermits, who addict themselves to unprofitable solitude, and are the true imitators of the unprofitable servant who hid his talent because his master was an austere man, and that think to save themselves by neglecting to shew compassion to others, will not do near so much in the true work of mortification, as this fruitful diligence for Christ will do.

16. And it will be some benefit, that by this means we shall take off ourselves and our people from vain controversies, and from employing our care and zeal in the lesser matters of religion, which often hinder their spiritual edification; for while we are taken up in teaching, and they in learning the fundamentals, we shall divert our minds and tongues, and have less room for lower things; and thus it will cure much wrangling and contention between ministers and people; for we do that which we need not, and should not, because we will not fall closely to do that which we need and should. If we could contrive to get some of the most understanding sort of our people to assist us in privately helping others, (though prejudice of others, and their own unripeness and unfitness, much hinder,) it would be the most effectual way to prevent their running

into preaching distempers, or schisms; for this employment would take them up, and content the teaching humour that they are inclined to; and it might make their parts more useful in a safe and lawful way.

17. Moreover, the very diligent practice of this work that we are upon, would do much to set men right about many controversies that now trouble the Church, and so put an end to our differences. Especially, most of those about the ministry, churches, and discipline, would receive more convincing light by practice, than all our idle talking or writing will afford us. We have fallen of late into parties, and troubled the Church about many controversies concerning excommunication, in such and such cases, which, perhaps, never will fall out; or if they do, they cannot be so well decided by any man that is not engaged in the practice. It is like the profession of a physician, a soldier, or a pilot, who can never be worth a straw at their work by all the precepts in the world, without practice and experience. This will be the only course to make, (1.) Sound divines in the main, which bare studying will not do. (2.) Recover us again to the primitive simplicity, to live upon the substantial necessary things. (3.) To direct and resolve us in many of our quarrels which can no other way be well resolved. For example: If this work had been set on foot, and it had been but visible what it is to have the oversight of souls, durst any prelates have contended for the sole oversight of two hundred, four hundred, or a thousand churches; and that the presbyters might be but their curates and informers? Durst they have striven with might and main, to have drawn upon themselves such impossibilities, and

have carried such mountains on their backs, and to answer to God as overseers and pastors of so many thousand people, whose faces they were never likely to see, much less were they ever likely to speak one word to them for their everlasting life? Would they not have said, "If I must be a bishop, let me be a parochial bishop, or have no more to oversee than I am capable of overseeing, and let me be such as the primitive bishops were, that had but one church, and not hundreds, to take care of; and let me not be engaged to perform natural impossibilities, and that on pain of damnation, and to the certain destruction of the business that I undertake?" Surely these would rather have been their strivings. I speak not this against any bishops that acknowledge the presbyters to be true pastors to rule and teach the flock, and take themselves only to be the chief or presidents among the presbyters, yea, or the rulers of presbyters, that are the rulers of the flock; but of them that null the presbyter's office, and the Church's government and discipline, by undertaking it alone as their sole prerogative.

Many other controversies pertaining to discipline I might instance, that will be better resolved by this course of practice, through the abundant experience which it will afford, than by all the disputations or writings that have attempted it.

18. The design of this work is the reforming and saving of all the people in our several parishes; for we should not leave out any man that will submit to be instructed. And though we can scarcely hope that every particular person will be reformed and saved by it, yet have we reason to hope, that as the attempt is universal, so the success will be more general or

extensive than hitherto we have seen of our other labours. Sure I am it is most like to the spirit, precepts, and offers of the gospel, which requireth us to preach the gospel to every creature, and promiseth life to every man if he will accept it by believing. If God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth—that is, as Rector and Benefactor of the world, He hath manifested Himself willing to save all men if they will themselves, though His elect He will also make willing—then surely it be-seems us to offer salvation unto all men, and to endeavour to bring them to the knowledge of the truth: and if Christ tasted death for every man, it is meet we should preach His death to every man. This work hath a more excellent design than our accidental conferences with now and then a particular person; and I observe that in such occasional discourses men satisfy themselves to have spoken some good words, but seldom set plainly and closely to the matter, to convince men of sin, misery, and mercy, as in this purposely appointed work we are now more likely to do.

19. And further, it is likely to be a work that shall reach over the whole land, and not stop with us that have now engaged in it. For though it be at the present neglected, I suppose the cause is the same with our brethren as it hath all this while been with us, who, by vain expectations of the magistrates' interposition, or by that inconsiderateness and laziness which we are bewailing here this day, have omitted it till now as we have done; but especially a despair of a common submission of the people hath been the hindrance. But when they shall be remembered of so

clear and great a duty, and excited to the consideration of it, and see with us the feasibility of it, in a good measure, when it is done by common consent, no doubt they will universally take it up, and gladly concur with us in so blessed a work; for they are the servants of the same God, as regardful of their flocks, as conscientious as we, as sensible of the interest of Christ, as compassionate to men's souls, and as self-denying and ready to do or suffer for such excellent ends. Seeing, therefore, they have the same spirit, rule, and Lord, I will not be so uncharitable as to doubt whether all that are godly, or the generality of them, will gladly join with us through all the land. And, oh, what a happy thing it will be to see such a general combination for Christ!—to see all England so seriously called upon, and importuned for Christ, and set in so fair a way to heaven! Methinks the consideration of it should make our hearts rejoice within us, to see so many faithful servants of Christ all over the land, to fall in with every particular sinner with such industrious solicitations for the saving of their souls, as men that will hardly take a denial. Methinks I see all the godly ministers of England setting upon the work already, and resolving to take the opportunity that unanimity may facilitate it; which if they do, no doubt but God will succeed them. Is it not, then, a most happy undertaking that you are all setting your hands to, and desiring the assistance of Christ, in this day?

20. Lastly, Of so great weight and excellency is the duty that we are upon, that the chief part of church reformation that is behind, as to means, consisteth in it; and it must be the chief means to answer the

judgment, the mercies, the prayers, the promises, the cost, the endeavours, and blood of the nation : and without this it will not be done ; the ends of all these will never be well attained, a reformation to purpose will never be wrought, the Church will be still low, the interest of Christ will be much neglected, and God will still have a controversy with the land, and, above all, with the ministers that have been deepest in the guilt.

How long have we talked of reformation, how much have we said and done for it in general, and how deeply and devoutly have we vowed it for our own parts (of which more anon). And after all this, how shamefully have we neglected it, and do neglect it to this day ! We carry ourselves as if we had not known or considered what that reformation was that we vowed. As carnal men will take on them to be Christians, and profess with confidence to believe in Christ and accept of His salvation, and may contend for Christ, and fight for Him, and yet for all this would have none of Him, but perish for refusing Him, who little dreamed that ever they had been refusers of Him ; and all because they understood not what His salvation is, and how it is carried on ; but dream of a salvation without flesh-displeasing, and without self-denying, and renouncing the world, and parting with their sins, and without any holiness or any great pains and labour of their own in subserviency to Christ and the Spirit : even so did too many ministers and private men talk, and write, and pray, and sigh, and long for reformation, and would little have believed that man that should have presumed to tell them that for all this their very hearts were against reformation, and that

they that were praying for it, and fasting for it, and wading through blood for it, would never accept it, but would themselves be the rejectors and destroyers of it. Yet so it is, and so it hath too plainly proved; and whence is all this strange deceit of heart, that good men should no better know themselves? Why, the case is plain: they thought of a reformation to be given by God, but not of a reformation to be wrought on and by themselves. They considered the blessing, but never thought of the means of accomplishing it. As if they had expected that all things besides themselves should be mended without them; or that the Holy Ghost should again descend miraculously; or every sermon should convert its thousands; or that some angel from heaven, or some Elias, should be sent to restore all things; or that the law of a parliament, and the sword of a magistrate, would have converted or constrained all, and have done the deed. Little did they think of a reformation that must be wrought by their own diligence and unwearied labours, by earnest preaching, catechising, personal instructions, and taking heed to all the flock, whatever pains or reproaches it should cost them. They thought not that a thorough reformation must multiply their own work. We had all of us too carnal thoughts, that when we had ungodly men at our mercy, all would be done, and conquering them was converting them, or such a mean as would have frightened them to heaven. But the business is far otherwise; and had we then known how a reformation must be attained, perhaps some would have been colder in the prosecution of it. And yet I know that even foreseen labours seem small matters at a distance, while we do but hear or talk of



them ; but when we come nearer them, and must lay our hands to the work, and put on our armour, and charge through the thickest of opposing difficulties, then is the sincerity and the strength of men's hearts brought to trial, and it will appear how they purposed and promised before. Reformation is to many of us, as the Messiah was to the Jews. Before He came they looked and longed for Him, and boasted of Him, and rejoiced in hope of Him ; but when He came, they hated Him, and would not believe that He was indeed the person, and therefore persecuted and put Him to death, to the curse and confusion of the main body of their nation. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. But who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap : and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (Mal. iii. 1-3.) And the reason was, because it was another manner of Christ that the Jews expected, than Jesus was that did appear to them ; it was one to bring them riches and liberty, and to this day they profess that they will never believe in any but such. So it is with too many about reformation. They hoped for a reformation that should bring them more wealth and honour with the people, and power to force men to do what they would have them ; and now they see a reformation that must put them to more condescension and pains than ever they were at before : this will not go down with them. They thought of having the opposers of godliness under their feet ; but now they

see they must go to them with humble entreaties, and put their hands under their feet, if it would do them good, and meekly beseech even those that sometimes sought their lives ; make it now their daily business to overcome them by kindness, and win them with love. Oh, how many carnal expectations are here crossed !

Hence also it is, that most men do lay so great a part of reformation in their private opinions or singular ways. The Prelatical party think that the true reformation is to restore them to power ; the Presbyterians, that if Prelacy and Independency were put down, and classes set up, the work were chiefly done ; the Independents, that if they had gathered a separated body of godly people under covenant, much of the reformation were wrought ; and the Anabaptists think, that if they could but get people to be baptized again, they had done a great matter for reformation. I am not now reproving any of these in the matter, though the last especially well deserve it, but that they lay so much upon their several orders and formalities as many of them do : when, indeed, if we had our will in all such matters of order, and had the rightest form of government in the world, it is the painful execution, and the diligent and prudent use of means for men's conversion and edification, by able, faithful men, that must accomplish the reformation.

Brethren, I dare confidently tell you, that if you will but faithfully perform what you have agreed upon, both in this business of catechising and personal instruction, and in the matter of discipline, formerly, where we have well waved all the controverted part, which hath so much ascribed to it, you will do more for the true reformation that is so desirable, and hath

been so long prayed and eagerly contended for, are ever likely to effect. If bishops would do this work, I would take them for reformers; and if presbyters will do it, I will take them for reformers; and those that neglected and hindered it, I ever took for *deformers*. Let us see the work well done, that God hath made so necessary for men's conversion, preservation, restoration, and salvation, and the doers of it, whether prelates or presbyters, shall never have any opposition from me. But it is not bare canons, and orders, and names, and shows, that any wise man will take for the substance of reformation. It is not circumcision or uncircumcision, to be a Jew or a Gentile, bond or free, that availeth anything; but a new creature, and faith that worketh by love. That is the reformation which best healeth the ignorance, and infidelity, and pride, and hypocrisy, and worldliness, and other killing sins of the land, and that most effectually bringeth men to faith and holiness. Not that I would have the least truth or duty undervalued, or any part of God's will to be rejected: but the kingdom of God consisteth not in every truth or duty—not in ceremonies or circumstances—not in meats or drinks; but in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Dear brethren, it is you, and such as you, that under Christ must yet give this nation the fruit of all their prayers and pains, their cost and blood, and their heavy sufferings. All that they have been doing for the good of the Church, and for true reformation, for so many years, was but to prepare the way for you to come in and do the work which they desired. Alas! what would they do by fire and sword, by drums and

trumpets, for the converting of souls? The actions of armies and famous commanders which seem so glorious, and make so great a noise that the world rings with them, what have they done, or what can they do that is worth talking of without you? In themselves considered, all their victories and great achievements are so far from being truly glorious, that they are very lamentable; and a butcher may as well glory that he hath killed so many beasts, or a hangman that he hath executed so many men, as they can glory in the thing considered in itself: for war is the most heavy temporal judgment. And far less cause would they have to glory, if their cause and end were wrong. If their hearts, end, and cause be right, and they mean as honestly as any men in the world, yet are these great commanders but your pioneers, to cut up the thorns that stand in your way, to cast out the rubbish, and prepare you the way to build the house. Alas! they cannot with all their victories exalt the Lord Jesus in the soul of any sinner; and therefore they cannot set up His spiritual kingdom, for the hearts of men are His house and throne. If the work should stop with the end of theirs, and go no further than they can carry it, we should be in the end but where we were in the beginning; and one generation of Christ's enemies would succeed another, and they that take down the wicked would inherit their vices, as they possess their places, and the last would be far the worst, as being deeper in the guilt, and more engaged in evil-doing. All this trouble, then, and stir of the nation, hath been to bring the work to your hands; and shall it die there? God forbid! They have opened you the door; and, at exceeding cost and

sufferings have removed many of your impediments, and put the building instruments into your hands; and will you now stand still and loiter? God forbid! Up then, brethren, and give the nation the fruit of their cost and labour. Frustrate not all the Preparer's works: fail not the long expectations of so many thousands that have prayed in hope of a true reformation; paid in hope, ventured in hope, suffered in hope, and waited till now in hope. In the name of God, take heed that you do not disappoint all these hopes! Have they spent so long time in fencing the vineyard, and weeding and pruning it, and making it ready for your hands, and will you fail them that are sent to gather in the vintage, and lose their labours? When they have ploughed the field, will you sow it by halves? If they had known beforehand that ministers would have proved idle or unfaithful, how many hundreds would have spared their blood, how many thousands would have sat still, and have let the old readers and formalists alone, and have said, "If we must have dullards and unprofitable men, it is as good to have one as another; it is not worth so much cost and pains to change one careless minister for another." The end is the mover and life of the agent in all the means. How many thousands have prayed, and paid, and suffered, and more in expectation of a great advantage to the Church, and more common illumination and reformation of the nation by your means; and will you now deceive them all? Again I say, God forbid! It is at your hands that they are expecting the happy issue of all. The eyes of the nation are, or should be, all under God upon you, for the bringing in the harvest of their cost and labours. I

profess, it maketh me wonder at the fearful deceitfulness of the heart of man, to see how every man can call on others for duty, or censure them for the omitting it, and what excellent judges we are in other men's cases, and how partial in our own! The very judicious teachers of the nation can cry out, and too justly, against one sect and another sect, and against unfaithful underminers of those that they thought would have done the work, and against the disturbers of the reformation that was going on, and say, "These have betrayed the Church, and frustrated the nation's cost and hopes, and undone all that hath been so long adoin'g." And yet they see not, or seem not to see, that it is we that are guilty of this, as much as they. It was not the magistrates' driving, but the ministers' drawing, that was the principal saving means that we waited for.

Brethren, it were a strange mistake, if any of us should think, that the price of the nation's wealth and blood was to settle us in good benefices, and to pull down the bishops, and give us the quiet possession of our livings which they would have deprived us of. Was this the reformation intended, that we might live in greater ease and fulness, and succeed the ejected ministers in their less disgraced sins? Why, sirs, what are we more than other men, that the people should do all this for us? that they should impoverish the whole nation almost to provide us a livelihood? What can they see in our persons, or countenances, for which they should so dote upon us? Are we not men, frail and corruptible flesh, and unworthy sinners like themselves? Surely it was for our work, and the end of our work, and not for our persons, but in order to our

work, that they have done all this. What say you now, brethren? Will you deal faithfully with your creditors, and pay the nation the debt which you owe them? Shall all the blood and cost of this people be frustrated or not? You are now called upon to give your answer, and it is you that must give it. The work is now before you; and in these personal instructions of all the flock, as well as in public preaching, doth it consist. Others have done their part, and borne their burden, and now comes in yours. You may easily see how great a matter lies upon your hands, and how many will be wronged by your failing, and how much by the sparing of your labour will be lost. If your labour be more worth than all our treasures, hazards, and lives,—more worth than the souls of men and the blood of Christ,—then sit still, and look not after the ignorant or the ungodly; follow your pleasures and worldly business, or take your ease; displease not sinners, nor your own flesh; but let your neighbours sink or swim; and if public preaching will not save them, let them perish. But if the case be far otherwise, you were best look about you. But I shall say more of this anon.

II. Having given you the first sort of moving reasons, which were drawn from the benefits of the present undertaken work, I come to the *second* sort, which are taken from the *difficulties*; which, if they were taken alone, or in a needless business, I confess might be rather discouragements than motives; but taking these with those that go before and follow, the case is otherwise. For difficulties must excite to greater diligence in a necessary work. And many difficulties we shall find both in ourselves and in our people;

which, because they are things so obvious that your experience will leave no room for doubting, I shall take leave to pass them over in a few words.

1. In ourselves there is much dulness and laziness, so that there will be much ado to get us to be faithful in so hard a work. Like a sluggard in bed, that knows he should rise, and yet delayeth and would stay as long as he can; so do we by duties that our corrupt natures are against, and put us to the use of all our powers. Mere sloth ties the hands of many.

2. We have also a base man-pleasing disposition, which will make us let men perish lest we lose their love, and let them go quietly to hell, lest we should make them angry with us for seeking their salvation. We are ready to venture on the displeasure of God, and suffer our people to run into everlasting misery, rather than get ill-will to ourselves. This disposition must be diligently resisted.

3. Some of us have a foolish bashfulness, which makes us very backward to begin with them, and to speak plainly to them. We are so modest, forsooth, that we blush to speak for Christ, to contradict the devil, or to save a soul; when of shameful works we are less ashamed.

4. We are so carnal that we are prone by our fleshly interests to be drawn to unfaithfulness in the work of Christ; lest we lose our tithes, or bring trouble upon ourselves, or set people against us, and such like. All these require diligence for their resistance.

5. The greatest impediment of all is, that we are weak in the faith; so that when we should set upon a man for his conversion with all our might, if there be not the stirrings of unbelief within us, to rise up actual



questionings of heaven and hell, whether the things that we should earnestly press be true; yet at least the belief of them is weak, and does not excite in us fervent, resolute, and constant zeal. Thus our whole motion is weak, because the spring of faith is weak. Oh, what need, therefore, have all ministers, for themselves and their work, to look well to their faith, especially that their assent to the truth of Scripture, about the joy and torments of the life to come, be sound and lively!

6. And lastly, We have commonly a great deal of unskilfulness and unfitness for this work. Alas, how few know how to deal with an ignorant, worldly man for his salvation!—to get within him, and win upon him, and suit all speeches to his condition and temper; to choose the fittest subjects, and follow them with the holy mixture of seriousness, terror, love, meekness, and evangelical allurements. Oh, who is fit for such a thing! I profess seriously, it seems to me, by experience, as hard a matter to confer aright with such a carnal person in order to his change, as to preach such sermons as ordinarily we do, if not much more so. All these difficulties in ourselves should awaken us to resolutions, preparations, and diligence, that we be not overcome by them, and hindered from, or in the work.

In our people, we have also many difficulties to encounter. 1. Too many of them will be obstinately unwilling to be taught, and refuse to come near us, as being too good to be catechised, or too old to learn, unless we deal wisely with them in public and private, and by the force of reason, and the power of love, conquer their perverseness, which we must carefully endeavour.

2. Many that are willing are so extremely dull, that they can scarcely learn a leaf of a catechism in a long time, and therefore will keep away, as ashamed of their ignorance, unless we are wise and diligent to encourage them.

3. When they do come, so great is their ignorance, that you will find it a wonderful hard matter to get them to understand you; so that if you have not the skill of making things plain, you will leave them as strange to it as before.

4. Yet harder will you find it to work things upon their hearts, and set them so close to the quick, as to produce that saving change, which is our end, and without which our labour is lost. Oh, what a rock is a hardened, carnal heart! How stiffly will it resist the most powerful persuasions, and hear of everlasting life or death as a thing of naught! If you have not therefore great seriousness, and fervency, and fitness of expression, what good can you expect? And when all is done, the Spirit of grace must do the work; but as God and men do use to choose instruments most suitable to the nature of the agent, work, or end, so here the Spirit of wisdom, life, and holiness, doth not use to work by foolish, dead, or carnal instruments, but by such persuasions of light, life, and purity, as are most like Himself and the work that is to be wrought thereby.

5. And when you have made some desirable impressions on their hearts, if you look not after them, and have a special care of them when they are gone, their hearts will soon return to their former hardness, and their old companions and temptations will render all abortive. I do but briefly hint these things which

you so well know. All the difficulties of the work of conversion, which you use to acquaint the people with, are here before us in our present work; which I will forbear to enumerate, as supposing it unnecessary.

III. The *third* sort of moving reasons are drawn from the *necessity* of the undertaken work; for if it were not necessary, the lazy might be discouraged, rather than excited, by the forementioned difficulties. And if we should here expatiate, we might find matter for a volume by itself. But because I have already been longer than I did intend, I shall only give you a brief hint of some of the general grounds of this necessity.

In the first place, it is necessary by obligation, "Ut Officium, necessitate præcepti:" in the second, it is necessary "ad finem;" and that for God, for our neighbours, and for ourselves.

(1.) We have on us the obligation of Scripture precepts, both general and special. (2.) The subservient obligation by promises and threatenings. (3.) These are seconded by executions of actual judgments and mercies. (4.) We have the obligation of our own undertaking upon us. These all deserve your consideration, but may not be insisted on by me, lest I be over-tedious.

1. Every Christian is obliged to do all that he can for the salvation of others; but every minister is doubly obliged, because he is separated to the gospel of Christ, and is to give up himself wholly to that work. (Rom. i. 1; 1 Tim. iv. 15.) It is needless to make any further question of our obligation, when we know that this work is needful to our people's conversion and salvation, and that we are in general com-

manded to do all that is needful to those ends, as far as we are able. That they are necessary to those ends hath been shewed before, and shall be more anon. Even old professors have need to be taught the principles of God's oracles, if they have neglected or forgotten them. Saith the apostle, *πάλιν χρείαν ἔχετε τοῦ διδάσκειν ὑμᾶς, τίνα τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ Θεοῦ.* (Heb. v. 12.) That the unconverted have need of conversion, and the means of it, I hope is not doubted among us; and whether this be a means, and a needful means, experience may put us far out of doubt, if we had no more. Let them that have taken most pains in public examine their people, and try whether many of them be not yet as ignorant and as careless almost as if they had never heard the gospel. For my part, I study to speak as plainly and affectingly as I can; next my study to speak truly, this is my chief study; and yet I frequently meet with those that have been my hearers eight or ten years, who know not whether Christ be God or man, and wonder when I tell them the history of His birth, life, and death, and sending abroad the gospel, as if they had never heard it before, and that know not that infants have any original sin; and of those that know the history of the gospel, how few are there that know the nature of that repentance, faith, and holiness, that it requireth, or, at least, that know their own hearts! But most of them have an ungrounded affiance in Christ, trusting that He will pardon, justify, and save them, while the world hath their hearts, and they live to the flesh; and this affiance they take for justifying faith. I have found by experience, that an ignorant sot that hath been an unprofitable hearer so long, hath

got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour's close discourse, than they did from ten years' public preaching. I know that the public preaching of the gospel is the most excellent means, because we speak to many at once; but otherwise, it is usually far more effectual to preach it privately to a particular sinner: for the plainest man that is can scarcely speak plain enough in public for them to understand; but in private we may much more. In public, we may not use such homely expressions or repetitions as their dulness doth require; but in private we may. In public, our speeches are long, and we quite overrun their understandings and memories, and they are confounded and at a loss, and not able to follow us, and one thing drives out another, so that they know not what we said; but in private, we can take our work "gradatim," and take our hearers with us as we go, and by questions and their answers, can see how far they go with us, and what we have next to do. In public, by length and speaking alone, we lose their attention; but when they are interlocutors, we can easily cause them to attend. Besides that, we can, as we above said, better answer the objections, and engage them by promises before we leave them, which in public we cannot do. I conclude, therefore, that public preaching will not be sufficient; for though it may be an effectual means to convert many, yet not so many as experience and God's appointment of further means may assure us. You may long study and preach to little purpose if you neglect this duty.

For instances of particular special obligations, we might easily shew you many, both from Christ's own examples, who used this interlocutory preaching both

to His disciples and to the Jews, and from the apostles' examples, who did the like; but that indeed it would be needless tediousness to recite the passages to those that so well know them, it being the most ordinary way of the apostles' preaching to do it thus interlocutorily, and discourse it out in the conclusion. Thus Peter preached to the Jews, (Acts ii.,) and to Cornelius and his friends, (Acts x.,) and thus Philip preached to the eunuch, (Acts ix.,) and thus Paul preached to the jailor, (Acts xvi.,) and to many others. It is plain that it was the most common manner of preaching in those times, which occasioneth the Quakers to challenge us to shew where any ever took a text, and preached as we do, (though they might have found that Christ did so, Luke iv. 18.) Paul preached privately to them of reputation, lest he should have run and laboured in vain, (Gal. ii. 2;) and that earnest charge, no doubt, includeth it, (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2,) "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." Both public preaching and all sorts of reproofs and exhortations are here required.

And how these precepts are seconded with promises and threatenings, is so well known I shall pass it over with the rest.

2. There is a necessity also of this duty "ad finem."

(1.) For bringing greater glory to God, by the more full success of the gospel; not simply to His glory, as if He could not have His glory without it, for so our salvation is not necessary to His glory; but to His

greater glory, because He is most honoured and pleased when most are saved; for He hath sworn that He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he return and live. And, doubtless, as every Christian liveth to the glory of God as his end, so will he gladly take that course that may most effectually promote it; for what man would not attain his end? O brethren, if we could see this work on foot in all the parishes of England, and get our people to submit to it, and then prosecute it skilfully and zealously ourselves, what a glory would it put upon the face of the nation, and what glory would redound to God thereby! If our common ignorance were thus banished, and our vanity and idleness turned into the study of the way of life, and every shop, and every house, were busied in learning catechisms, and speaking of the Word and works of God, what pleasure would God take in our cities and countries! He would even dwell in our habitations, and make them His delight. It is the glory of Christ that shineth in His saints, and all their glory is His glory; that therefore which honoureth them, in number or excellency, honoureth Him. Will not the glory of Christ be most wonderful and conspicuous in the new Jerusalem, when the Church shall have that shining lustre that is described in Rev. xxi.? It is He that is the Sun and the Shield of His Church, and His light is it in which they shall have light; and the business of every saint is to glorify Him. If, therefore, we can increase the number or strength of the saints, we thereby increase the honour of the King of saints; for He will have service and praise where before He had disobedience and dishonour. Christ also will be honoured in the fruits of His bloodshed,

and the Spirit of grace in the fruit of His operations; and do not all these ends require that we use the means with diligence?

(2.) This duty also is necessary to the welfare of our people. How much it doth tend to their salvation is manifest. Brethren, can you look believingly on your miserable neighbours, and not perceive them calling for your help? There is not a sinner whose case you should not so far compassionate, as to be willing to relieve them at a dearer rate than this. Can you see them as the wounded man by the way, and unmercifully pass by? Can you hear them cry to you, as the man of Macedonia to Paul in his vision, "Come and help us," and yet will you refuse your help? Are you entrusted with an hospital, where one languisheth in one corner, and another groaneth in another, and crieth out, "Oh, help me, pity me for the Lord's sake!" and a third is raging mad, and would destroy himself and you; and yet will you sit idle, or refuse your help? If it may be said of him that relieveth not men's bodies, how much more of them that relieve not men's souls—"If you see your brother have need, and shut up the bowels of your compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in you?" You are not such hard-hearted men but you will pity a leper—you will pity the naked, imprisoned, or desolate—you will pity him that is tormented with grievous pain or sickness; and will you not pity an ignorant, hard-hearted sinner? Will you not pity one that must be shut out from the presence of the Lord, and lie under His remediless wrath, if thorough repentance speedily prevent it not? Oh, what a heart it is that will not pity such an one! What shall I call the heart



of such a man? A heart of stone, or a very rock, or adamant, or the heart of a tiger, or rather the heart of an *infidel*; for surely if he believed the misery of the impenitent, is it not possible but he should have pity on him? Can you tell men in the pulpit that they shall certainly be damned except they repent, and yet have no pity on them when you have proclaimed their danger; and if you pity them, will you not do this much for their salvation? What multitudes round about you are blindly hastening to perdition; and your voice is appointed to be the means of reclaiming them! The physician hath no excuse who is doubly bound to relieve the sick, when every neighbour is to help him.

Brethren, what if you heard sinners cry after you in the streets, "O sirs, have pity on me, and afford me your advice; I am afraid of the everlasting wrath of God! I know I must shortly leave this world, and I am afraid lest I shall be miserable in the next!" Could you deny your help to such a sinner? What if they came to your study-door, and cried for help, and would not go away till you had told them how to escape from the wrath of God; could you find in your hearts to drive them away without advice? I am confident you could not. Why, alas! such persons are less miserable than they that cannot cry for help. It is the hardened sinner that cares not for your help, that most needeth it; and he that hath not so much life as to feel that he is dead, nor so much light as to see his danger, nor so much sense left as to pity himself—this is the man that is most to be pitied. Look upon your neighbours round about you; and think what numbers need your help in no less a case than the apparent danger of damnation. And every impenitent person that you see,

and know about you, suppose that you hear them cry to you, "If ever you pitied poor wretches, pity us, lest we should be tormented in the flames of hell; if you have the hearts of men, pity us!" Do that for them that you would if they followed you with such complaints. Oh, how can you walk, and talk, and be merry with such people, when you know their case! Methinks when you look them in the face, and think how they must lie in perpetual misery, you should break forth into tears, as the prophet did when he looked upon Hazael, and then begin with the most importunate exhortations! When you must visit them in their sickness, will it not wound your hearts to see them ready to depart into misery, before you have ever dealt seriously with them for their recovery? Oh, then, for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of poor souls, have pity on them, and bestir yourselves, and spare no pains that may conduce to their salvation.

(3.) And I must further tell you, that this ministerial fidelity is necessary to your own welfare, as well as to that of your people; for this is your work, according to which you shall be judged. You can no more be saved without ministerial diligence and fidelity, than they or you can be saved without Christian diligence and fidelity. If you care not for others, at least care for yourselves. Oh, what is it to answer for the neglect of such a charge! and what sin more heinous than the betraying of souls! Doth not this threatening make you tremble, "If thou warn not the wicked, their blood will I require at thy hands?" I am afraid, nay, I am past doubt, that the day is near when unfaithful ministers will wish that they had never known that charge, but that they had rather been colliers, or

tinkers, or sweepers of channels, than pastors of Christ's flock—when, besides all the rest of their sins, they shall have the blood of so many souls to answer for!

O brethren, our death, as well as that of our people, is at hand; and it is as terrible to an unfaithful pastor as to any! When we see that die we must, and there is no remedy, no wit or learning, no credit or popular applause, can put by the stroke, or delay the time, but, willing or unwilling, our souls must go, and that into a world that we never saw, where our persons and worldly interest will not be respected—oh, then, for a clear conscience, that can say, "I lived not to myself, but to Christ; I spared no pains; I hid not my talent; I concealed not men's misery, nor the way of their recovery." O sirs, let us therefore take time while we may have it, and work while it is day; for the night cometh when none can work. This is our day too; and by doing good to others, we must do good to ourselves. If you would prepare for a comfortable death, and a sure and great reward, the harvest is before you: gird up the loins of your minds, and quit yourselves like men, that you may end your days with confident triumph: "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous Judge, shall give me." And if you would be blessed with those who die in the Lord, *labour now*, that you may rest from your labours then; and do such works as you would wish should follow you, and not such as will prove your terror in the review.

Having found so great reason to move us to this

work, I shall, before I come to the directions, First, Apply them further for our humiliation and excitation. And, Second, Answer some objections that may be raised.

1. What cause have we to plead before the Lord this day, that have neglected so great and good a work so long—that we have been ministers of the gospel so many years, and done so little, by personal instruction and conference, for the saving of men's souls! If we had but set about this business sooner, who knows how many more might have been brought over unto Christ, and how much happier we might have made our parishes, ere now? and why might we not have done it sooner? I confess many impediments were in our way, and so there are still, and will be while there is a devil to tempt, and a corrupt heart in man to resist the light; but if the greatest impediment had not been in ourselves, even in our own darkness, and dulness, and undisposedness to duty, I see not but much might have been done before now. We had the same God to command us, and the same miserable objects of compassion, and the same liberty from governors of the commonwealth; but we stood looking for changes, and we would have had the magistrate not only to have given us leave to work, but to have done our work for us, or at least to have brought the game to our hands; and while we looked for better days, we made them worse by the lamentable neglect of a chief part of our work. And had we as much petitioned parliaments for the interposition of their authority to compel men to be catechised and instructed by the minister, as we did for maintenance and other matters, it is likely we might have obtained it long ago, when they were forward to gratify us in

such undisputable things. But we have sinned, and have no just excuse for our sins; somewhat that may perhaps excuse "a tanto," but nothing "a toto;" and the sin is so great, because the duty is so great, that we should be afraid of pleading excuse too much. The Lord in mercy forgive us, and lay not this or any of our ministerial negligences to our charge! Oh that He would cover all our unfaithfulness, and by the blood of the everlasting covenant, wash away our guilt of the blood of souls, that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we may stand before Him in peace, and may not be condemned for scattering His flock! And oh that He would put up His controversy which He hath against the pastors of His Church, and not deal more severely with them for our sakes, nor suffer underminers or persecutors to scatter them, as they have suffered His sheep to be scattered; and that He will not care as little for them, as they have done for the souls of men; nor think His salvation too good for them, as they have thought their labour and sufferings too much for men's salvation! And as we have had many days of humiliation in England, for the sins of the land, and the judgments that have lain upon us, I hope we shall hear that God will more thoroughly humble the ministers, and cause them to bewail their own neglects, and to set apart some days through the land to that end, that they may not think it enough to lament the sins of others, while they overlook their own; and that God may not abhor our solemn national humiliations, because they are managed by unhumiliated guides; and that we may first prevail with Him for a pardon for ourselves, that we may be the fitter to beg for the pardon of others.

And oh that we might cast out the dung of our pride, contention, self-seeking, and idleness, lest God should cast our sacrifices as dung in our faces, and should cast us out as the dung of the earth, as of late He hath done many others for our warning ; and that we might presently resolve in concord to mend our pace, before we feel a sharper spur than hitherto we have felt !

2. And now, brethren, what have we to do for the time to come, but to deny our lazy, contradicting flesh, and rouse up ourselves to the business that we are engaged in ? The harvest is great ; the labourers are too few ; the loiterers and contentious hinderers are many ; the souls of men are precious ; the misery of sinners is great, and the everlasting misery that they are in danger of is greater ; the beauty and glory of the Church is desirable ; the joy that we are helping them to is inconceivable ; the comfort that followeth a faithful stewardship is not small ; the comfort of a full success also will be greater. To be co-workers with God and His Spirit, is not a little honour ; to subserve the blood shed of Christ for men's salvation, is not a light thing ; to lead on the armies of Christ through the thickest of the enemies, and guide them safely through a dangerous wilderness, and steer the vessel through such storms, and rocks, and sands, and shelves, and bring it safe to the harbour of rest, requireth no small skill and diligence. The fields now seem even white unto harvest, the preparations that have been made for us are very great, the season of working is more warm and calm than most ages before us have ever seen : we have carelessly loitered too long already ; the present time is posting away : while

we are trifling, men are dying, and passing quickly into another world. And is there nothing in all this to awaken us to our duty, and to resolve us to speedy and unwearied diligence? Can a man be too careful and active under all these motives and engagements? Or can that man be a fit instrument for other men's illumination, that were himself so blind? or for the quickening of others, that were himself so senseless? What, sirs! are you that are men of wisdom as dull as the common people? And do we need to heap up a multitude of words to persuade you to a known and weighty duty? One would think it should be enough to set you on work, to shew a line in the Book of God to prove it to be His will; or to prove to you that the work hath a tendency to men's salvation; or that the very sight of your miserable neighbours should be sufficient to draw out your most compassionate endeavours for their relief. If a cripple do but open his sores, and shew you his disabled limbs, it will move you without words; and will not the case of souls that are near to damnation move you? O happy Church, if the physicians were but healed themselves; and if we had not too much of that infidelity and stupidity which we daily preach against in others! Were there but such clear and deep impressions upon our souls, of those glorious things that we daily preach, oh, what a change would it make in our sermons, and in our private discourse! Oh, what a miserable thing it is to the Church and to themselves, that men must preach of heaven and hell, before they heartily believe the reality of either, or have felt the weight of the doctrines which they preach! It would amaze a sensible man to think what matters we preach and talk of!—

what it is for the soul to pass out of this flesh, and go before a righteous God, and enter upon unchangeable joy or torment! Oh, with what amazing thoughts do dying men view these things! How should such matters be preached and discoursed of! Oh the gravity, the seriousness, the incessant diligence that these things require! I know not what others think of them, but for my part, I am ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at myself that I deal not with my own and others' souls as one that looks for the great day of the Lord; and that I can have room for almost any other thoughts or words, and that such astonishing matters do not wholly occupy me. I marvel how I can preach of them slightly and coldly, how I can let men alone in their sins, and that I do not go to them and beseech them for the Lord's sake to repent, however they take it, and whatever pains or trouble it may cost me! I seldom come out of the pulpit, but my conscience smiteth me that I have been no more serious and fervent. It accuseth me not so much for want of human ornaments or elegance, nor for letting fall an uncouth word; but it asketh me, "How couldst thou speak of life and death with such an heart? How couldst thou preach of heaven and hell in such a careless, sleepy manner? Dost thou believe what thou hast said? Art thou in earnest or in jest? How canst thou tell people that sin is such a thing, and that so much misery is upon them and before them, and be no more afflicted with it? Shouldst thou not weep over such a people, and should not thy tears interrupt thy words? shouldst not thou cry aloud, and shew them their transgressions, and entreat and beseech them as for life and death?" Truly, this is the peal that con-



science doth ring in my ears, and yet my drowsy soul is not fully awakened. Oh, what a thing is a senseless, hardened heart! O Lord, save us from the plague of infidelity and hard-heartedness ourselves, or else how shall we be fit instruments of saving others from it? I am even confounded to think what a difference there is between my views in sickness, and my pulpit discourse, and conversation in health concerning the life to come; that that can appear so light to me now, which seemeth so great and astonishing a matter then, and which I know will be so again when death looks me in the face. O brethren, surely, if you had all conversed with death as often as I have done, and as often received the sentence in yourselves, you would have an unquiet conscience, if not a reformed life in your ministerial diligence and fidelity; and you would have something within you that would frequently ask you such questions as these: "Is this all thy compassion for lost sinners? Wilt thou do no more to seek and to save them? Is there not such and such a one—oh, how many round about thee!—that are yet the visible sons of death? What hast thou said to them or done for their recovery? Shall they die and be in hell before thou wilt speak to them one serious word to prevent it? Shall they there curse thee for ever that didst no more in time to save them?" Such cries of conscience are daily in my ears; though, the Lord knows, I have too little obeyed them. The God of mercy pardon me, and awake me with the rest of His servants that have been thus sinfully negligent! I confess to my shame, that I seldom hear the bell toll for one that is dead, but conscience asketh me, "What hast thou done for the saving of that soul before it

left the body? There is one more gone to judgment; what didst thou to prepare that immortal spirit for judgment?" And yet I have been slothful and backward to help the rest that do survive. How can you refrain, when you are laying a corpse in the grave, from thinking, "Here lieth the body, but where is the soul, and what have I done for it before it departed? It was part of my charge—what account can I give of it?" O sirs, is it a small matter to you to answer such questions as these? It may seem so now, but the hour is coming when it will not. If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and will condemn us much more, with another kind of condemnation than conscience doth. The voice of conscience now is a still voice, and the sentence of conscience is a gentle sentence, in comparison of the voice and the sentence of God. Alas! conscience seeth but a very little of our sin and misery, in comparison of what God seeth. What mountains would those things appear to your souls which now seem mole-hills! and what beams would these be in your eyes that now seem motes, if you did but see them with a clearer light—I dare not say, as God seeth them! We can easily make shift to plead the cause with conscience, and either bribe it, or bear its sentence; but God is not so easily dealt with, nor His sentence so easily borne. "Wherefore we receiving (and preaching) a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. xii. 28, 29.) But because you shall not say that I affright myself or you with bugbears, and tell you of dangers and terrors when there are none, I will

here add the certainty of that condemnation that is likely to befall negligent pastors, and particularly that will befall us that are here this day, if we shall hereafter be wilful neglecters of this great work. Many will be ready to rise up against us to our condemnation.

(1.) Our parents that destinated us to the ministry may condemn us, and say, "Lord, we devoted them to Thy service, and they made light of it, and served themselves."

(2.) Our masters that taught us, our tutors that instructed us, the schools and universities that we lived in, and all the years that we spent in study, may rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us. For why was all this, but for the work of God?

(3.) Our learning, knowledge, and ministerial gifts, will condemn us. - For to what are we made partakers of these, but for the work of God?

(4.) Our voluntarily undertaking the charge of souls will condemn us; for all men should be true to the trust that they have undertaken.

(5.) All the care of God for His Church, and all that Christ hath done and suffered for them, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us; because by our negligence we destroyed them for whom Christ died.

(6.) All the severe precepts and charges of Holy Scripture, with the promises of assistance and reward, and all the threatenings of punishment, will rise up against the unfaithful and condemn them: for God did not speak all this in vain.

(7.) All the examples of the prophets and apostles and other preachers recorded in Scripture, will rise up against such and condemn them; even this pattern that

is set them by Paul, (Acts xx.,) and all the examples of the diligent servants of Christ in these later times, and in the places around them : for these were for their imitation, and to provoke them to an holy emulation, in fidelity and ministerial diligence.

(8.) The Holy Bible that is open before us, and all the books in our studies that tell us of our duty, directly or indirectly, condemn the lazy and unprofitable servants; for we have not all these helps and furniture in vain.

(9.) All the sermons that we preach to persuade our people to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, to lay violent hands upon the crown, and take the kingdom as by force, to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and so to run as that they may obtain, will rise up against us and condemn us; for if it concern them to labour for their salvation, doth it not concern us who have the charge of them to be also violent, laborious, and unwearied in striving to help on their salvation? Is it worth their labour and patience, and is it not also worth ours?

(10.) All the sermons that we preach to them to set out the danger of a natural state, the evil of sin, the need of Christ and grace, the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, yea, and the truth of the Christian religion, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us. And a sad review it will be, when we shall be forced to think, "Did I tell them of such great dangers and hopes in public, and would I do no more to help them in private? What! tell them daily of threatened damnation, and yet let them run into it so easily! Tell them of such a glory, and scarcely speak a word to them personally to help them to it! Were these

such great matters with me at church, and so small when I came home?" All this is dreadful self-condemnation.

(11.) All the sermons that we have preached to persuade other men to such duties; as neighbours to exhort one another daily, and plainly to rebuke them that sin; parents and masters to do it to their children and servants; all these will condemn us. For shall we persuade others to that which we will not do ourselves? When we threaten them for neglecting it, we threaten our own souls.

(12.) All our hard censures of the magistrate for doing no more, and all our reproofs of him for permitting seducers, and denying his further assistance to the ministers, doth condemn ourselves if we refuse our own duty. What! must all the rulers of the world be servants to our slothfulness, or light us the candle to do nothing, or only hold the stirrup to our pride, or make our beds for us, that we may sleep by daylight? Should they do their part in a subordinate office to protect and further us, and should not we do ours, who stand nearest to the end?

(13.) All the maintenance that we take for our service, if we be unfaithful, will condemn us; for who is it that will pay a servant to take his pleasure, or sit still, or work for himself? If we have the fleece, it is surely that we may look to the flock. By taking the wages, we oblige ourselves to do the work.

(14.) All the honour that we expect, or receive from the people, and all the ministerial privileges before mentioned, will condemn the unfaithful; for the honour is but the encouragement to the work, and obligeth to it.

(15.) All the witness that we have borne against the

scandalous, negligent ministers of this age, and the words we have spoken against them, and all the endeavours that we have used for their removal, will condemn the unfaithful; for God is no respecter of persons. If we succeed them in their sins, we spoke all that against ourselves; and as we condemned them, God and others will condemn us, if we imitate them; and though we be not so bad as they, it will prove sad to be too like them.

(16.) All the judgments that God hath executed on them in this age before our eyes, will condemn us, if we be unfaithful. Hath He made the idle shepherds and sensual drones to stink in the nostrils of the people, and will He honour us if we be idle and sensual? Hath He sequestered them, and cast them out of their habitations, and out of the pulpits, and laid them by as dead while they are alive, and made them a hissing and a byword in the land; and yet dare we imitate them? Are not their sufferings our warnings? If anything in the world should awaken ministers to self-denial and diligence, one would think we had seen enough to do it. If the judgments of God on one man could do so much, what should so many years' judgment on so many hundreds do? Would you have imitated the old world, if you had seen the flood that drowned them? Would you have taken up the sins of Sodom, "pride, fulness of bread, and idleness," if you had stood by and seen the flames of Sodom? This was God's argument to deter the Israelites from the nations' sins, because "for all these things they had seen them cast out before them." Who would have been a Judas that had seen him hang himself; or a lying, sacrilegious hypocrite, that had

seen Ananias and Sapphira struck dead? Who would not have been afraid to contradict the gospel, that had seen Elymas struck blind? And shall we approve self-seeking, idle ministers, when we have seen God scourging such out of His temple, and sweeping them away in His displeasure? God forbid! for then how great and how manifold will our condemnation be!

(17.) All the disputations and eager contests that we have had against unfaithful men, and for a faithful ministry, will condemn us if we be unfaithful; and so will the books that we have written to those ends. How many scores, if not hundreds, of catechisms are written in England; and yet shall we forbear to use them? How many books have been written for discipline by English and Scottish divines; and how fully hath it been defended! And what reproach hath been cast upon the adversaries of it through the land; and yet shall we lay it by as useless, when we have free leave to use it? Oh, fearful hypocrisy! What can we call it less? Did we think when we were writing against this sect and that sect that opposed discipline, that we were writing all that against ourselves? Oh, what evidence do the booksellers' shops, and their own libraries, contain against the greatest part, even of the godly ministers of the land! The Lord cause them seasonably to lay it to heart!

(18.) All the days of fasting and prayer that have been of late years kept in England for a reformation, will rise up in judgment against the unreformed, that will not be persuaded to this part of the work. And I confess it is so heavy an aggravation of our sin, that it makes me tremble to think of it. Was there ever a nation on the face of the earth, that so solemnly and

so long followed God with fasting and prayer as we have done? Before the parliament began, how frequent and fervent were we in secret; after that, for many years' time together, we had a monthly fast commanded by the parliament; besides frequent private and public fasts. And what was all this for? Whatever was the means that we sometimes looked at, yet still the end of all our prayers was church-reformation, and therein, especially, these two things: *a faithful ministry, and exercise of discipline in the Church.* Did it then once enter into the hearts of the people, yea, or into our hearts, to imagine, that when we had all that we wished for, and the matter was put into our own hands, to be as diligent as we could, and to exercise what discipline we pleased, that then we would do nothing but preach publicly; that we would not be at the pains of catechising and instructing our people personally, nor exercise any considerable part of discipline at all? It astonisheth me to think of it! What a depth of deceit is in the heart of man! What! are good men's hearts so deceitful? Are all men's hearts so deceitful? I confess I told many soldiers, and other sensual men, then, that when they had fought for a reformation, I was confident they would abhor it, and be enemies to it, when they saw and felt it: thinking that the yoke of discipline would have pinched their necks; and that when they had been catechised and personally dealt with, and re-proved for their sin, in private and public, and brought to public confession and repentance, or avoided as impenitent, they would have scorned and spurned against all this, and have taken the yoke of Christ for tyranny. But little did I think that the ministers would have



let all fall, and put almost none of this upon them, but have let them alone for fear of displeasing them, and have let all run on, as it did before.

Oh the earnest prayers that I have heard in secret for a faithful ministry, and for discipline! They prayed as if they had wrestled for salvation itself! Yea, they commonly called discipline, the kingdom of Christ, or, the exercise of His kingly office in His Church; and so preached and prayed for it as if the setting up of discipline had been the setting up of the kingdom of Christ: and did I then think that they would refuse to set it up when they might? What! is the kingdom of Christ now reckoned among the things indifferent?

If the God of heaven, that knew our hearts, had in the midst of our prayers and cries on one of our public monthly fasts, returned this answer with His dreadful voice, in the audience of the assembly: "You deceitful-hearted sinners, what hypocrisy is this, to weary me with your cries for that which you will not have if I would give it you, and thus to lift up your voices for that which your souls abhor? What is reformation, but the instructing and importunate persuading of sinners to entertain my Christ and grace as offered them, and the governing my Church according to my Word? And these, which are your work, you will not be persuaded to, when you come to find it troublesome and ungrateful. When I have delivered you, it is not me, but yourselves, that you will serve; and I must be as earnest to persuade you to reform the Church in doing your own duty, as you are earnest with me to grant you liberty for reformation; and when all this is done, you will leave it undone!"—I

say, if the Lord, or any messenger of His, had given us in such an answer, would it not have amazed us, and have seemed incredible to us, that our hearts should have been such as now they prove? And would we not have said as Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing;" or as Peter, "Though all men forsake or deny thee, yet will not I?" Well, brethren, sad experience hath shewed us our frailty: we have denied the troublesome and costly part of the reformation that we prayed for: but Christ yet turneth back, and looketh with a merciful eye upon us. Oh that we had but the hearts immediately to go out and weep bitterly, and do as we have done no more, lest a worse thing come unto us; but henceforth follow Christ through labour and suffering, though it were unto death!

(19.) All the judgments upon the nation, the cost, the labour, the blood, and the deliverances, and all the endeavours of the governors for reformation, will rise up against us, if we now refuse to be faithful for a reformation, when it is before us, and at our will.

I have said somewhat of this before. Hath God been hewing us out a way with His sword, and leveling opposers by His terrible judgments, and yet will we sit still or play the sluggard? Have England, Scotland, and Ireland paid so dear for a reformation, and now shall some men treacherously strangle it in the birth, and others expose it to contempt and overrun it, and others sit still and look on it as a thing not worth the trouble? How many thousand persons may come to the condemnation of such men! The whole countries may say, "Lord, we have been plundered and ruined, or much impoverished, we have paid

taxes these many years, and it was a reformation that was pretended, and that we were promised, in all; and now the ministers, that should be the instruments of it, do neglect it." Many thousands may say, "Lord, we ventured our lives, in obedience to a parliament that promised reformation, and now we cannot have it." The souls of many that have died in these wars may cry out against us, "Lord, it was the hopes of a reformation that we fought and suffered for, in obedience to those governors that professed to intend it; and now the pastors reject it by their idleness." The parliament may say, "How long did we sit and consult about reformation; and now the ministers will not execute the power that is granted them." The nation may say, "How often did we beg of God and petition the parliament for it; and now the ministers deny us the enjoyment of it." Yea, God himself may say, "How many prayers have I heard, and what dangers have I delivered you from—how many, how great, and in what a wonderful manner; and what do you think it was that I delivered you for? Was it not that you should do my work? and will you betray it or neglect it after all this?" Truly, sirs, I know not what others think; but when I consider the judgments that we have felt, and the wonders of mercy that my eyes have seen, to the frequent astonishment of my soul, as I know it is great matters that these things oblige us to, so I am afraid lest they should be charged on me as the aggravation of my neglect. I hear every exasperated party still flying in the faces of the rest; and one saith, "It was you that killed the king," and the other saith, "It was you that fought against a parliament, and put them to defend themselves, and

drenched the land in blood." But the Lord grant that it be not *we*, if we prove negligent in our ministry, and betray the reformation that God hath called us to, that shall have all this blood and misery charged upon us, yea, though we had never any other hand therein; and that the Lord say not of us, as of Jehu, even when he had destroyed the house of Ahab by His command, because he accomplished not the reformation which that execution tended to, "Yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu." (Hosea i. 4.) O sirs! can we find in our hearts to lose all the cost and trouble of the three nations, and all to save us a little trouble in the issue, and so to bring the guilt of all upon ourselves? Far be it from us, if we have the hearts of Christians.

(20.) Lastly, If we still refuse a reformation, by instructing the ignorant or exercising Christ's discipline, many vows and promises of our own will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us. [1.] In the National Covenant, those that entered into it did vow and promise most solemnly before the Lord and His people, that "having before our eyes the glory of God, and the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we would sincerely, really, and constantly endeavour, in our several places and callings, the reformation of religion, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government;" and we did profess "our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour, for ourselves, and all others under our power and charge, and both in public and private, in all duties we owe to God and man, to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of the reformation. And this covenant we make as in the

presence of God, the searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer at the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed." Oh, dreadful case then that we have put ourselves into, if infinite mercy help us not out! May we not say after the law, (2 Kings xxii. 13; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 21,) "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because we have not done according to this covenant. Could a people have devised a readier way to thrust themselves under the curse of God, than by taking such a solemn, dreadful covenant, and when they have done so, so long, so wilfully, so openly to violate it?" Doth not this plainly bind us to the private as well as the public parts of this duty, and to a real reformation of discipline in our practice? Again, therefore, I must needs say, what a bottomless depth of deceit is the heart of man! Oh, what heavy charges have we brought against many others of these times for breaking this solemn vow and covenant, (from which I am far from undertaking to acquit them,) when yet we that led the way, and drew on others, and daily preached up reformation and discipline, have so horribly violated this covenant ourselves, that in a whole country it is rare to find a minister that hath set up discipline or private instruction! And he that can see much done towards it in England hath more acquaintance or better eyes than I have.

[2.] Also in our frequent, solemn humiliation-days in the time of our deepest distress and fear, how publicly and earnestly did we beg for deliverances, not as for our sakes, but for the sake of the Church and gospel, as if we had not cared what had become of us, so that the reformation of the Church might go on; and we

promised if God would hear and deliver us, what we would do towards it. But oh, how unfaithful have we been to those promises ! I confess it filleth my own soul with shame to consider the unanswerableness of my affections and endeavours to the many fervent prayers, rare deliverances, and confident promises of those years of adversity ! And such experience of the almost incredible unfaithfulness of our hearts, is almost enough to make a man never trust his heart again, and consequently to shake his certainty of sincerity. Have we now, or are we likely to have, any higher resolutions than those were which we have broken ? And it tends also to make us question in the next extremity, even at the hour of death, whether God will hear and help us any more, who have forfeited our credit with Him by proving so unfaithful. If so many years' public humiliation, spurred on by such calamities as neither we nor our fathers for many generations had ever seen, had no more in them than now appears, and if this be the issue of all, how can we tell how to believe ourselves hereafter ? It may make us fear lest our case be like the Israelites, (Psalm lxxviii. 34-37, 42, 57,) who, "when he slew them, then they sought him ; and they returned and inquired early after God : and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with God, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. . . . They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. . . . But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers : they were turned aside like a deceitful bow."

[3.] Moreover, if we will not be faithful in duties that we are engaged to, our own agreements and engagements which remain subscribed by our hands, and are published to the view of the world, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us. We have engaged ourselves under our hands near three years ago, that we will set up the exercise of discipline; and yet how many have neglected it to this day, without giving any just and reasonable excuse! We have now subscribed another agreement and engagement for catechising and instructing all that will submit. We have done well so far; but if now we should flag and prove remiss and superficial in the performance, our subscriptions will condemn us—this day of humiliation will condemn us. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; it is not your names only, but your hearts and hands also, that He requireth. There is no dallying with God by feigned promises; He will expect that you be as good as your word. He will not hold him guiltless that, by false oaths, or vows, or covenants with Him, doth take His holy name in vain. “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?” (Eccles. v. 4–6.)

Thus I have shewed you what will be the consequence of your not setting yourselves faithfully to this work, to which you have so many obligations and engagements; and what an inexcusable thing our

neglect will be, and how great and manifold a condemnation it will expose us to. Truly, brethren, if I did not apprehend the work to be of exceeding great moment to yourselves, to the people, and to the honour of God, I would not have troubled you with so many words about it, nor have presumed to have spoken so sharply as I have done. But when it is for life and death, men are apt to forget their reverence, and courtesy, and compliments. For my part, I apprehend this as one of the best and greatest works that ever I put my hand to in my life. And I verily think that your thoughts of it are as mine; and then you will not think my words too many or too keen. I can well remember the time when I was earnest for the reformation of matters of ceremony; and if I should be cold in such a substantial matter as this, how disproportionable would my zeal appear! Alas! can we think that the reformation is wrought when we have cast out a few ceremonies — changed some vestures, gestures, and forms? Oh no, sirs! it is the converting and saving of souls that is our business. The chief part of the reformation is that which doth most good, and tendeth most to the salvation of the people. Let others take it how they will, I will so far speak my conscience for your just encouragement as to say again, that I am verily persuaded that as you are happily agreed and combined for this work, so if you will but faithfully execute this agreement, together with your former agreement for discipline, you will do much more for a true reformation, and that peaceably, without meddling with controverted points, than has yet been done in any part of England, though no more than is unquestionably your duty.



I am next to answer some of those objections which backward minds may cast in our way.

1. Some may object, that "this course will take up so much time, that a man shall have no time to follow his studies: most of us are young, and have need of much time to improve our own abilities, which this course prohibits us." To which I answer—

(1.) We suppose them whom we persuade to this work, to understand the substance of the Christian religion, and to be able to teach others; and the addition of lower and less necessary things is not to be preferred before this needful communication of the fundamentals. I highly value common knowledge, and would not encourage any to set light by it; but I value the saving of souls before it. That work which is immediately connected with the end of all our labours must be done, whatever be undone. It is a very desirable thing for a physician to be thoroughly studied in his art, and to be able to see the reason of his experiments, and to resolve such difficult controversies as are before him; but if he had the charge of an hospital, or lived in a city that had the raging pestilence, if he would be studying "*de fermentatione, de circulatione sanguis, de vesiculo chylo, de instrumentis sanguificationis,*" and such excellent, useful points, when he should be looking to his patients, and saving men's lives, and should turn them away, and let them perish, and tell them that he cannot have while to give them advice, because he must follow his own studies, I should take that man for a preposterous student, that preferred the remote means of his studies before the end itself: and, indeed, I should think him but a civil kind of murderer. Men's souls may be

saved without knowing whether God did predetermine the creature in all its acts; whether the understanding necessarily determines the will; whether God works grace in a physical or moral way of causation; what free-will is; whether God have "*scientiam mediam*," or positive decrees "*de malo culpæ*;" with a hundred such like, which are the things that you would be studying when you should be saving souls. Get well to heaven, and help your people thither, and you shall know all these things in a moment, and a thousand more, which by all your studies you can never know; and is not this the most expeditious and certain way to knowledge?

(2.) If you grow not extensively in knowledge, you will by this way of diligent practice obtain the intensive and more excellent growth. If you know not so many things as others, you will know the great things better than they; for this serious dealing with sinners for their salvation will help you to far deeper apprehensions of their saving principles, than will be got by any other means; and a little more of the knowledge of these is worth all the other knowledge in the world. Oh, when I am looking heavenward, and gazing towards the inaccessible light, and aspiring after the knowledge of God, and find my soul so dark and distant, that I am ready to say, "I know not God—He is above me—quite out of my reach;" this is the most killing and grievous ignorance! Methinks I could willingly exchange all other knowledge that I have for one glimpse more of the knowledge of God and the life to come. Oh that I had never known a word in logic, metaphysics, &c., nor known what schoolmen said, so I had but one spark more of that

light that would shew me the things that I must shortly see. For my part, I conceive that by serious talking of everlasting things, and teaching the Creed and Catechism, you may grow more in knowledge, though not in the knowledge of more things, and prove much wiser men, than if you spent that time in common or curious and less necessary things.

(3.) Yet, let me add, that though I count this the chief, I wish you to have more ; because those subservient sciences are very useful ; and therefore I say, that you may have competent time for both, lose none upon vain recreations and employments ; trifle not away a minute ; consume it not in needless sleep ; do what you do with all your might, and then see whether you have not competent time. If you set apart but two days in a week for this great work, you may find some for common studies out of all the other five.

(4.) Duties are to be taken together, and the greatest preferred ; but none neglected that can be performed ; nor one pleaded against another, but each in its proper place. But if there were such a case of necessity, that we could not read for ourselves in the course of our further studies, and instruct the ignorant too, I would throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the perdition of one soul ; at least I know this is my duty.

*Object. 2.* “But this course will destroy the health of our bodies, by continual spending the spirits, and allowing us no time for necessary recreations ; and it will wholly lock us up from any civil and friendly visitations, so that we must never stir from home, nor take our delight at home one day with our friends, for the relaxation of our minds ; but as we shall seem dis-

courteous and morose to others, so we shall tire ourselves, and the bow that is still bent will be in danger of breaking at last."

*Ans.* (1.) This is the mere plea of the carnal mind for its own interest. The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the way. He will not plough because of the cold. There is no duty of moment and self-denial, but if you consult with flesh and blood, they will give you as wise reasons as these against it. Who would ever have been burnt at a stake for Christ, if this reasoning had been good? yea, or who would ever have been a Christian?

(2.) We may take time for necessary recreation for all this. An hour, or half an hour's walk before meat, is as much recreation as is of necessity for the health of most of the weaker sort of students. I know something of this by long experience. Though I have a body that hath languished under great weakness many years, and my diseases have been such as require as much exercise as almost any in the world, and I have found exercise the principal means of my preservation till now, and therefore have as great reason to plead for it as any man that I know alive, yet I have found that the aforesaid proportion hath been blessed to my preservation, though I know that more would have tended to increase my health. I do not know one minister in a hundred, who needeth so much as I do. Yea, I know abundance of ministers that scarcely ever use any exercise at all, though I commend them not for it. I doubt not but it is our duty to use as much exercise as is of necessity for the preservation of our health, so far as our work requireth: else we should for one day's work lose the opportunity of many. But

this may be done, and yet the works that we are engaged in be done too. On those two days a-week that you set apart for this work, what hinders but you may take an hour or two to walk for the exercise of your bodies? much more on other days.

But as for those men that limit not their recreations to their stated hours, but must have them for the pleasing of their voluptuous humour, such have need to study better the nature of Christianity, learn the danger of living after the flesh, and get more mortification and self-denial, before they preach these things to others. If you must needs have your pleasures, you should not have put yourselves into that calling that requireth you to make God and His service your pleasure, and restraineth you so much from fleshly pleasures. Is it your baptismal engagement to fight against the flesh; and do you know that much of the Christian warfare consisteth in the combat between the flesh and the Spirit; and that is the very difference between a true Christian and a wicked wretch, that one liveth after the Spirit, and mortifieth the deeds and desires of the body, and the other liveth after the flesh? And do you know that the overcoming of the flesh is the principal part of our victory, on which the crown of life depends, and do you make it your calling to preach all this to others, and yet must you needs have your pleasures? If you must, then for shame give over preaching the gospel, and the profession of Christian self-denial, and profess yourselves to be as you are; and as you sow to the flesh, so of the flesh shall you receive the wages of corruption. Doth such an one as Paul say, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the

air : but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.) And have not we need to do so ? Shall we pamper our bodies, and give them their desires in the unnecessary pleasures, when Paul must keep under his body, and bring it into subjection ? Must Paul do this, lest after all his preaching he should be a cast-away ; and have not we cause to fear it of ourselves much more ? I know that some pleasure itself is lawful ; that is, when it is of use to fit us for our work. But for a man to be so far in love with his pleasures as that he must unnecessarily waste his precious time in them, and neglect the great work of God for men's salvation, yea, and plead for this as if it might be done, and so to justify himself in such a course, is wickedness inconsistent with the common fidelity of a Christian, much more with the fidelity of a teacher of the Church. Such as are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, must look to be loved of Him accordingly, and are more fit to be cast out of Christian communion, than to be the chief in the Church ; for we are commanded from such to turn away. (2 Tim. iii. 5.) Recreations for a student must be especially for the exercise of his body, he having before him such variety of delights for his mind ; and they must be as whetting is with the mower, only to be used so far as is necessary to his work. And we must be careful that it rob us not of our precious time, but be kept within the narrowest bounds that may be. I pray peruse well Mr Wheatley's Sermon of Redemption of Time. The labour that we are now engaged to perform, is not likely much to impair our health. It is

true, we must be serious ; but that will but excite and revive our spirits, and not spend them. Men can talk all the day long of other matters without any abatement of their health ; and why may not we talk with men about their salvation, without such great abatement of ours ?

(3.) It is to be understood that the direction that we give, and the work which we undertake is not for dying men, that are not able to preach or speak, but for men of some competent measure of strength, and whose weaknesses are tolerable, and may admit of such labours.

(4.) What have we our time and strength for, but to lay both out for God ? What is a candle made for, but to burn ? Burnt and wasted we must be ; and is it not more fit it should be in lighting men to heaven, and in working for God, than in living to the flesh ? How little difference is there between the pleasure of a long and short life when both are at an end ! What comfort will it be at death, that you lengthened your life by shortening your work ? He that works much, lives much. Our life is to be esteemed according to the end and work of it, and not according to the mere duration. As Seneca can say of a drone, "*Ibi jacet, non ibi vivit ; et diu fuit, non diu vixit.*" Will it not comfort us more at death to review a short time faithfully spent, than a long time unfaithfully ?

(5.) And for the matter of visitations and civilities, if they be for greater ends or use than our ministerial employments are, you may break a Sabbath for them—you may forbear preaching, and also this private work ; but if it be otherwise, how dare you make them a pretence to neglect so great a duty ? Must God wait

on your friends? What if they be lords, or knights, or gentlemen? Must they be served before God? Is their displeasure or censure a greater hurt to you than God's displeasure? Or dare you think, when God will question you for your neglects, to put him off with this excuse: "Lord, I would have spent more of my time in seeking men's salvation, but that such a gentleman, and such a friend, would have taken it ill if I had not waited on them." If you yet seek to please men, you are no longer the servants of Christ. He that dares spend his life in flesh-pleasing and man-pleasing is bolder than I am; and he that dares waste his time in compliments, doth little consider what he hath to do with it. Oh that I could but improve my time according to my convictions of the necessity of it! He that hath looked death in the face as often as I have done, will thereby be taught to value his time. I profess I wonder at those ministers that can hunt, shoot, bowl, or use the like recreations two or three hours, yea, whole days together; that can sit an hour together in vain discourses, and spend whole days in complimentary visits, and journeys to such ends. Good Lord, what do these men think on, when so many souls about them cry for help, and death gives us no respite, and they know not how short a time their people and they may be together, and the smallest parish hath so much work that may employ all their diligence night and day?

Brethren, I hope you are content to be plainly dealt with. If you have no sense of the worth of souls, and the preciousness of that blood that was shed for them, and of the glory that they are going to, and of the misery that they are in danger of, then are you no



Christians, and therefore very unfit to be ministers; and if you have, how can you find time for needless recreations, visits, or discourses? Dare you, like idle gossips, chat and trifle away your time, when you have such works as these to do, and so many of them? O precious time! how swiftly doth it pass away!—how soon will it be gone! What are the forty years of my life that are past? Were every day as long as a month, methinks it were too short for the work of a day. Have we not lost enough already in the days of our vanity? Never do I come to a dying man that is not utterly stupid, but he better sees the worth of time. Oh, then, if they could call time back again, how loud would they call! If they could but buy it, what would they give for it! And yet can we trifle it away, yea, and allow ourselves in this, and wilfully cast off the greatest works of God! Oh, what a foolish thing is sin, that can thus distract men that seem so wise! Is it possible that a man of any true compassion and honesty, or any care of his ministerial duty, or any sense of the strictness of his account, should have time to spare for idleness and vanity?

I must tell you further, brethren, that if another might take some time for mere delight which were not strictly necessary, yet so cannot you; for your undertaking binds you to a stricter attendance than other men are bound to. May a physician, in the time of the plague, take any more relaxation or recreation than is necessary for his life, when so many are expecting his help in a case of life and death? As his pleasure is not worth men's lives, so neither is yours worth men's souls. Suppose your cities were besieged, and the enemy on one side watching all advantages to

surprise it, and on the other seeking to fire it with grenadoes, which are cast in continually. I pray you tell me now, if certain men undertake it as their office to watch the ports, and others to quench the fires that might be kindled in the houses, what time would you allow these men for recreation or relaxation? At the utmost, you would allow them none but what was absolutely necessary.

Do not grudge at this now, and say, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" For it is your mercy; and you are well, if you know when you are well, as I shall shew you in answering the next objection.

*Object.* 3. "I do not think that it is required of ministers that they make drudges of themselves. If they preach diligently, and visit the sick, and do other ministerial duties, and occasionally do good to those they converse with, I do not think that God requires that we should thus tie ourselves to instruct every person distinctly, and to make our lives a burden and a slavery."

*Ans.* (1.) Of what use and weight the duty is, I have shewed before; and how plainly it is commanded. And do you think God doth not require you to do all the good you can? Will you stand by and see sinners gasping under the pangs of death, and say, "God doth not require me to make myself a drudge to save them?" Is this the voice of ministerial or Christian compassion, or rather of sensual laziness and diabolical cruelty? Doth God set you work to do, and will you not believe that He would have you do it? Is that the voice of obedience, or of rebellion? It is all one whether your flesh do prevail with you to deny obedience to acknowledged duty, and say plainly, "I will obey no further

than it pleaseth me;" or whether it may make you wilfully reject the evidence that should convince you that it is a duty, and say, "I will not believe it to be my duty, unless it please me." It is the true character of a hypocrite to make a religion to himself of the cheapest part of God's service, which will stand with his fleshly ends and felicity; and to reject the rest, which is inconsistent therewith. To the words of hypocrisy, this objection superaddeth the words of gross impiety. For what a wretched calumny is this against the most high God, to call His service slavery and drudgery? What thoughts have these men of their Master, their work, and their wages? the thoughts of a believer or of an infidel? Are these men like to honour God, and promote His service, that have such base thoughts of it themselves? Do they delight in holiness who account it a slavish work? Do they believe, indeed, the misery of sinners, that account it such a slavery to be diligent to save them? Christ saith, He that denieth not himself, and forsaketh not all, and taketh not up his cross and followeth Him, cannot be His disciple; and yet these men count it a slavery to labour hard in His vineyard, and deny their ease, in a time when they have all accommodations and encouragements! How far is this from forsaking all; and how can these men be fit for the ministry, that are such enemies to self-denial, and so to true Christianity? Still, therefore, I am forced to say, that all these objections are so prevalent, and all these carnal reasonings hinder the reformation, and, in a word, hence is the chief misery of the Church, *that so many are made ministers before they are Christians.* If these men had seen the diligence of Christ

in doing good, when He neglected His meat to talk with one woman, (John iv.,) and when they had no time to eat bread, (Mark iii. 22,) would not they have been of the mind of His carnal friends, that went to lay hold on Him, and said, "He is beside himself?" They would have told Christ, He made a drudge or a slave of Himself, and that God did not require all this ado. If they had seen Him all night in prayer, and all day in preaching and healing, it seems He would have had this censure from them for His labour! I advice these men to search their own hearts, whether they unfeignedly believe the word that they preach. Do you believe indeed that such glory attends those that die in the Lord, and such torment those that die unconverted? If you do, how can you think any labour too much for such weighty hands? If you do not, say so, and get you out of the vineyard, and go with the prodigal to keep swine; but do not undertake to feed the flock of Christ.

Do you not know that it is your own benefit which you grudge at? The more you do, the more you receive: the more you lay out, the more you have coming in. If you are strangers to these Christian paradoxes, you should not have taken on you to teach them to others. At the present our incomes of spiritual life and peace are commonly in way of duty; so that he that is most in duty hath most of God: exercise of grace increaseth it. And is it a slavery to be more with God, and to receive more from Him, than other men? It is the chief solace of a gracious soul to be doing good, and receiving by doing, and to be much exercised about those divine things which have his heart. A good stomach will not say at a feast, "What

a slavery is it to bestow my time and pains so much to feed myself?" Besides, we prepare for fuller receivings hereafter. We set our talents to usury, and by improving them we shall make five become ten, and so be made rulers of ten cities. We shall be judged according to our works. Is it a drudgery to send to the utmost parts of the world to exchange our trifles for gold and jewels? Do not these men seek to justify the profane, that consider diligent godliness a drudgery, and reproach it as a precise and tedious life? They say they will never believe but a man may be saved without all this ado. Even so say these in respect to the works of the ministry; they take this diligence for ungrateful tediousness, and they will not believe but a man may be a faithful minister without all this ado! It is a heinous sin to be negligent in so great a business; but to approve of that negligence, and to plead against duty as if it were none, and when they should lay out themselves for the saving of souls, to say, "I do not believe that God requireth it;" this is so great an aggravation of the sin, that, where the Church's necessity doth not force us to make use of such, for want of better, I cannot but think them worthy to be cast out as the rubbish, and as salt that hath lost its savour, that is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. "He that hath ears to hear," saith Christ in these words, "let him hear." (Luke xiv. 34, 35.) And if such ministers become a byword and reproach, let them thank themselves; for it is their own sin that maketh them vile. (1 Sam. iii. 13.) And while they thus debase the service of the Lord, they do but debase themselves, and prepare for a greater abasement at the last.

*Object.* 4. "But if you make such severe laws for ministers, the Church will be left without; for what man will put himself upon such a toilsome life? or what parents will choose such a burden for their children? Men will avoid it, both for the bodily toil, and the danger to their consciences if they should not well discharge it."

*Ans.* (1.) It is not we, but Christ that hath made and imposed these laws which you call severe; and if I should silence, or misinterpret them, or tell you that there is no such things, that would not relax them, nor excuse you. He that made them, knew why He did it, and will expect the performance of them. Is Infinite Goodness itself to be questioned or suspected by us, as making bad or unmerciful laws? Nay, it is mere mercy in Him that imposeth this great duty upon us. If physicians be required to be diligent in hospitals or pest-houses, or with other patients, to save their lives, were there not more mercy than rigour in this law? What! must God let the souls of your neighbours perish, to save you a little labour and suffering, and this in mercy to you? Oh, what a miserable world should we have, if blind, self-conceited man had the ruling of it!

(2.) And for a supply of pastors, Christ will take care. He that imposeth duty, hath the fulness of the Spirit, and can give men hearts to obey His laws. Do you think Christ will suffer all men to be as cruel, unmerciful, and self-seeking as you are? He that hath undertaken Himself the work of redemption, borne our transgressions, and been faithful as the chief Shepherd and Teacher of the Church, will not lose all His labour and suffering for want of instruments to carry on His

work; nor will He come down again to do all Himself, because no other will do it; but He will provide men to be His servants and ushers in His school, that shall willingly take the labour on them, and rejoice to be so employed, and account that the happiest life in the world which you account so great a toil; nor would they change it for all your ease and carnal pleasure; but for the saving of souls and the propagating of the gospel of Christ, will be content to bear the burden and heat of the day, and to fill up the measure of the sufferings of Christ in their bodies, and to do what they do with all their might, and to work while it is day, and to be the servants of all, and not to please themselves, but others for their edification; and to become all things to all men, that they may save some; and to endure all things for the elect's sake; and to spend and be spent for men, though the more they love, the less they should be beloved, and should be accounted their enemies for telling them the truth: with such pastors will Christ provide His people after His own heart, that will feed them with knowledge, as men that seek not theirs, but them! What! do you think Christ can have no servants, if such as you shall, with Demas, turn to the present world, and forsake Him? If you dislike His service, you may seek you a better where you can find it, and boast of your gain in the conclusion; but do not threaten Him with the loss of your service. He hath made such laws as you will call severe, for all who will be saved, as well as for His ministers, though He impose not on them the same employment; for all must deny themselves, and mortify the flesh, and be crucified to the world, and take up their cross, and follow Christ, that will be His dis-

ciples. And yet Christ will not be without disciples, nor will He hide His seeming hard terms from men, to entice them to His service, but will tell them of the worst, and then let them come or choose. He will call to them beforehand to count what it will cost them, and tell them that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He comes not to give them worldly peace and prosperity, but to call them to suffer with Him, that they may reign with Him, and in patience to possess their souls, and conquer, that they may be crowned with Him, and sit down on His throne; and all this He will enable His chosen to perform. If you be at that pass with Christ as the Israelites were once with David, and say, "Will the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards? Every man to your tents, O Israel;" and if you say, "Now look to thy own house, O David," you shall see that Christ will look to His own house; and do you look to yours as well as you can, and tell me at the hour of death or judgment which is the better bargain, and whether Christ had more need of you, or you of Him.

And for scrupling it in conscience for fear of failing: it is not involuntary imperfections that Christ will take so heinously, but unfaithfulness and wilful negligence; and it shall not serve your turn to run out of the vineyard or harvest, on pretence of scruples that you cannot do the work as you ought. He can follow you and overtake you, as He did Jonas, with such a storm as shall lay you out in the belly of hell. Totally to cast off a duty, because you cannot endure to be faithful in the performance of it, will prove but a poor excuse at last. If men had but reckoned well at first



of the difference between things temporal and eternal, and of what they shall lose or get by Christ, and had that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and lived by faith and not by sense, all these objections would be easily resolved; and all the pleas of flesh and blood for its interest, would appear to have no more reason than a sick man's plea for cold water in a pestilential fever.

*Object. 5.* "But to what purpose is all this, when most of the people will not submit? They will but make a scorn at your motion, and tell us they will not come to us to be catechised, and that they are too old now to go to school; and therefore it is as good to let them alone as trouble ourselves to no purpose."

*Ans. (1.)* It is not to be denied but too many people are obstinate in their wickedness, too many simple ones love simplicity, and too many scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge. But the worse they are, the more deplorable is their case, the more to be pitied, and the more diligent should we be for their recovery.

(2.) I would it were not too much long of ministers that a great part of the people are so obstinate and contemptuous. Did we shine and burn before them as we should—had we convincing sermons and convincing lives—did we set ourselves to do all the good we could, whatever it cost us—were we more humble and meek, more loving and charitable, and let them see that we set light by all worldly things in comparison of their salvation, much more might be done than is, and the mouths of many would be stopped; and though still the wicked will do wickedly, yet more would be tractable, and the wicked would be fewer

and calmer than they are. If you say, that the ablest and most godly ministers in the world have had as untractable and scornful parishioners as any others ; I answer, that even able, godly men have some of them been too lordly and strange, and some of them too uncharitable and worldly, and backward to difficult, though necessary works ; and some of them have done but little in private, when they have done excellently in public, and so have hindered the fruit of their labours. But where these impediments are absent, experience telleth us that the success is much greater, at least, as to the bowing of people to more calmness and teachableness ; but we cannot expect that all should.

(3.) Their wilfulness will not excuse us from our duty. If we offer them not our help, how know we who will refuse it ? Offering it is our part, and accepting is theirs. If we offer it not, we leave them excusable, (for then they refuse it not,) but it is we that are left without excuse ; but if they refuse our help when it is offered, we have done our part, and delivered our own souls.

(4.) If some refuse our help, others will accept it ; and the success with them may be so much as may answer all our labour. It is not all that are wrought on by your public preaching, and yet we must not therefore give it over as unprofitable.

*Object.* 6. "But what likelihood is there that men will be informed or converted by this means that will not by the preaching of the word, when that is God's chief ordinance appointed to that end ? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word preached."

*Ans.* (1.) The advantages I have shewed you before,

and therefore will not stand to repeat them; only, lest any think that this will wrong them by hindering them from preaching, I add to the twenty benefits before mentioned, that it will be an excellent means to help you in preaching. For as the physician's work is half done when he fully knows the disease, so when you are well acquainted with your people's case, you will know what to preach on: and it will furnish you with matter to talk an hour with an ignorant or obstinate sinner, as much as an hour's study will do; for you will know what you have need to insist on, and what objections of theirs to refute.

(2.) I hope there is none so silly as to think this conference is not preaching. Doth the number we speak to make it preaching? or doth interlocution make it none? Surely a man may as truly preach to one as to a thousand; and, as is aforesaid, if you search, you will find, that most of the gospel-preaching in those days, was by conference, or serious speeches to people occasionally, and frequently interlocutory; and that with one, two, or more, as opportunity served. Thus Christ himself did most commonly preach. Besides, we must take account of our people's learning, if we regard the success of our work.

There is nothing therefore from God, from the Spirit, nor from right reason, to cause us to make any question of our work, or to be unwilling to it; but from the world, the flesh, and the devil, we shall have much, and more perhaps than we yet expect. But against all temptations, if we have recourse to God, and look on His great obligations on one side, and the hopeful effects and reward on the other, we shall see that we have little cause either to draw back, or to faint.

Let us set before us this pattern in the text, and learn our duty thence, and imitate it. To serve the Lord, and not men or ourselves, with all humility of mind, and not proudly, and with many tears; to keep back nothing that is profitable to the people, and to teach them publicly, and from house to house; that the matter of our preaching be repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; that though we go bound in the spirit, not knowing particularly what shall befall us, but only that everywhere bonds and afflictions await us, yet none of these things shall move us, neither will we count our life dear to ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus; to testify the gospel of the grace of God; to take heed to ourselves and to all the flock, particularly against domestic seducers and schisms; without ceasing to warn every one day and night with tears; to covet no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, as counting it more honourable to give than to receive. Oh, what a lesson is here before us; but how ill is it learnt by those that still question whether all this be their duty! I confess some of these words of Paul have so often been presented before mine eyes, and stuck upon my conscience, that I have been deeply convinced by them both of my duty and negligence: and I think this one speech better deserves a twelvemonth's study, than most things that young students do lay out their time in. O brethren, write it on your study doors, or set it as your copy in capital letters still before your eyes! Could we but properly learn two or three lines of it, what preachers should we be! (1.) For our general business, **SERVING THE LORD WITH HUMILITY OF MIND.**

(2.) Our special work, TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES, AND TO ALL THE FLOCK. (3.) Our doctrine, REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD, AND FAITH TOWARD OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. (4.) The place and manner of teaching, I HAVE TAUGHT YOU PUBLICLY, AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE. (5.) The object and internal manner, I CEASED NOT TO WARN EVERY ONE NIGHT AND DAY WITH TEARS. This is it that must win souls and preserve them. (6.) His innocency and self-denial for the advantage of the gospel, I HAVE COVETED NO MAN'S SILVER OR GOLD. (7.) His patience, NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME, NEITHER COUNT I MY LIFE DEAR. (8.) And among all our motives, these have need to be in capital letters before our eyes: We oversee and feed THE CHURCH OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD. GRIEVOUS WOLVES SHALL ENTER IN AMONG YOU, NOT SPARING THE FLOCK, and OF YOUR OWNSSELVES SHALL MEN ARISE, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY DISCIPLES AFTER THEM. Write all this upon your hearts, and it will do yourselves and the Church more good than twenty years' study of lower things, which though they get you greater applause in the world, yet separated from these, will make you but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

The great advantage of a sincere heart is, that God and glory, and the saving of souls, are their very end; and where that end is truly intended, no labour or suffering will stop them, or turn them back; for a man must have his end, whatever it cost him. He still retains this lesson, whatever he forget, ONE THING IS NECESSARY, and *Seek first the kingdom of God*, and therefore says, *Necessity is laid upon me, and woe unto*

*me if I preach not the gospel!* This is it that will most effectually make easy all our labours, make light all our burdens, make all our sufferings seem tolerable, and cause us to venture on any hazard in the way. That which I once made the motto of my colours in another warfare, I desire may be still before my eyes in this, which yet, according to my intention, is not altogether another. On one side, *He that saveth his life shall lose it;* on the other, *Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.* This, Doctor Reignolds thought had reason enough in it to hold him to his labours, though it cost him his life. He that knoweth that he serveth a God that will never suffer any man to be a loser by Him, need not fear what hazard he runs in His cause; and he that knows that he seeks a prize, which if obtained, will infinitely overmatch his cost, may boldly engage his whole estate on it, and sell all to purchase so rich a pearl.

Well, brethren, I will spend no more words in exhorting wise merchants to such a bargain, or telling teachers themselves of such common truths; and if I have said more than needs already, I am glad. I hope now I may take it for granted, that you are resolved on the utmost diligence and fidelity in the work. On which supposition I shall now proceed.

## CHAPTER VII.

## DIRECTIONS FOR THE RIGHT MANAGING THIS WORK.

It is so happy a work which we have before us, that it is a thousand pities it should be destroyed in the birth, and perish in our hands. Though I know we have a knotty generation to deal with, and that it is past the power of any of us to change a carnal heart without the effectual grace of the Holy Ghost; yet it is so usual with God to work by means, and to bless the right endeavours of His servants, that I cannot fear but great things will be done, and a wonderful blow will be given to the kingdom of darkness by our work, if it do not miscarry through the fault of the ministers themselves. The chief danger is want of diligence and skill. Of the former I have spoken much already; as for the latter, I am so conscious of my own unskilfulness, that I am far from imagining that I am fit to give directions to any but the younger and inexperienced of the ministry; and therefore must expect so much justice in your interpretation, as that you will suppose me now to speak to none but such. But yet something I shall say, and not pass over this part in silence, because the number of such is so great, and I am so apprehensive that the welfare of the Church and nation doth much depend on the management and success of this work.

The points wherein you have need to be solicitous

are these two:—1. To bring your people to submit to this course of private instruction; for if they will not come near you, what good can they receive? 2. To do the work so as may most tend to the success of it, when they do come.

I. And for the *first*, the best directions that I can give are these following:—

1. The chief means of all is, for a minister so to behave himself in the main course of his ministry and life, as may tend to convince his people of his ability, sincerity, and unfeigned love to them; for if they take him to be ignorant, they will despise his teaching, and think themselves as wise as he. If they think him self-seeking, or hypocritical, and one that doth not mean as he saith, they will suspect all that he saith and doth for them, and will not regard him. If they think he intendeth but to domineer over their consciences, and to trouble and disgrace them, or merely to exercise their wit and memory, they will flee away from him as an adversary, and from his endeavours as hurtful and disgusting. Whereas when they are convinced that he understandeth what he doth, and have high thoughts of his abilities, they will reverence him, and the more readily stoop to his advice. When they are persuaded of his uprightness, they will the less suspect his motions; and when they perceive that he intendeth no private ends of his own, but merely their good, they will the sooner be persuaded by him. Because those that I write to are supposed to be none of the most able ministers, and therefore may despair of being revered for their parts, I say to such— (1.) You have the more need to study and labour for their increase. (2.) You must necessarily have that



which Amesius makes the lowest degree tolerable—viz., to be “supra vulgus fidelium ;” and it will produce some reverence when they know you are wiser than themselves. (3.) And that which you want in ability, must be made up in other qualifications, and then your advice may be as successful as others.

If ministers are content to purchase an interest in their people at the dearest rates to their own flesh, and would condescend to them, and be familiar, and loving, and prudent in their carriage, and abound according to their ability in good works, they might do much more than usually they do. Not that we should much regard an interest in them for our own sakes ; but that we may be more capable of promoting the interest of Christ, and of furthering their own salvation. Were it not for their own sakes, it were no great matter whether they love or hate us : but what commander can do any great service by an army that hates him ? And how can we think that they will much regard our counsel, while they abhor or disregard the persons that give it ? Labour, therefore, for some competent interest in your people’s estimation and affection, and then you may the better prevail with them.

*Object.* “ But what should a minister do that findeth he hath quite lost his interest with them ? ”

*Ans.* 1. If they be so vile a people that they hate him not for any weakness, nor through misreports about particular things, but merely for endeavouring their good, though in prudence as well as zeal, and would hate any other that should do his duty ; then must he in patience and meekness continue to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.

But if it be upon any weaknesses of his, or difference in lesser opinions, or prejudice merely against his own person, let him try first to remove the prejudice by all lawful means ; and if he cannot, let him tell them, " It is not for myself, but for you, that I labour : and therefore seeing that you will not obey the word from me, I desire that you will agree to accept of some other that may do you that good which I cannot : " and so leave them, and try whether another man may not be fitter for them, and he for another people. An ingenious man can hardly stay with a people against their wills ; and a sincere man can more hardly, for any interest of his own, remain in a place where he is likely to be unprofitable, to hinder the good which they might receive from another man, who hath the advantage of a greater interest in their estimation and affection.

2. Supposing, then, this general preparation ; the next thing to be done is, to use the most effectual means to convince them of the benefit and necessity of this course to their own souls. The way to win the consent of any man to anything that you offer, is to prove it to be good for him, and to do this by evidence that hath some fitness and proportion with his own understanding ; for if you cannot make him believe that it is good or necessary for him, he will never receive it. You must therefore preach to them some plain and convincing sermons to this purpose beforehand, which shall fully shew them the benefit and necessity of the knowledge of divine truths in general, and of knowing the principles in special, and that the aged have the same duty and need as others, and in some respects much more. Heb. v. 12, affordeth us

many observations suitable to our present business. As, (1.) That God's oracles must be man's lessons. (2.) Ministers must teach these, and people must learn them. (3.) The oracles of God have some principles or fundamentals, that all must know that will be saved. (4.) These principles must be first learned. (5.) It may be well expected that people thrive in knowledge according to the means or teaching which they possess ; and if they do not, it is their sin. (6.) If any have lived long in the Church under the means of knowledge, and yet be ignorant of these first principles, they have need to be taught them yet, how old soever they may be. All this is plain from the text ; whence we have a fair opportunity by twenty clear and convincing reasons to shew them the necessity of knowing God's oracles, especially the first principles ; and especially for the aged, that have sinfully lost so much time already, have long promised to repent when they were old, should now have been teachers of others, and whose ignorance therefore is a double sin and shame, who have so little time to learn it, and are so near their judgment ; and who have souls to save or lose as well as others. Convince them how impossible it is to walk in the way to heaven without knowing it, when there are so many difficulties and enemies in our way. Men cannot do their worldly business without knowledge, nor learn a trade without an apprenticeship. Who can love, or seek, or desire that which he knoweth not ? Convince them what a contradiction it is to be a Christian, and yet refuse to learn. For what is a Christian but a disciple of Christ, and how can he be His disciple, that refuseth to be taught by Him ? They that refuse to be taught by His minis-

ters, refuse to be taught by Him. For Christ will not come down from heaven again to teach them by His own mouth, but hath appointed His ministers to keep school and teach them under Him. To say therefore, that they will not be taught by His ministers, is to say, they will not be taught by Christ ; and that is to say, they will be none of His disciples. Abundance of such undeniable evidences we have at hand to convince them of their duty. Make them understand that it is not an arbitrary business of our own devising and imposing, but necessity is laid upon us, and if we look not to every member of the flock according to our power, they may perish in their own iniquities, but their blood will be required at our hands ; it is God, and not we, that is the contriver and imposer of the work ; therefore they blame God, more than us, in accusing it. Would they be so cruel as to wish a minister to cast away his own soul knowingly and wilfully, for fear of troubling them in hindering their damnation ? Especially acquaint them fully with the true nature of the ministerial office, and the Church's necessity of it ; how it consisteth in teaching and guiding all the flock ; shew them that they must come to the congregation as scholars to school, and must be content to give an account of their learning, and be instructed man by man. Let them know what a tendency this hath to their salvation, what a profitable improvement it will be of their time, how much vanity and evil it will prevent ; and when they once find that it is for their own good, they will the more easily yield to it.

3. When this is done, it will be necessary, according to our agreement, that we give one of the cate-

chisms to every family in the parish, poor and rich, that they might be so far without excuse ; for if you leave it to themselves, perhaps half of them will not get them. Whereas, when they have them put into their hands, the receiving is a kind of engagement to learn them ; and if they do but read the exhortation, it will perhaps convince them, and excite them to submit. In delivering them, the best way is, for the minister first to give notice in the congregation that they shall be brought to their houses, and then go himself from house to house and deliver them, and take the opportunity of persuading them to the work ; and as you go, take a catalogue of all the persons at years of discretion in the several families, that you may know whom you have to take care of and instruct, and whom to expect when it cometh to their turn. I have formerly, in the distributing of some books among them, desired every family to fetch them ; but I found more confusion and uncertainty in that way ; but in small parishes either way may serve. And for the charges of the books, if the minister be able, it will be well for him to bear it ; if not, the best affected of his people of the richer sort should bear it among them : or on a day of humiliation preparatory to the work, let the collection that is wont to be for the poor be employed to buy catechisms, and the people be desired to be more liberal, and what is wanting the well-affected to the work may make up. And for the order of proceeding in small parishes, the matter is not great ; but in greater it will be needful that we take them in order, family by family, beginning the execution a month or six weeks after the delivery of the books, that they may have time to learn ; and

thus taking them together in common, they will the more willingly come, and the backward will be the more ashamed to keep off.

4. Be sure that you deal gently with them, and take off all discouragements as effectually as you can. (1.) Tell them publicly, that if they have learned any other catechism already, you will not urge them to learn this, unless they desire it themselves; for the substance of all catechisms that are orthodox is the same; only our reasons for offering them this was its brevity and fulness, that we might give them as much as we could in a few words, and so make their work more easy. If any of them would rather learn any other orthodox catechism, let them have their choice. (2.) As for the old people of weak memories, and not likely to live long in the world, who complain that they cannot remember the words, tell them that you do not expect that they should perplex their minds about it, but hear it often read over, and see that they understand it, and get the matter into their minds and hearts, and then they may be borne with, though they remember not the words. (3.) And let your dealing with those that you begin with be so gentle, convincing, and winning, that the report of it may be an encouragement to others to come.

5. If all this will not serve to bring any particular persons to submit, do not so cast them off, but go to them and expostulate the case with them; know what their reasons are, and convince them of the sinfulness and danger of their contempt of the help that is offered them. A soul is so precious, that we should not lose one for want of labour; but follow them while there

is any hope, and not give them up as desperate till there is no remedy. Before we give them over as dogs or swine, let us try the utmost, that we may have the experience of their obstinate contempt or renting us, to warrant our forsaking them. Charity beareth and waiteth long.

II. Having used these means to procure them to come in and submit to your teaching, the next thing to be considered is, how you should deal most effectually with them in the work. And again I must say, that I think it an easier matter by far to compose and preach a good sermon than to deal rightly with an ignorant man for his instruction in the necessary principles of religion. Much as this work is contemned by some, I doubt not but it will try the parts and spirits of ministers, and shew them the difference between one man and another, more fully than pulpit preaching will do. And here I shall, as fitting to my purpose, transcribe the words of a most learned, orthodox, and godly man, Bishop Usher, in his sermon before King James at Wansted, on Ephes. iv. 13: "Your majesty's care can never be sufficiently commended, in taking order that the chief heads of the catechism should in the ordinary ministry be diligently propounded and explained unto the people throughout the land; which I wish were as duly executed everywhere as it was piously by you intended. Great scholars possibly may think that it standeth not so well with their credit to stoop thus low, and to spend so much of their time in teaching these rudiments and first principles of the doctrine of Christ. But they should consider that the laying of the foundation skilfully, as it is the matter of greatest importance in the

whole building, so is it the very masterpiece of the wisest builder. 'According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation,' saith the great apostle. And let the most learned of us all try it whenever we please, we shall find that to lay this groundwork rightly, (that is, to apply ourselves to the capacity of the common auditory, and to make an ignorant man to understand these mysteries in some good measure,) will put us to the trial of our skill, and trouble us a great deal more than if we were to discuss a controversy, or handle a point of learning in the schools. Yet Christ did give as well His apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, as His ordinary pastors and teachers, to bring us all, both learned and unlearned, unto the unity of this faith and knowledge; and the neglecting of this is the frustrating of the whole work of the ministry. For let us preach never so many sermons to the people, our labour is but lost as long as the foundation is unlaidd, and the first principles untaught, upon which all other doctrine must be builded."

The directions which I think necessary to be observed in the managing of the work, for matter or manner, are these following:—

*Direct.* 1. When your neighbours come to you, one family, or more, begin with a brief preface, to demulce their minds, and take off this offence, unwillingness, or discouragement, to prepare them to entertain your following instructions:—"Neighbours and brethren, it may perhaps seem to some of you an unusual and troublesome business that I put upon you; but I hope you will not think it needless; for if I had thought so, I should have spared you and myself this labour."



But my conscience hath told me, yea, God hath told me in His Word, what it is to have the charge of men's souls, and how the blood of them that perish in their sins will be required at the hands of a minister that neglecteth them, that I dare not be guilty of it. Alas! all our business in this world is to get well to heaven; and God hath appointed us to be guides to His people, to help them safe thither. If this be well done, all is done; and if this be not done, we are for ever undone! The Lord knows how short a time you and I may be together; and therefore it concerns us to do what we can for our own and your salvation, before we leave you, or you leave the world. All other employments in the world are but toys and dreams in comparison of this! The labours of your calling are but to prop up the cottages of your flesh, while you are making ready for death and judgment, which God knows is near at hand. And I hope you will be glad of help in so needful a work, and not think it much that I put you to this trouble, when the trifles of the world cannot be got without greater trouble."

This, or something to this purpose, may tend to make them more willing to hear you, and receive instruction, and give you an account of their knowledge, or practice, which must be the work of the day.

*Direct. 2.* When you have spoken thus to them all, take then the persons one by one, and deal with them as far as you can in private, out of the hearing of the rest. For some cannot speak freely before others, and some cannot endure to be questioned before others, because they think it tendeth to their shame to have others hear their answers; and some persons that can make better answers themselves, will be ready when

they are gone to tattle of what they heard, and to despise those that speak not so well as they. You must therefore be very prudent to prevent all these inconveniences. But the main reason is, as I find by experience, people will better take plain, close dealing, about their sin, and misery, and duty, when you have them alone, than they will before others; and if you have not opportunity to set it home and deal freely with them, you will frustrate all. If, therefore, you have a convenient place, let the rest stay in one room, while you confer with each person by themselves in another; only for the necessary avoiding of scandal, we must speak to the women in the presence of some others; and if we do lose some advantage by it with regard to the success of our instructions, there is no remedy; better do so than by giving occasion to those who are seeking it, destroy all the work. Yet we may so contrive it, that though some others be in the room, yet what passages are less fit for others' observance may be spoken "submissâ voce," that others may be no hearers of it; and therefore they may be placed at the remotest part of the room; or at least let none be present but the members of the same family, that are more familiar, and not so likely to reproach one another. In your rousing examinations and reproofs, address yourselves chiefly to the most ignorant, secure, and vicious, that you may have the clearer ground for your *closest dealing*, and that the hearing of it may awaken the bystanders, to whom you seem not so directly to apply it. These small things deserve attention, because they are parts of a work that is not small; and small errors may hinder a great deal of good.

*Direct.* 3. Let the beginning of your work be, by

taking an account of what they have learnt of the catechism, receiving their answer to each question; and if they are able to recite but a little or none of it, try whether they can rehearse the Creed and the Decalogue.

*Direct.* 4. Then choose out some of the weightiest points, and try, by further questions, how they understand them. And therein be careful of these things following:—(1.) That you do not begin with less necessary points, but those which themselves may perceive do most nearly concern them. As, “What do you think becomes of men after death? Do you believe that you have any sin, or that you were born in sin? and what doth sin deserve? What remedy hath God provided for the saving of sinful, miserable souls? Hath any one suffered for our sins in our stead? or must we suffer for them ourselves? Who are they that God will pardon? Who shall be saved by the blood of Christ? What change must be made on all that shall be saved? and how is it made? Where is our chief happiness? What is it that our hearts must be most set upon?” and such like. (2.) Take heed of asking them nice, needless, - or doubtful and very difficult questions, though about matters of the greatest weight in themselves; especially be very cautious how you put them upon the definitions or descriptions. Some self-conceited men will be busy with questions which they cannot answer themselves, and as censorious and severe with the poor people that cannot answer them, as if life and death depended thereon. You will ask them perhaps, “What is God?” and how defective an answer must you make yourselves! You may tell what He is not, sooner than what He is. If you ask, “What is *repentance*, what is

*faith*, or what is *forgiveness of sin?*" how many ministers may you ask, before you have a right answer, or else they would not be so disagreed in the point? so if you ask them what *regeneration* is, what *sanctification* is. But you will, perhaps, say, "If men know not what God is, what repentance, faith, conversion, justification, and sanctification are, how can they be true Christians and be saved?" I answer, It is one thing to know exactly what they are, and another thing to know them in their nature and effects, though with a more general and indistinct knowledge; and it is one thing to *know*, and another thing to *tell* what this or that is. The very name as commonly used doth signify to them, and express from them, the thing without a definition; and they partly understand what that name signifieth, when they cannot tell it you in other words; as they know what it is to repent, to believe, to be forgiven. By custom of speech they know what these mean, and yet cannot define them, but perhaps put you off with the country answer: To repent, is to repent; and to be forgiven, is to be forgiven; or if they can say, It is to be pardoned, it is fair. Yet do I not absolutely dissuade you from the use of such questions; but do it cautiously, in case you suspect some gross ignorance in the point; especially about God himself. (3.) In such a case so contrive your question, that they may perceive what you mean, and that it be not a nice definition, but a necessary solution, that you expect. Look not after words but things, and there leave them to a bare yea or nay, or the mere election of one of the two descriptions which you yourself shall propound. As "What is God? is He made of flesh and blood as we are, or is He an invisible Spirit? had He any

beginning? can He die? What is faith? is it a believing all the Word of God? What is it to believe in Christ? is it all one as to become a true Christian; or to believe that Christ is the Saviour of the world, and to accept Him for your Saviour to pardon, teach, govern, and glorify you? What is repentance? is it only to be sorry for sin, or is it the change of the mind from sin to God, or both?" (4.) And as you must do thus when you come to hard points, as definitions, or the like; so in all points where you perceive that they understand not the meaning and stress of your question, you must first draw out their answer into your question, and demand but his yea or nay; yea, if it be never so easy a point that you are upon, you must do thus at last, in case by the first question you have had an unsatisfactory answer. *E.g.*, I have often asked some very ignorant people, How do you think your many and great sins will be pardoned? And they tell me, by their repenting and mending their lives; and never mention Jesus Christ. I ask them further, But do you think that your amendment can make God any amends or satisfaction for the sin that is past? They will answer, "We hope so, or else we know not what will." One would think now that these men had no knowledge of Christ at all: and some I find have indeed none. Hence, I tell them the history of the gospel, and what Christ did and suffered, and why: they stand wondering at it as a strange thing that they had never heard before, and say they never heard this much till now, though they came to church every Lord's day. But others, I perceive, give such answers, because they understand not the scope of my question, but think that I take Christ's death as granted, and

only ask them what shall make God satisfaction, as their part under Christ. And when I asked them whether their deeds can merit anything of God, they say no, but they hope God will accept them. And if I ask, Can you be saved without the death of Christ? they say, 'No.' And if I ask, What hath He done or suffered for you? they will say, "He shed His blood for us;" and will profess that they place their confidence in that for salvation. Many men have that in their minds which is not ripe for utterance, and through want of education and practice, they are strangers to the expressions of those things which they have some conceptions of: and, by the way you may here see how needful it is to deal very tenderly with the common people for matter of knowledge and defect of expression, if they are teachable, and willing to use means, and to live obediently; for many even aged, godly persons, cannot speak their minds in any tolerable expressions; no, nor can they learn when expressions are put into their mouths. Some of the most pious, experienced, and approved Christians that I know, complain exceedingly to me with tears, that they cannot learn the words of the catechism, and when I consider their advantages, that they have lived under the most excellent helps, in constant duty, and in the best company, for forty, fifty, or sixty years together, it teacheth me what to expect from poor, ignorant people, that never had such advantages, and not to reject them so hastily as some hot, and too high professors would have us do. (5.) This also must be observed, that if you find them at a loss, and perceive them troubled that they cannot answer, step in yourself and take the burden off them, answering the question yourself; and then do it

thoroughly and plainly, and make a full explication of the whole business to them, that by your teaching they may be brought to understand it before you leave them. And herein it is commonly necessary that you fetch up the matter "ab origine," and take it on in order till you come to the point in question. (6.) Usually, with the grossly ignorant, it is necessary that you run over all the sum of our religion to them in the most familiar way that you can possibly devise. But this must be the next direction.

*Direct. 5.* When you have done what you see cause in the trial of their knowledge, proceed next to instruct them yourselves, according to their several capacities. If it be a professor that understandeth the fundamentals, fall on what you perceive he most needeth, either explaining further some of the doctrines of the gospel, or laying the grounds of some duty which he may doubt of, or shewing the necessity of what he neglecteth, or meeting with his sins or mistakes, as may be most convincing and edifying to him. If it be one that is grossly ignorant, give him a plain recital of the sum of the Christian religion in a few words; for though it be in the catechism already, yet a more familiar way may better help them to understand it. As thus: "You must know, that from everlasting there was one only God that had no beginning, and can have no end, who is not a body as we are, but a most pure, spiritual being, that knoweth all things, and can do all things, and hath all goodness and blessedness in Himself. This God is but one, but yet three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in an incomprehensible manner, above our reach; yet we have somewhat in ourselves and

other creatures that may give us some resemblance of it. As in a man, his power, his understanding, and will, are but one soul, and yet they are not one faculty, but differ one from another; or as in the sun, the being or power, and the heat, and the light, are not all one, and yet there is but one sun : so, in a more incomprehensible manner, it is in God. And you must know that this one God did make all the world by His word. The heavens He made to be the place of His glory, and made a world of holy angels to serve Him in His glory; but some of these did by pride or other sin fall from God, and are become devils that shall be miserable in torments for ever. When He had made the rest of this lower world, He made man, as His noblest creature here, even one man and one woman, Adam and Eve; and He made them perfect, without any sin or fault, and put them into the garden of Eden, and forbid them to eat but of one tree in the garden, and told them that if they did, they should die. But the devil, that had first fallen himself, did tempt them to sin, and they yielded to his temptation; and by wilfully sinning, they fell under the curse of God's law, and fell short of the glory of God. But God of His infinite wisdom and mercy did send His own Son Jesus Christ to be their Redeemer, who, as He was promised in the beginning, so in the fulness of time, sixteen hundred and fifty-five years ago, was made man, and was born of a virgin by the power of the Holy Ghost, and lived on earth among the Jews about thirty-three years; preached the gospel Himself, and wrought many miracles to prove His doctrine, and bring men to believe in Him; healing the lame, the blind, the sick, and raising the dead by the word



of His mouth, by His Divine power ; and at the end, by the malice of the Jews, and His own consent, He was offered upon the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, to bear that curse that we should have borne. And when He was buried, He rose again the third day, and lived on earth forty days after ; and before His departure, He sent His apostles and other ministers to preach the gospel of salvation to the world, and to call home lost sinners by repentance, and to assure them in His name, that if they will but believe in Him, and take Him for their Saviour, and unfeignedly lament their former sins, and turn from them to God, and will take everlasting glory for their portion, and be content to resign their carnal interests and desires, He will pardon freely all that is past, and be merciful to them for the time to come, and will lead them up into spiritual communion with God, and bring them to His glory when this life is ended. But for them that make light of their sins and of His mercy, and will not forsake the pleasures of this world for the hopes of another, they shall be condemned to everlasting punishment. This gospel Christ hath appointed His ministers to preach to all the world ; and when He had given this in charge to His apostles, He ascended up into heaven before their faces, where He is now in glory with God the Father, in our nature, ruling all ; and at the end of this world, He will come again in that nature, and will call the dead to life again, and set them all before Him to be judged ; and all that truly repented and believed in Him, and were renewed by His Spirit, and renounced this world for the hopes of a better, shall be judged to live with God in glory, and shall be like to His angels, and praise Him for ever ; and the

rest that repented not, and believed not in Him, but lived to the flesh and the world, shall be condemned to everlasting misery. So that you may see by this, that man's happiness is not in this world, but in the next, and that all men have lost their hopes of that happiness by sin, and that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God and the Redeemer of the world, hath recovered it for us by the price of His blood, and hath made a new covenant with us, assuring us of life and salvation, if we repent and believe in Him for that life, and mortify our fleshly desires. To this end He sendeth forth His Holy 'Spirit to convert all that shall be saved, and to turn their hearts from this world to God. If ever you mean to be saved, therefore, it must be thus with you : your former sins must be the grief of your soul, and you must fly to a crucified Christ as your only refuge from the deserved curse, and the Spirit of Christ must convert you, and dwell in you, and make you wholly a new creature, or there is no salvation." Some such short, plain rehearsal of the principles of religion, in the most familiar manner that you can devise, with a brief touch of application in the end, will be necessary when you deal with the grossly ignorant ; and if you perceive they understand you not, go over it again till they do, and, if possible, fix it in their memories.

*Direct. 6.* Whether they be grossly ignorant or not, if you suspect them to be ungodly, in the next place make a prudent inquiry into their state ; and the best and least offensive way will be by a few words to prepare their minds, by convincing them of the necessity of it ; as thus, or to this purpose :—" You see in the seventh article proved in Scripture, that the Holy

Ghost doth by the Word enlighten men's minds, and soften and open their hearts, and turn them from the power of Satan to God by faith in Christ, and so makes them a sanctified, peculiar people to God; and that none but these are made partakers of Christ and life. Now, though I have no desire needlessly to pry into any man's state, yet because it is the office of ministers to give advice to people in the matters of salvation, and because it is so dangerous to be mistaken, where life or death everlasting doth lie upon it, I would entreat you to deal truly, and tell me whether you ever found this great change upon your own heart or not. Did you ever find the Spirit of God by the Word, come in upon your understanding with a new and heavenly life, as hath made you a new creature? The Lord that seeth your heart doth know whether it be so or not; therefore I pray you, see that you speak the truth!" If he tell you, he hopes he is converted—all are sinners—but he is sorry for his sins, or the like; then tell him more particularly in a few words what true conversion is, and so renew and enforce the inquiry, thus:—"Because your salvation or damnation lieth upon it, I would fain help you a little in this, that you may not be mistaken in a business of such consequence, but may find out the truth before it be too late; for as God will judge us impartially, so we have His Word before us, by which we may know now how God will judge us then; for this Word tells us most certainly who they be that shall go to heaven, and who to hell. Now, the Scripture tells us that the state of an unconverted man is this: he seeth no great matter of felicity in the love and communion of God in the life to come, which may draw his heart thither

from this present world ; but he liveth to himself, and the main bent of his life is, that it may go well with his body here. The world and flesh are highest in his esteem, and nearest to his heart, and God and glory stand below them and further off, and all their service of God is but a giving Him that which the world and flesh can spare. This is the true case of every unconverted man ; and all that are in this case, are in a state of misery. But he that is truly converted, hath had a light shining into his soul from God, which hath shewed him the greatness of his sin and misery, and made it a heavy load upon his soul ; and hath shewed him what Christ is, and hath done for sinners, and made him admire the riches of God's grace in Him ! Oh, what glad news is it to him, that yet there is hope for such lost sinners as he—that so many and so great sins may be pardoned—and that this is offered to all that will accept it ! How gladly doth he entertain this message and offer : and for the time to come he resigneth himself and all that he hath to Christ, to be wholly His, and disposed of by Him, in order to the everlasting glory which He hath promised. He hath now such a sight of the blessed state of the saints in glory, that he despiseth all this world as dross and dung in comparison of it, and there he layeth up his happiness and his hopes, and takes all the matters of this life but as so many helps or hindrances in the way to that ; so that the very bent and main care and business of his life is to be happy in the life to come. This is the case of all that are truly converted, and shall be saved. Is this your case or not ? Have you found such a change or work as this upon your soul ?” If he say, he hopes he hath, descend to some particu-

lars distinctly—*e. g.*, “I pray you, then, answer these two or three questions: (1.) Can you truly say, that all the known sins of your life past are the grief of your heart, that you have felt everlasting misery is due to you for them, and that in the sense of this heavy burden you have felt yourself a lost man, and have gladly entertained the news of a Saviour, and cast your soul upon Christ alone for pardon by His blood? (2.) Can you truly say, that your heart is so far turned from your former sins, that you hate the sins that formerly you loved, and love that holy life that you had no mind to before, and that you do not now live in the wilful practice of any known sin? Is there no sin which you are not heartily willing to leave, whatever it cost you, and no duty which you are not willing to perform? (3.) Can you truly say, that you have so far taken the everlasting enjoyment of God for your happiness, that it hath the most of your heart, of your love, desire, and care; and that you are resolved by the strength of grace to let go all that you have in the world rather than hazard it; and that it is your daily and principal business to seek it? Can you truly say that, though you have your failings, yet your main care and bent of your whole life is to please God and enjoy Him for ever; and that your worldly business is but as a traveller seeking provision in his journey, and heaven is your home?” If he say yea to the first and third, tell him how great a thing it is for a man’s heart to abhor his sin, and to lay up his happiness unfeignedly in another world, and to live in this world for one that is out of sight; and therefore desire him to see that it be so indeed. If he say yea to the second question, then turn to the ninth, tenth,

eleventh, or twelfth articles of the catechism, and read over some of those duties which you most suspect him to omit ; and ask him, whether he performs such or such a duty, especially family and private prayer, and the holy spending of all the Lord's day ; because these are of so great moment (of which anon).

*Direct.* 7. When you have either by former discovery of gross ignorance, or by these latter inquiries into his spiritual state, discerned an apparent probability that the person is yet in an unconverted state ; your next business is to endeavour with all your skill and power to bring his heart to the sense of his condition :—" Truly, neighbour, I have no desire, the Lord knows, to make your condition worse than it is, nor to put any causeless fear or trouble in your mind : but I suppose you would take me for a flattering enemy, and not a faithful friend, if I should daub you, and not tell you the truth. If you sought to a physician in your sickness, you would have him tell you the truth, though it were the worst : much more here ; for, there the knowledge of your disease may by fears increase it, but here you must know it, or else you can never be recovered from it. I much fear that you are yet a stranger to the new life of all them that Christ will save ; for if you were a Christian indeed, and truly converted, your very heart would have been set on God and the life to come, you would have admired the riches of grace in Christ, you would have made it your business to prepare for eternity, and you durst not, you would not live in any wilful sin, nor in the neglect of known duties. Alas ! what have you done ? how have you spent your time till now ? Did you not know that you had a soul to save or lose, and that you

must live in heaven or hell for ever, and that you had your life and time in this world for that purpose, to prepare for another? Alas! what have you been doing all this while that you are so ignorant, and so unprepared for death if it should now find you? If you had but as much minded heaven as earth, you would have known more of it, and done more for it, and inquired more diligently after it than you have! You can learn how to do your business in the world, and why could you not have learned more of the will of God? You have neighbours that could learn more, that have had as much to do in the world as you, and as little time. Do you think that heaven is not worth your labour, or that it can be had without care and pains; when you cannot have the trifles of the world without seeking after them, and when God hath bid you first seek His kingdom and the righteousness thereof? Alas, neighbour, what if you had died before this hour in an unconverted state? what had become of you, and where had you now been? Why, you did not know all this while that you should live a day to an end! Oh that ever you would be so cruel to yourselves as to venture your everlasting state so desperately as you have done! What did you think of? Did you not all this while know that you must shortly die, and be judged as you were then found? Had you any greater work to do, or any greater business to mind, than your salvation? Do you think that all that you can get in this world will comfort you in a dying hour, or purchase your salvation, or ease the pains of hell-fire?" Set these things home with a more earnest voice than the former part of your discourse; for if you get not to the heart, you do little or

nothing, and that which affecteth not is soon forgotten.

*Direct.* 8. Next this, conclude the whole with a practical exhortation, which must contain two parts :—

(1.) The duty of the heart in order to a closure with Christ, and that which is contained in that closure.

(2.) The use of external means for the time to come, and the avoiding of former sins. “ Neighbour, I am heartily sorry to find you in so sad a case, but I should be more sorry to leave you in it ; and therefore let me entreat you, for the Lord’s sake, and for your own sake, to regard what I shall say to you, for the time to come. It is the Lord’s great mercy that He did not cut you off in your unconverted state, that you have yet life and time, and that there is a sufficient remedy provided for your soul in the blood of Christ ; and He is yet offered with pardon and life to you as well as others. God hath not left sinful man to utter desperation, for want of a ransom by a Redeemer, as He hath done the devils ; nor hath He made any exception in the offer or promise of pardon and life against you any more than against any others. If you had yet but a bleeding heart for sin, and would come to Christ believingly for recovery, and resign yourself to Him as your Saviour and Lord, the Lord would have mercy on you, pardon your sins, and save your soul ; and I must tell you, that as it must be the great work of God’s grace to give you such a heart, so if ever He pardon and save you, He will make this change upon you that I have before mentioned. He will make you feel your sin as the heaviest burden in the world, as that which is most odious in itself, and hath laid you open to the curse of God ; He will make



you see that you are a lost man, and that there is no way but one for you, even everlasting damnation, unless you are pardoned by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit; He will make you see the need you have of Christ, and how much you are beholden to Him for the shedding of His blood, and how all your hope and life is in Him; He will make you see the vanity of this world and all that it can afford you, and that all your happiness is with God, in that everlasting life, where, with saints and angels, you may behold His glory, and live in His presence, and praise Him for ever, when those that reject Him shall be tormented with the devils; and because it is only Christ the Redeemer that can bring you to that glory, and deliver you from that torment, He will make you look to Him as your hope and life, and cast your burdened soul upon Him; and give up yourself to be saved, and taught, and ruled by Him. And He will possess you with the Spirit of holiness, that your heart shall be set upon God and heaven as your treasure; and the care of your mind, and the business of your life, shall be to obtain it; and you shall despise this world, deny your fleshly interests and desires, and cast away the sin with abhorrence which you delighted in; and count no pains too great, no suffering too dear, for the obtaining of that everlasting life with God. Let me tell you, that till this work be done, you are a miserable man; and if you die before it is done, you are lost for ever. Now you have hope and help before you, but then there will be none. Let me therefore entreat these two or three things of you, and do not deny them me, as you love your soul:—[1.] That you will not rest in this condi-

tion: be not quiet in your mind till you find a true conversion wrought. Think when you rise in the morning, Oh, what if this day should be my last, and death should find me in an unrenewed state! Think when you are about your labour, Oh, how much greater a work have I yet to do, to get my soul reconciled to God and possessed of His Spirit! Think when you are eating, or drinking, or looking on anything that you possess in the world, What good will all this do me if I live and die an enemy to God, a stranger to Christ and His Spirit, and so perish for ever? Let these thoughts be day and night upon your mind, till your soul be changed. [2.] Think seriously what a vain thing this world is, and how shortly it will leave you to a cold grave, and everlasting misery, if you have not a better treasure than this. Think what it is to live in the presence of God, to reign with Christ, and to be like the angels; and that this is the life that Christ hath procured you, and is preparing for you, and freely offereth you if you will accept it in and with Himself upon His easy and reasonable terms. Think whether it be not madness to slight such endless glory, and to prefer these fleshly dreams and earthly shadows before it. Use yourself to such considerations as these, when you are alone, and let them dwell upon your mind. [3.] Presently, without any more delay, accept of felicity and this Saviour: close with the Lord Jesus that offereth you this eternal life. Joyfully and thankfully accept His offer, as the only way to make you happy; and then you may believe that all your sins shall be done away by Him. [4.] Resolve presently against your former sins; find out what hath defiled your heart and life, and cast it away by repentance,

as you would poison out of your stomach, and abhor the thought of taking it in again. [5.] Set yourselves close to the use of God's means till this change be wrought, and then continue His means till you are confirmed, and at last perfected. Because you cannot of yourselves make this change upon your heart and life, betake yourself daily to God for it by prayer, and beg earnestly as for your life that He will pardon all your former sins, and change your heart, shew you the riches of His grace in Christ, and the glory of His kingdom, and draw up your heart to Himself. Follow God day and night with these requests. Fly from temptations and occasions of sin, and forsake your former evil company, and betake yourselves into the company of those that fear God, and will help you in the way to heaven. Especially spend the Lord's day in holy exercises, both public and private, and lose not one quarter of an hour of any of your time, but especially of that most precious time which God hath given you purposely that you may set your mind upon Him, be instructed by Him, and to prepare yourself for your latter end. What say you? Will you do this presently, at least so much of it as you can? Will you promise me to think of these things that I before mentioned, and to pray daily for a change of heart till you have obtained it, and to change your company and courses, and fall upon the use of God's means in reading and hearing the Scriptures, and meditating on them, especially on the Lord's day?" And here be sure, if you can, to get their promise, and engage them to amendment, especially to use means, and change their company, and forsake actual sinning, because these are more in their reach, and in this way they

may wait for the accomplishing of that change that is not yet wrought. And to do this solemnly, remembering them of the presence of God that heareth their promises, and will expect the performance.

*Direct. 9.* Before you dismiss them, add a few words to this effect: "I pray you take it not ill that I have put you to this trouble, or dealt thus freely with you. It is as little pleasure to me as to you. If I did not know these things to be true and necessary, I would have spared this labour to myself and you. But I know that we shall be here but a little while—we are almost at the world to come already—and therefore it is time for us all to look about us, and see that we be ready when God shall call us." Because it is but seldom that we ourselves shall have opportunity to speak with the same persons, set them in a way for the perfecting of what is begun. Engage the governor of each family to call all his family to account every Lord's day evening, before they go to bed, what they can rehearse of the catechism, and so to continue till they have all learned it perfectly; and when they have done so, yet still to continue to hear them recite it, that they may not forget it; for, even to the most judicious it will be an excellent help to have still in memory a sum of the Christian doctrine, for matter, method, and words. As for the rulers of families themselves, or those that are under such rulers as will not help them, if they have learned some small part of the catechism only, engage them either to come again when they have learned the rest, or else to go to some experienced neighbour, and recite it to them, and take their assistance when they cannot have yours.

*Direct. 10.* Have all the names of your parishioners

by you in a book; and when they come and recite the catechism, note in your book who come, and who do not, and who are so ignorant as to be utterly unfit for the Lord's Supper and other holy communion, and who not. And as you perceive the necessities of each, so deal with them for the future. But for those that are utterly obstinate, and will not come to you, nor be instructed by you, remember the last article of our Agreement, "to deal with them as the obstinate despisers of instruction should be dealt with, in regard of the communion, and the application of sealing and confirming ordinances;" which is to avoid them, and not hold holy or familiar communion with them in the Lord's Supper or other ordinances; and though some reverend brethren are for admitting their children to baptism, and offended with me for contradicting it, yet so cannot I be, nor shall dare to do it upon any pretences of their ancestors' faith, or of a dogmatical faith of the rebellious parents, supposing them both to be such as in that article we have mentioned. To these particulars I add this general:—

*Direct.* 11. Through the whole course of your conference with them, see that the manner as well as the matter be suited to the end. Concerning the manner, observe these particulars:—(1.) Speak differently, according to the difference of the persons that you have to deal with. To the dull and obstinate you must be more earnest and sharp; to the tender and timorous that are already humbled, you must rather insist on direction and confirmation; to the young you must lay greater shame on sensual voluptuousness, and shew them the nature and necessity of mortification; to the aged you must do more to disgrace this present

world, and make them apprehensive of the nearness of their change, and the aggravations of their sin, if they should live and die in ignorance or impenitence; to inferiors and the younger sort you must be more free; to superiors and elders more respectful; to the rich this world must be more disgraced, and the nature and necessity of self-denial opened, and the deceitful consequence of preferring the present prosperity to future happiness, as also the necessity of improving their talents in well-doing; to the poor shew the riches of glory which are propounded to them in the gospel, and how well present things may be spared, where the everlasting may be got. Also those sins must be most insisted on to which their age or sex, or calling and employment in the world, doth most incline them to: as in females, loquacity, evil speeches, passion, malice, pride, &c. Of all which, and abundance more differences, calling to us for different carriage, see Gregor. Mag. de Officio Pastor. (2.) Be as condescending, familiar, and plain as is possible, with those that are of a weaker capacity. (3.) Give them Scripture proof for all you say, that they may see it is not you only; but God, by you, that speaketh to them. (4.) Be as serious in all, but especially in the applicatory part, as you can. I scarcely fear anything more than lest some ministers should slubber over the work, and do it superficially and without life, and destroy this as they do all other duties, by turning it into mere formality; putting a few cold questions to them, and giving them two or three cold words of advice, without any life and feeling in themselves, and therefore not likely to produce any in the hearers. But surely he that

valueth souls, and knoweth what an opportunity is before him, will do accordingly. (5.) To this end I should think it very necessary that we, both before and in the work, take special pains with our own hearts; especially to excite and strengthen our belief of the truth of the gospel, and the invisible glory and misery that is to come. I am confident this work will exceedingly try the strength of our faith; for he that is superficially a Christian, and not sound in the faith, will likely feel his zeal quite fail him, especially when the duty is grown common, for want of a proper sense of the things which he is to treat of to keep it alive. An affected fervency and hypocritical stage action will not hold out in such duties long. The pulpit will have more of them than a conference with poor ignorant souls; for the pulpit is the hypocritical minister's stage. There, and in the press, and in public acts, where there is room for ostentation, you are sure to have his best, and almost all. It is other kind of men that must effectually do the work now on hand. (6.) It is therefore very meet that we prepare ourselves to it by private prayer; and if time would permit, if we did begin and end with a short prayer with our people, it were best. (7.) Carry on all, even the most earnest passages, in clear demonstrations of love to their souls, and make them feel through the whole that you aim at nothing but their salvation; and avoid all harsh, discouraging passages, throughout. (8.) If you have not time to deal so fully with each one particularly as is here directed, then omit not the most necessary parts; take several of them together that are friends, and will not seek to divulge

each other's weaknesses, and speak to them in common as much as concerneth all ; and only the examinations of their knowledge and state, and convictions of misery and special directions, must be used to the individuals alone ; but take heed of slubbering it over, or being too brief, without real necessity.

*Direct.* 12. Lastly, If God enable you, extend your charity to the poorest sort, before they part from you : give them somewhat towards their relief, and from the time that is thus taken from their labours, especially for encouragement of them that do best, promise as much when they have learned the catechism. I know you cannot give what you have not ; but I speak to them that can.—So much shall serve for directions to the younger ministers in their dealing with the more ignorant or carnal sort of persons.

As for them that are under fears and troubles of mind, who yet give us hopes of the work of saving grace on their souls, though it deserve a full discourse to direct us in dealing with them, yet I shall not meddle with it now, because I intended this discourse for another end, and because I have done so much as I think necessary already in my "Directions for Peace of Conscience."



## CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER sort there are that we may have occasion of conference with, though they will scarcely stoop to be catechised, and that is, opinionative questionists, that being tainted with pride and self-conceitedness, are readier to teach than to be taught, and to vent their own conceits, and quarrel with you as being ignorant or erroneous yourselves, than to receive instruction; and if they are tainted with any notable error or schismatical dispositions, they will seek to waste time in vain janglings, and to dispute rather than to learn. I am not now directing you what to do with those men at other times (of that I shall give a touch anon); but only in case they come to you at this time which is appointed for catechising and edifying instruction: nor is it my thought to presume to direct any but the weaker sort of ministers in this, any more than in the former.

It is likely you will have some come to you amongst the rest, that when they should give an account of their faith, will fall into a teaching and contentious discourse. One will tell you that you have no true Church, because you have such bad members; another will ask you by what authority you baptize infants; another will ask you how you can be a true minister if you had your ordination from prelates; and another will tell you that you are no true minister because you had not your ordination from prelates; another will

ask you what scripture you have for praying or singing psalms in a mixed assembly ; and another will quarrel with you because you administer not the Lord's Supper to them in the gesture and manner as they desire, and were wont to receive it, or because you exercise any discipline among them. If any such person should come to you, and thus seek to divert your better discourse, I should think it best to take this course with them :—

1. Let them know that this meeting is appointed for instructing the people in the principles of religion, and you think it very unmeet to pervert it from that use ; it being a sin to do God's work disorderly, or to be doing a lesser work when you should be doing a greater : and therefore, as you durst not turn God's public worship on the Lord's day into vain or contentious disputing, which discompose men's minds, and spoil a greater work ; so neither do you think it lawful to abuse those times to lower uses which are appointed for higher.

2. Yet let him know that you do not this to avoid any trial of the truth ; and therefore that you will at any other fit season, endeavour to give him full satisfaction ; or you will as willingly receive instruction from him, if he be able, and have the truth, as you desire he should receive instruction from you : and if it must be so, you will yield to his desire before you part, if there be but time when you have despatched the greater work : but upon condition only, that he will submit to the greater first.

3. Then desire him first to give you some account of the principles in the catechism : and if he deny it, convince him before all of the iniquity of his course :—

(1.) In that it is the first principles that salvation, most dependeth on, and therefore being of greatest excellency and necessity, are first to be taken into consideration. (2.) In that it is the appointed business of this day. (3.) It is orderly to begin with the fundamentals, because they bear up the rest, which suppose them, flow from them, and cannot be understood without them. (4.) It is the note of a proud, vain-glorious hypocrite, to make a flourish about lesser things, and yet either to be ignorant of the greater, or to scorn to give that account of his knowledge, which the people, whom he despiseth, refuse not to give.

If he yield to you, ask him only such questions as are of great weight, and yet strain him up a little higher than you do the common people; and especially put him most upon defining, or distinguishing, or expounding some terms or sentences of Scripture. As such questions as these may be put to him, which call for definitions, wherein it is ten to one but you will find him ignorant: "What is God? What is Jesus Christ? What is the Holy Ghost? What is person in the Trinity? How many natures hath Christ? Was Christ a creature before His incarnation or the creation? Is He called the firstborn of all creatures as God, or as man? Is He called the image of the invisible God, and the express image of the Father's person or subsistence, as a creature, or as God? Was Adam bound to believe in Christ? Was one or two covenants made with Adam before his fall? Did the first covenant of nature make any promise of everlasting celestial glory? Did it threaten hell-fire or temporal death? Did it threaten eternal torment to the soul only, or to the body also? Should there have

been any resurrection of the body, if Christ had not come to procure it? Should Christ have come, or have been our head, or have brought us to glory, if man had not fallen? What is the first covenant? what its conditions? What the second covenant, and its conditions? What was the difference between the covenant with Adam, and that by Moses? Was it a covenant of works or of grace, that was made by Moses? What were the conditions of salvation before Christ's incarnation? What is forgiveness of sin? What is justification? How are we said to be justified by faith? how by works? What is faith? What repentance? What sanctification, vocation, regeneration? Is the covenant of grace made with the elect only, or with all; or with whom? What is free-will? Is there any conversion without the Word? What is the true nature of special grace? and what is the proper difference of a regenerate man from all others? What is the Catholic Church? How will you know the true Church? How know you the Scripture to be the Word of God? What is Christ's priestly, prophetic, kingly office? Be they three offices, or but one? and be they all?"—with abundance of the like.

If it be sacrament controversies which he raiseth, tell him it is necessary that you be first agreed what baptism and the Lord's Supper are, before you dispute who should be baptized; and it is twenty to one, he is not able truly to tell you what the sacraments themselves are. A true definition of baptism or the Lord's Supper is not so commonly given as is pretended.

4. If he discover his ignorance in the cases propounded, endeavour to humble him in the sense of his

pride and presumption; and let him know what it is, and what it signifieth to go about with a contentious, proud behaviour, while he is indeed so ignorant in things of greater moment.

5. See that you are able to give him better information yourselves in the points wherein you find him ignorant.

6. But especially take care that you discern the spirit of the man; and if he be a settled, perverse schismatic or heretic, so that you see him peremptory, and quite transported with pride, and have no great hopes of his recovery, then do all this that I have before said openly before all that are present, that he may be humbled or shamed, and the rest confirmed. But if you find him godly and temperate, and that there is any hope of his reduction, then see that you do all this privately, between him and you only; let not fall any bitter words that tend to his disparagement. And thus I advise, both because we must be as tender of the reputation of all good men, as fidelity to them and to the truth will permit. We must bear one another's burdens, and not increase them; and we must restore those with a spirit of meekness that fall through infirmity, remembering that we ourselves also may be tempted, and also because there is small hope that you should ever do them good, if once you exasperate them, and disaffect them towards you.

7. See that to such erring persons as you have any hopes of, you carry yourselves with as much tenderness and love as will consist with your duty to the Church of God: for most of them, when they are once tainted this way, are so selfish and highminded, that

they are much more impatient of reproof than many of the profaner sort of people.

This way did Musculus take with the Anabaptists, visiting them in person, and relieving them, even while they railed at him as antichristian; and so continued without disputing with them, till they were convinced that he loved them, and then they sought to him for advice themselves, and many of them were reclaimed by him.

8. Either in the conclusion of your meeting, or at an appointed time, when you come to debate their controversy with them, tell them, "That seeing they think you unable to teach them, and think themselves able to teach you, it is your desire to learn. You suppose disputing, as tending usually to exasperate men's minds, rather than to satisfy them, is to be used as the last remedy; therefore you are here ready, if they are able to teach you, to learn of them, and desire them to speak their minds." If they refuse, tell them you think it the humblest and most Christian edifying way for him that hath most knowledge to teach, and the other to learn; and therefore your purpose is to be either a learner or a teacher, and not be a disputant till they make it to be necessary. When they have declared their minds to you in a teaching way, if it be nothing but the common pleas of the seduced, as it is likely it will not, tell them, "That this is no new thing to you; it is not the first time that you have heard it or considered of it; and if you had found a Divine evidence in it, you had received it long ago: you are truly willing to receive all truth, but you have received that which is contrary to this doctrine with far better evidence than they bring for it,"

&c. If they desire to hear what your evidence is, tell them, if they will hear as learners, you shall communicate your evidence in the meetest way you can; which if they promise to do, let them know that this promise obligeth them to impartiality, and an humble, free entertainment of the truth, and that they do not turn back in rash carping and contention, but take what shall be delivered into serious consideration: which if they promise, if you are so far versed in the point in hand as to manage it well "ex tempore," or the person be temperate and fit for such debates, then come in with your evidence in a way of discourse, first shewing your reasons against the grossest imperfections of his own discourse, and then giving him your grounds from Scripture; not many, but rather a few of the clearest and best approved. When you have done, (or without verbal teaching, if you find him unfit to learn that way,) give him some book that most effectually defendeth the questioned truth, and tell him, "That it is a vain thing to say that over so often which is so fully said already, and a man may better consider of what he hath before his eyes, than of that which slideth through his ears, and is mistaken or forgotten: and therefore you desire him, as an humble learner, to peruse that book with mature consideration, because there are the same things that you would say to him; and desire him to bring you in a sober and solid answer to the chief strength of it, if after perusal he judge it to be unsound;" and if possible, fasten some one of the most striking evidences on him before you leave him. If he refuse to read the book, endeavour to convince him of his unfaithfulness to the truth and his own soul. Doth he think that God's truth is

not worth his study? or will he venture his soul, as the ungodly do, and the Church's peace with it, and all to save himself so small a labour? Is it not just with God to give him over to delusion that will not be at a little pains to be informed, nor afford the truth an equal hearing?

9. But above all, before you part, yea, or before you debate the controversy, see that you do sum up the precedent truths wherein you are both agreed. (1.) Know whether he agree to all that is in the catechism, which you teach the people. (2.) Whether he suppose that you may attain salvation, if you be true to so much as you are agreed in. (3.) Whether they that are so far agreed as you are, should not live in love and peace, as children of the same God, and members of the same Christ, and heirs of the same kingdom. (4.) Whether you are not bound, notwithstanding your small differences, to be helpers in the main work of the gospel for the conversion and saving of souls. (5.) Whether they are not bound to manage the private differences so as they may not hinder the main work, and therefore to let the lesser stoop to the greater. (6.) Whether they ought not to hold communion in public worship and church-relation with those that are so far agreed, and walk in the fear of God. (7.) And whether it be not schism to separate from them, for the sake of that small disagreement, themselves being not necessitated by communion to any actual sin.

I speak all this only of the tolerable differences that are among men fearing God; and in that case, if the person be sober and understanding, he must needs yield to the affirmative of these questions: which if he do, or to any of them, let him subscribe it, or openly



aver it; and then let all the bystanders be made apprehensive that none of the great matters that you deal with them about, are questioned, but all yielded unquestionable; and the affixed scripture leaves them so; therefore there is no cause for them to receive the least discouragement.

I confess it is past doubt, that differing brethren may well join in recommending the truth that they are agreed in to the ignorant people. Bishop Usher told King James, in his sermon at Wansted, on the Church's unity, that he made this motion even to the Papist priests themselves, that they might join in teaching the people of that barbarous nation the common principles that both were agreed in: a motion too Christian for sullen, factious zeal to entertain. I will repeat his own words, p. 33:—"The danger, then, of this ignorance being, by the confession of the most judicious divines of both sides, acknowledged to be so great; the woful estate of the poor country wherein I live is much to be lamented, where the people generally are suffered to perish for want of knowledge, (he meant the Papists,) the vulgar superstitions of Popery not doing them half that hurt that the ignorance of those common principles of the faith doth, which all true Christians are bound to learn. The consideration whereof hath sometimes drawn me to treat with those of the opposite party to move them, that however in other things we differ one from another, yet we should join together in teaching those main points the knowledge whereof was so necessary to salvation, and of the truth whereof there was no controversy betwixt us. But what, for the jealousies which these distractions in matters of religion have bred among us, and what, for

other respects, the motion took small effect; and so betwixt us both, the poor people are kept still in miserable ignorance, neither knowing the grounds of the one religion nor of the other." So far this learned Christian bishop.

And what wonder if Popish priests refuse this motion, when now among us it is so rare a matter to find any in England, though he differ only in the point of infant baptism, that will calmly and without fraudulent designs of secretly promoting his own opinions by it, entertain and prosecute such a motion from the common good; as if they had rather that Christianity were thrust out of the world, or kept under, than infants should be admitted into the Church! Well, let any party or person pretend what they will of zeal or holiness, I will ever take the "dividatur" for an ill sign: the true mother abhors the division of the child; and the true Christian doth prefer the common interest of Christianity, before the interest of a faction, or an opinion, and would not have the whole building endangered, rather than one peg should not be driven in, as he would have it; he had rather a particular truth, if we suppose it a truth, should suffer, than the whole or the main.

Having given you this advice, what to do with this kind of men in your conference on the occasion now in question, I shall add a word or two of advice, how to carry yourself towards them at other times; for the preservation of the unity and peace of your congregations doth much depend on your right dealing with such as these. For, alas! for grief and shame, it is most commonly men that profess more than ordinary religiousness, that are the dividers of the Church.

1. I must premise, that the chief part of your work to preserve the Church from such, doth consist in the prevention of their fall: for when they are once thoroughly infected, be the error what it will, they are but seldom recovered; but if they be beaten out of the error which they first fell into, they go to another, and perhaps thence to another, but seldom return to the truth.

2. To which end, it is most desirable that the minister should be of parts above the people, so far as to be able to teach them, and awe them, and manifest their weaknesses to themselves, or to all. The truth is, for it cannot be hid, it is much long of the ministers, that our poor people are run into so many factions; and particularly, the weakness of too many is not the least cause. When a proud seducer shall have a nimble tongue, and a minister be dull and ignorant, so that such a one can baffle him, or play upon him in the ears of others, it brings him into contempt, and overthrows the weak; for they commonly judge him to have the best cause that hath the most confident, plausible, triumphant tongue. But when a minister is able to open their shame to all, it mightily tendeth to preserve the Church from their infection.

3. It is necessary also to this end, that you frequently and thoroughly possess your people with the nature, necessity, and daily use of the great unquestionable principles of religion, and of the great sin and danger of a perverse zeal about the lower points before the greater are well laid, and let them be made sensible how it is the principles, and not their smaller controversies, that life or death depend upon.

4. Make them sensible of the mischiefs of schism,

and the great and certain obligations that lie upon us all to maintain the Church's unity and peace.

5. When a fire is kindled, resist it in the beginning, and make not light of the smallest spark ; and therefore go presently to the infected person, and follow him by the means hereafter mentioned, till he be recovered.

6. Especially use a fit diversion. When a small controversy begins to endanger the Church, raise a greater yourself, which you have better advantage to manage, and which is not likely to make a division ; this is, let them know that there are far greater difficulties than theirs to be first resolved, such as some of the questions before mentioned, and so give them a catalogue of them, and set them at work upon them, that they may be matter of avocation from that sore, where the humours begin their conflux, and also that they may be humbled in the sense of their ignorance, and their proud self-conceits may be somewhat abated.

7. See that you preach to such auditors as these some higher points, that stall their understandings, and feed them not with all milk, but sometimes with stronger meat ; for it exceedingly puffs them up with pride, when they hear nothing from ministers but what they know already, or can say themselves. This makes them think themselves as wise as you, and as fit to be teachers ; for they think you know no more than you preach : and this hath set so many of them on preaching, because they hear nothing from others but what they can say themselves ; and ministers do not set them such patterns as may humble them, and deter them from that work. Not that I

would have you neglect the great fundamental verities, or wrong the weak and ignorant people, while you are dealing with such as these; but only when the main part of your sermons is as plain as you can speak, let some one small part be such as shall puzzle these self-conceited men; or else have one sermon in four or five on purpose for them; not by heaping up citations of fathers, nor repeating words of Latin or Greek, unless when you are convincing them of the difficulty of a text of Scripture, for they will but deride all this; but take up some profound questions, such as the schools voluminously agitate, and let them see that it is not your obscure manner of handling, but the matter itself, that is too hard for them, and so may see that they are yet but children that have need of milk, and that you would be more upon such higher points, if it were not that their incapacity doth take you off.

8. See that you preach as little as may be against them in the pulpit, in any direct manner, opposing their sect by name, or by any reproachful titles; for they are exceedingly tender, proud, passionate, and rash, ordinarily, that are entangled in a schism; and they will but hate you, and fly from you as an enemy, and say you rail. The way therefore is, without naming them, to lay the grounds clearly and soundly which must subvert their errors; and then the error will fall of itself: and when you are necessitated to deal with them directly, do it not by short, unsatisfactory applications, and toothed snatches, or irritating reproaches; but, without naming them, take up the controversy, and handle it thoroughly, peaceably, and convincingly, and so let them alone in public; yet

be not too long upon it ; but give them your fullest evidence in a few sermons, not saying all that may be said, but choosing out that which they can have least pretence to quarrel with, and passing over that which they may say more against, or will require more ado to clear and defend.

9. Be sure to keep up some private meetings, draw them in among you, and manage them prudently. By this means you may keep them from dividing meetings among themselves, where they may say what they will behind your back without control ; for most professors are addicted to private meetings, which, well ordered, are of great use to their edification ; and if they have not the opportunity of such as they should have, they will attend such as they should not. In the managing of them, as to the present purpose, observe these things:—(1.) Be sure to be always with them yourselves. (2.) Let not the main exercises of the meeting be such as tend to contention, or to private men's proud ostentation of their parts, but such as tend to the edification of the people ; not for private men to preach or expound Scripture, nor, as some do, to let every one of them speak to questions of their own propounding ; but to repeat the sermons that you have preached, to call upon God, and sing His praise. (3.) Yet let there be some opportunity for them to speak, and appear in a learning way. To which purpose, when you have done repeating, let all that are present know, that if they doubt of anything that was delivered, or would have anything made plainer to them, or would be resolved in anything else that concerneth the subject in hand, or any other case of need, you desire them to propound their doubts ; and so let them have the

liberty of questioning as learners, while you remain the teacher, and resolve all the doubts yourselves, and do not set them on disputing, by leaving it to them to make the answer. And if you have not competent abilities "ex tempore" to resolve their doubts, you were much better let pass this too ; but if you have, it will be of very great use, both for their edification, and the maintaining of order and their necessary dependence on you. (4.) But if you perceive them so set upon the exercise of their own parts for ostentation, that they are likely to divide, if they have not opportunity to do it, be not too stiff against them ; but mildly let them know that it is for their good that you dislike it, both because it is a sign of a proud heart, that had rather teach than learn, especially where a teacher by office is in place, and where there is no necessity ; and also because you fear it will not tend to the edification of the flock, but to vain janglings, or to excite others that are unable to an imitation. Desire also to know of them, whether they have any truth of God to reveal to them, that you do not reveal. If they have not, why should they desire needlessly to tell them what they are daily told by you ? If they have, it is necessary that you know it and consider it, before you consent it should be taught to your flock. But if this mild resistance satisfy not, let them take their course awhile, rather than separate from you, unless they be already perverse and subtle heretics, and when they have done their exercises, tell them, that as you give liberty to all to propound their doubts about what you have delivered, so you must take the like liberty that you give : and so propound, first, Whether the understandings of people are likely to be more edified by

such vain obtrusions of vanity, or by a fastening well upon their memories the things that they have lately heard ; and so whether such exercises or repetitions be more necessary : and then open the weaknesses of their discourse ; the mis-expounding of Scriptures, the errors in matter, in method, and in words ; and that not in a contemptuous or disgraceful way, but as the points wherein you remain unsatisfied. By such means as these you will quickly shame them out of their way of ostentation, and make them give it over.

10. Make use of your people's parts to the utmost, as your helpers, in an orderly way, under your guidance, or else they will make use of them in a disorderly and dividing way in opposition to you. It hath been a great cause of schism, when ministers would contemptuously cry down private men's preaching, and withal desire not to make any use of the gifts that God hath given them for their assistance ; but thrust them too far from holy things, as if they were a profane generation. The work is likely to go poorly on if there be no hands employed in it but the ministers. God giveth not any of His gifts to be buried, but for common use. By a prudent improvement of the gifts of the more able Christians, we may receive much help by them, and prevent their abuse, even as lawful marriage preventeth fornication. And the uses you must especially put them to are these:—(1.) Urge them to be diligent in teaching and praying with their own families, especially catechising them, and teaching them the meaning of what they learn, and setting it home on their affections ; and there if they have a mind to preach to their children and servants, so they undertake not more than they are able to do, I know



no reason but they may. (2.) Urge them to step out now and then to their poor ignorant neighbours, and catechise and instruct them in meekness and patience, from day to day; and that will bring them more peace of conscience than contemning them. (3.) Urge them to go often to the impenitent and scandalous sinners about them, and deal with them with all possible skill and earnestness, yet also with love and patience, for the converting, reforming, and saving their souls. (4.) Acquaint them with their duty of watching over each other in brotherly love, and admonishing and exhorting one another daily; and if any walk scandalously, to tell them their fault before two or three, after the contempt of private reproof; and if that prevail not, to tell the officers of the Church, that they may be proceeded with as Christ hath appointed. (5.) At your private meetings, and on days of humiliation or thanksgiving in private, employ them in prayer, and in such learning questions as is aforesaid. (6.) If there be any very ignorant or scandalous sinner that you know of, and you cannot possibly have time yourselves to speak to them at that season, send some of those that are able and sober, to do it in your stead, to instruct the ignorant, and to admonish the offenders, as far as a private man on a message from a minister, and in discharge of his own duty, may go. (7.) Let some of them be chosen to represent the Church; or to see that they have no wrong, and to be their agents to prepare all cases of discipline for public audience, and to be present with the Church-officers at appointed meetings, to hear the evidences that are brought in against any scandalous, impenitent sinners; and to discern how far they are valid, and how far the persons

are obliged to make satisfaction, and give public testimony of repentance, or to be further proceeded against. (8.) Let such as are fit, be made subservient officers—I mean deacons; and then they may afford you help in a regular way, and will by their relation feel themselves obliged to maintain the unity of the Church, and authority of the ministry, as they have some participation of the employment and honour; and so by a complication of interests you will make them firmer to the Church; but then see that they be men competently fit for the place.

I am persuaded, if ministers had thus made use of the parts of their ablest members, they might have prevented much of the divisions, and distractions, and apostasies that have befallen us; for they would have then found work enough upon their hands for higher parts than theirs, without invading the ministry, and would rather have seen cause to bewail the imperfection of their abilities to that work which doth properly belong to them. Experience would have convinced and humbled them more than our words can do. A man may think he can stir such a block, or pluck up a tree by the roots, that never tried; but when he sets his hand to it he will come off ashamed. See that you drive them to diligence in their own works, and let them know what a sin it is to neglect their families, and their ignorant, miserable neighbours; and then they will be kept humble, and have no such mind to be running upon more work, when they feel you spurring them on to their own, and rebuking them for the neglect; nor will they have any leisure for schismatical enterprises, because of the constancy and greatness of their employment.

11. Still keep up Christian love and familiarity with them, even when they have begun to warp; and make defection; and lose not your interest in them, while you have any thoughts of attempting their recovery.

12. If they do withdraw into separate meetings, follow them, and be among them, if it may be, continually. Enter a mild dissent as to the lawfulness of it; but yet tell them that you are willing to hear what it is that they have to say, and to be among them for their good, if they will give you leave, for fear lest they run to further evil, and be not easily removed. But hold on, unless they absolutely exclude you; for you may thereby have the opportunity of a moderate, gentle, opposing their errors, and so in time may manifest the vanity of their course; and you will prevent much of that impudent reviling, and grosser venting of further error, which they will do more freely where there is no one to contradict. They may say anything when there is none to gainsay them, and make it seem good in the eyes of the weak. By this means, if any seducers from abroad come in to confirm them, you will be ready to oppose them; and so, at the least, you will do much to prevent the increase of their party. It hath been a very great cause of the schisms in England, that ministers have only contemned them, and when they have withdrawn into private separate meetings, have talked against them to others, or reprov'd them in the pulpit, and in the meantime fled away from the faces of them, or been strangers to them; while they have given seducers opportunity to come among them, be familiar with them without contradiction, and to have the advantages of deceiving them, and even doing what they

listed. Oh that the ministry had been more guiltless of those errors and schisms that they talk against! But it is easier to chide a sectary in the pulpit, and to subscribe a testimony against him, than to play the skilful physician for his cure, and do the tenth part of the duty that lieth upon us to prevent and heal such calamitous distempers. I am not finding fault with the prudent reprehensions of such in public, or testimonies against them; but I think too many of us have cause to fear, lest we do but publicly proclaim our own shame in the guilt of our negligence or imprudent weaknesses, and lest, in condemning them and testifying against them, we testify against and condemn ourselves.

13. If you be not well able to deal with them, do as I before advised; give them the best book on that subject to peruse.

14. If all this will not do, get the fittest neighbouring minister that you know to come over and help you; not in public, nor as a set disputation, (without necessity,) but let him come as occasionally and "ex improviso"—come upon them in one of their private meetings, as desirous to see and hear them, and so take the opportunity to deal with them. And if after that there be any disputations appointed, be sure to observe the old rule—fight with them on their own ground, and keep up the war in their quarters, and let it come as little as you can into your own; and therefore go to their assemblies, but let them not come into yours. For with them you can lose little, and may gain much; but at home you can gain little, but it is two to one will lose some, let the error be never so gross. The sectaries commonly observe this course

themselves, and therefore you will have much ado to get their consent to bring your disputations into their own assemblies.

15. Let not the authors of the schism outdo you, or go beyond you in anything that is good; for as truth should be more effectual for sanctification than error, so if you give them this advantage, you give them the day, and all your disputations will do but little good; for the weaker people judge all by the outward appearance, and by the effects, and are not able to judge of the doctrine itself. They think that he hath the best cause whom they take to be the best man.

I extend this rule both to doctrine and life. If a libertine preach up free grace, do you preach it up more effectually than he: be much upon it, and make it more glorious on right grounds than he can do on wrong. If, on the like pretences, he magnify the grace of love, and, in order to cry down fear and humiliation, be all for living in pure love to God, do not contradict him in the assertive, but only in the negative and destructive part; but outgo him, and preach up the love of God, with its motives and effects, more fully and effectually than he can do on the corrupt grounds on which he doth proceed: or else you will make all the silly people believe that this is the difference between you, that he is for free grace and the love of God, and you are against it; for if you dwell not upon it in your preaching as well as he, they will not take notice of a short concession or profession. So, if an enthusiast do talk all of the Holy Ghost, and the light, and witness, and law within us, fall you upon that subject too, and do that well which they did ill; and preach up the office of the Holy Ghost, His indwelling and opera-

tions, and the light, and testimony, and law within us, better than they do. This is the most effectual way of settling your people against seduction. So if you be assaulted by the Pelagians—if they make a long story to prove that God is not the author of sin, do you fall upon the proof of it too. If they plead for free-will, do you plead for that free-will which we have, (the natural liberty, which none deny, consisting in a self-determining power, and supposing actual indetermination,) and deny only that liberty which the will hath not; that is, either a freedom from God's government or from the necessary guidance of the intellect and moral force of the object; or that true spiritual, ethical freedom from various inclinations, which consisteth in the right disposition of the will; though the sanctified indeed have this in part, and that predominantly. So if any Pelagian or semi-Pelagian will go about industriously to prove man's power, or rather impotency, to will or do evil, do it as effectually as he; for this is indeed but to prove a man a sinner, under pretence of proving him free, or at least to prove him defectible, if it be not the ill inclination, but the possibility of sinning, that they defend: in which case we can say more than they. So if they go about laboriously to prove that Christ died for all, I would endeavour to do it as effectually as they, that it might appear to the people that the difference between us is not in this, that they would magnify the riches of grace above me, or that I would leave sinners hopeless and remediless, and without an object for faith, any more than they; nor that I abase or reject express scriptures, when they own them in their proper sense:

but I would let them know that the controversy lieth elsewhere, viz., Whether Christ, in offering Himself a sacrifice for sin, had not a special intention or resolution, in compliance with His Father's predestinating will, infallibly and effectually to save His chosen, even such and such by name, in making His blood applied effectually to the pardon of all their sins, and to give them His Spirit to seal them unto glory; having no such will, intention, resolution, in dying (no more than His Father had in predestinating) as to the rest of the world. So if one that is for private men's preaching, come and inveigh against ministers for inhibiting them to use the gifts of God for the edification of the Church, I would not presently set to thwart him, but I would rather fall a persuading private men to use their gifts in all the ways that I even now mentioned, and sharply chide them for using them no more; and then among my cautions or reprehensions meet with his desired abuse in the end. And what I have said by way of instance in these few points, I mean in all others. Preaching truth is the most successful way of confuting error; and I would have no seducer to have the glory of outgoing us in any good, and so not in befriending or defending any truth. Once more: If a Socinian should fall a pleading for the Church's peace, and for unity upon the ancient simplicity of faith, I would labour to outgo him in it, and then would shew that the ancient simple faith condemned him. If he would plead reason for Scripture, or the Christian religion, I would endeavour to outgo him in it, and he should not have opportunity to glory that he only had reason for what he held, and I had none. But I would shew, that as I have reason to

believe the Scriptures, so that Scripture condemneth his errors. If a Separatist will plead for the necessity of Church-order and discipline, so would I as well as he; and shew him that it is only disorder and confusion, inconsistent with right order and discipline, that I dislike in him or those of his way. And so would I do by others in this case.

And you should be as loath that they should outgo you in the practice of a holy and righteous life, any more than in sound, diligent teaching. Do any of them express a hatred of sin, and desire of Church-reformation? So must we do more. Do any of them use to spend their time when they meet together in holy discourse, and not in vain janglings? Let us do so much more. Are they unwearied in propagating their opinions? Let us be more so in propagating the truth. Do they condescend to the meanest, and creep into houses to lead captive the silliest of the flock? Let us stoop as low, and be as diligent to do them good. Are they loving to their party, and contemners of the world? Let us be lovers of all, and especially of all saints, and do good to all, as we have power, and especially to all the household of faith; and love an enemy as well as they can do a friend. Let us be more just than they, more merciful, more humble, more meek and patient; "for this is the will of God, that by well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Let us excel them in a holy, harmless, righteous, merciful, fruitful, heavenly life, as we do in soundness of doctrine; more just than they, more merciful, humble, meek, and patient; that by our fruits we may be known, and the weaker sort



of our people may see the truth in this reflection that cannot see it in itself; and that our light may so shine before men, that they may see our conversation, and glorify our Father which is in heaven; and even they that obey not the Word, may without the Word be won by the conversation of their teachers. (1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.) Oh, how happy had England been—how happy had all the Church been—if the ministers of the gospel had taken these courses! It would have done more against errors and schism than all our chiding hath done, or than all the force can do which we desire from the magistrate.

Three sorts of persons that we may meet with in our conference, are now over:—1. The grossly ignorant and unconverted. 2. The doubting, troubled believer. 3. The cavilling questionist, or seduced schismatic. The fourth sort that I should speak of in this direction, are those that by a professed willingness to learn and obey, and by other signs, do give us some probability that they may have true repentance and faith, and yet by their ignorance, or lukewarmness, (being not noted for any special profession of godliness,) or by some uneven walking, do make our fears to be as great or greater than our hopes: so that we are between hope and fear of them, doubting the worst of their present safety, though we have not ground to charge them to be unconverted, impenitent, unsanctified persons. I think half that come to me are of this sort, and ten of this sort, if not forty, for one that I dare flatly say are unregenerate. Now, it may be a great difficulty with some younger ministers what you should do with this sort of people, where they have no suffi-

cient ground to determine of them as godly or ungodly, whatever their fears or hopes may be. Of these I shall only briefly say this :—

1. The first directions may suffice in the main for dealing with these, and are as much fitted to these as to the worst: for as we may tell a notorious, ungodly man, “Your case is miserable, you are a child of death;” so may we tell these, “I much fear your case is sad—these are ill signs—I wonder how you dare so hazard your salvation;” and so abating of the several degrees of the hopeful good that appeareth in them, we may see, in the first case, how to deal in this.

2. I would advise you to be very cautious how you pass too hasty or absolute censures on any that you have to do with; because it is not so easy a matter to discern a man to be certainly graceless that professeth himself a Christian, as many do imagine it to be: and you may do the work in hand as well without such an absolute conclusion as with it, as the former examples, which will serve all with a little alteration, do shew.

3. The general description of the ministerial work may supply the rest. I shall therefore only add :— (1.) Keep them close to the use of private and public means. (2.) Be often with the lukewarm to awaken them, and with the careless to admonish them. (3.) Take the opportunity of sickness, which will bow their hearts and open their ears. (4.) See that they spend the Lord’s day, and order their families aright. (5.) Draw them from temptations, and occasions of sin. (6.) Charge them to come and seek help in all great straits, and open their temptations and dangers before they are swallowed up. (7.) Strike at the great radi-

cal sins : self-seeking, fleshly-mindedness, sensuality, pride, worldliness, and infidelity. Keep them to the reading of Scripture and good books, and direct them to those that are most likely to awaken them. (8.) Engage their godly neighbours to have an eye upon them. (9.) Keep up discipline to awe them. (10.) Maintain the life of grace in yourselves, that it may appear in all your sermons to them ; that every one that comes cold to the assembly may have warming helps before he departs.

I have done my advice, and leave you to the practice. Though the proud may receive it with scorn, and the selfish and slothful with some distaste and indignation, I doubt not but God will use it, in despite of the oppositions of sin and Satan, to the awakening of many of His servants to their duty, and promoting the work of a right reformation : and that His much greater blessing shall accompany the present undertaking for the saving of many a soul, the peace of you that undertake and perform it, the exciting of His servants through the nation to second you, and to increase purity and the unity of His Churches. Amen.

*December 25, 1655.*

The first part of the book  
 is devoted to a general  
 introduction of the subject  
 and a description of the  
 various methods of  
 investigation. The second  
 part is devoted to a  
 detailed description of  
 the various methods of  
 investigation. The third  
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 part is devoted to a  
 detailed description of  
 the various methods of  
 investigation.

APPENDIX.

The first part of the history is devoted to a description of the country and its inhabitants. The author describes the various tribes and their customs, as well as the geographical features of the region. He also discusses the political organization of the different states and the relations between them.

The second part of the history is devoted to a description of the wars and conflicts that have taken place in the region. The author describes the various battles and the strategies used by the different sides. He also discusses the causes and consequences of these conflicts.

The third part of the history is devoted to a description of the social and economic conditions of the region. The author discusses the different occupations and industries, as well as the distribution of wealth and the state of the population.

The fourth part of the history is devoted to a description of the religious and cultural life of the region. The author discusses the different religions and the customs and traditions of the people.

The fifth part of the history is devoted to a description of the political and administrative changes that have taken place in the region. The author discusses the different forms of government and the changes in power over time.

The sixth part of the history is devoted to a description of the foreign relations of the region. The author discusses the relations with neighboring states and the influence of foreign powers.

The seventh part of the history is devoted to a description of the scientific and technological progress of the region. The author discusses the different inventions and discoveries and the state of knowledge in various fields.

The eighth part of the history is devoted to a description of the art and literature of the region. The author discusses the different styles and the achievements of the artists and writers.

The ninth part of the history is devoted to a description of the moral and ethical values of the region. The author discusses the different virtues and vices and the state of the moral life of the people.

The tenth part of the history is devoted to a description of the future prospects of the region. The author discusses the different challenges and opportunities and the path forward for the people.

## APPENDIX:

IN ANSWER TO SOME OBJECTIONS WHICH I HAVE HEARD OF,  
SINCE THE FORMER EDITION.

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It is a hard case that either so good a master and work should have servants so bad, as will plead against their duty when they practise it; or that good men themselves should be so backward, and need so many words to draw them to so needful an employment. There is no sanctified man but hath virtually in him a love to the main work that is urged in this treatise: and it is hard that men should oppose, or stiffly refuse the duties which as Christians they love, and by their nature are inclined to. And it is harder that those should be ministers of the gospel that have no such sanctified natures and inclinations. (Though I am thankful to God that useth even such for the service of His Church.) If we are sanctified, we are devoted, separated and resigned up to God as being wholly His. And if indeed we are absolutely resigned up to God, we shall have no time or labour that will seem too much and too good for His service. It is one of the clearest, surest differences between a damnable hypocrite, and a truly sanctified man, that the hypocrite hath something, but the sanctified hath nothing so dear to him that he cannot spare it for God. If we love not our work for the end, and therefore the end more than the

work, we are deceitful workmen: and if we do but value the success of our labour, methinks we should be willing of that sort of labour in which we have greatest probability of success; though it may be somewhat troublesome in the performance. If we are faithful servants, the work of God will be pleasant to us: and if it were pleasant, methinks we should not be drawn to it, as a bear to the stake; much less should we fly from it, and oppose it like enemies. Whatever a Jonas may do in a temptation against one particular act, methinks the ordinary discharge of such duties should neither be opposed nor wholly neglected by the faithful. Methinks while we live among the miserable, and see such multitudes near to hell, compassion should be argument enough to persuade us to do all that we can for their relief, and humanity should be enough to convince us of the duty, and stop our mouths from cavilling against it.

Though I seemed to myself even unmannerly bold with my brethren in this book, yet I must needs say, that conscience did not accuse me for it, but provoke me to it, and often asked me, "Is there not a cause?" Nor can I repent of this adventure, when I consider the necessity and the success. I bless God that I have lived to hear of so many faithful servants of Christ falling closely to this work of *personal instruction*, not only in this county, but in many other parts of the land. Now I begin to hope that the pastoral office will be better understood, by some competent time of experience, both by our people and ourselves, and that they will come in time to understand what use they have of ministers, and what duty towards them they are obliged to perform: I hope now that misunderstand-



ings between people and their teachers will be removed; and they will perceive what we aim at, and how far we are from intending their hurt, or lording it over them, when they see us take our greatness and dignity to consist in *being the servants of all*. Now I am in hopes that we shall get a more universal, effectual advantage against the common ignorance, and profaneness, and security that have discouraged and disappointed both us and our predecessors; and that we shall have a more satisfactory acquaintance with the state of our hearers, to direct us in the several acts of administration and discipline. These, and abundance more fruit, we may expect, if the Lord will but give us hearts to proceed with a vigorous seriousness in the work, and not to faint and be weary of well-doing. The greatest thing that I fear next *unskilfulness*, is *laziness*; lest we begin to favour ourselves, and say, "What a toil is this?" and so the flesh pervert our reason, and make us say, "I do not think that I am bound to all this stir and trouble;" especially lest when we have gone once over the parish, we lazily say, "I have done enough already; what need I do the same again?" Though I hope experience of men's necessity, and the benefit, will do much to save us from the power of these temptations.

I have no great fear of any opposition from conscience or unbiased reason; but only from unwillingness, and from reason biased by the flesh. Most of the objections that I have heard of since the publishing of this book, are the same that are already answered in it, especially in the Preface; and yet I hear of no reply that they make to those answers. I shall not think it my duty to answer the same again, because

men will not observe what is answered already ; but shall answer now to the new objections only.

*Object.* 1. Some carry about this objection at a distance, that my whole book doth run upon a false supposition—viz., “That discipline and personal instruction are essential to our ministry.”

*Ans.* I know of no such word that ever I spoke or wrote. Nor do I build on any such supposition, otherwise I should have said, that all that perform not these duties are no ministers. But these words I did write indeed, *Ruling is as essential a part of the pastor's office as preaching, I am sure.* But then I difference the special office of a pastor from the general office of a minister ; and, secondly, I distinguish between the power and duty of ruling, and personal instructing, and the exercise of that power and performance of that duty : and I distinguish between the ministry or office, and the pastor. And so I conclude, (1.) That it is essential to the office or ministry of a pastor of a particular church to have the power of ruling as well as of public preaching, and to be *obliged* on fit occasions to rule as well as to preach. (2.) But actually to rule is not essential to his being a pastor ; for to be a *pastor*, is to be *empowered* and *obliged* : these only are contained in the office, and the exercise followeth as an effect. A man is a pastor before ever he preach ; and continueth to be so when he interrupteth his exercise. (3.) Ruling, taken for authoritative guidance in the way to heaven, (which is our ministerial kind of rule ; even as a physician ruleth his patient, supposing him to be of Divine institution,) is the general work of the ministry, and comprehendeth public preaching, and therefore is more necessary than a part

alone. (4.) A man may be a faithful minister, and yet never preach a sermon. If a great congregation have six or more pastors, and two or three of them be the ablest preachers, and the rest more judicious, and fit for discourse and private oversight, these latter may well employ themselves in such oversight, conference, and other ministerial works, and leave public-speaking in the pulpit to them that are more able for it, and so they may divide the work among them according to their parts: and it will not now follow that they are no pastors that preach not publicly. I think, then, that all this laid together will warrant me to say, that *ruling is as much essential to a pastor's office as preaching*. At least, though methinks it should be enough to persuade us to our duty to know that it is commanded, without disputing whether it be essential to our office.

*Object. 2.* "The same persons say that they cannot agree with us, because we make a difference between the members of our flock, or church, and the rest of the parish, and so take not all the parish to be our church, as in the tenth article of our Agreement is expressed."

*Ans. 1.* The palpable vanity of this objection is a dishonour to the heads or the hearts of the objectors, and doth but open their own nakedness. What force is in this reason, or what show of force? If they take all their parish for their church, cannot they agree to catechise and instruct them personally, because we take not all of our parishes for church-members? They may as well give over preaching, and say, they cannot agree to preach to their own parish-churches, because we take not all in our parishes to be of our

churches. Who can believe that this is a reason to excuse them from their duty? 2. But to give them also an account of our actions, I add, that we expressly there exclude none of our parishes from our churches, but *such as have withdrawn themselves from our charges, and particular church, by refusing to own and profess their membership.* And for our parts, we have not the faculty of making men church-members, whether they will or no, or discerning them to be such, whether they will signify it or no; much less when they disown it, and after many public invitations, and a year or two's waiting for their fuller information, do still refuse to profess themselves members. They that have this faculty let them use it: in the meantime, let them know that their doctrine obligeth them to more duty than ours; and therefore will be no excuse to them for doing less. We shall endeavour to instruct and catechise men, whether they be members of our churches or not: but we take not ourselves bound to rule and watch over all those in our parishes that withdraw themselves from our pastoral oversight, with the same exactness and authority as we must guide and oversee the members of our charge. But you that take all in the parish to be of your churches, must see that you rule and oversee them accordingly.

*Object.* 3. "Others object against the following words in the same article of our Agreement,—'That we shall in regard of communion, and the application of sealing and confirming ordinance, deal with them as the obstinate despisers of instruction should be dealt with.' And who are these that we must so deal with? Those that after sufficient admonition shall contemptuously and obstinately refuse to be either catechised or in-

structed thus personally by us, giving us no valuable reason of their refusal."

*Ans.* It seems, then, that these objectors, (1.) Either take not those for obstinate despisers of instruction, that "after sufficient admonition shall contemptuously and obstinately refuse either to come to the minister, or to let the minister come to them, and be instructed by them, not giving any valuable reason of such refusal." By which it may appear what reformation they desire, and how they judge of the qualifications of church members; and why cannot they also be as charitable to those that contemptuously and obstinately refuse to hear them preach, and will join only in sacraments and common prayer. I like not charity unreasonably large for the exempting of ourselves from the labour of duty: I would not choose such a charitable physician that would make his patients believe that they are in no danger, to save himself the labour of attending them for the cure. (2.) Or else they think that we must not deal with such men in regard of church-communion and sacraments as they should be dealt with, which we agree to; but this surely can never be their sense. But I suppose they will say that the thing offensive is the intimation, that such persons should be denied the sealing and confirming ordinances. And, indeed, would you not have it so? If people will neither come to you for instruction, nor let you come to them, nor give you any valuable reason, yea, contemptuously and obstinately refuse this, after sufficient admonition, would you yet have these admitted to communion in the sacraments? It seems, then, either this is no scandalous sin with you, or you would have the garden of Christ lie common as

the wilderness; and you would be their pastor in despite of them, that contemptuously and obstinately refuse to take you for their pastor? Or you will divide Christ and His ordinances, and give them one part at their will, that obstinately refuse the other. But think as you please of this resolution of ours, and admit all the most obstinate refusers of your instruction to the sacrament, (which yet a Papist will not do,) if you can make it good; but what is this to the business of catechising and instructing those that will submit? Cannot you agree with us in the rest, because of this clause? Cannot you agree to instruct them that will submit, because we resolve to deal with the obstinate refusers as we ought?

*Object.* 4. "You cut us a shoe too narrow for our foot. You judge all our congregations by your own. We have stubborn people that will not be instructed, nor come near us, and are not fit for church-discipline. Had we a tractable people, we would yield to all."

*Ans.* (1.) If I understand this, the meaning of it is, we are resolved not to suffer the hatred, ill-will, and railing of our neighbours: if we had a people that would take it well, and put us to no such suffering, but rather drive us on to duty, then we would do it. If this be the meaning, it sounds not well. (2.) The worse your people are, the more need they have of instruction and help. (3.) If a thousand refuse your help, will that excuse you from offering it to them, and affording it to a thousand others that will not refuse it? Surely your people will not so refuse it. (4.) Are your whole parishes fit to be church members, and to be admitted to communion in all ordinances, and yet are they unfit for discipline? This cannot ordinarily be: it is a contradiction. If, indeed, all your parish-

ioners be infidels, or ungodly, and unfit matter to constitute a church, confess then that you are no pastors of a particular church, and give them no communion ordinances, but preach to them as infidels, to make them Christians. But if, indeed, you take yourselves for pastors, and your parishes, or part of them, for churches, use them as churches, and rule as pastors are bound to rule, and take not an office which you constantly refuse to exercise; and choose not out that part of the work of your office which is least costly, or distasteful to flesh and blood, but be true to your undertakings.

*Object.* 5. "But you build much on Acts xx. 20, Paul's teaching from house to house, whereas, *κατ' οἶκους* and *κατ' οἶκον*, in the New Testament, is ever spoken of the houses where the churches did usually assemble for public worship."

*Ans.* (1.) If I had misinterpreted Acts xx. 20, it is excusable to err with so good company. Mr Mede confesseth (p. 31) that the most of the reformed writers, and some of the other side, are against him: and (p. 44) that the phrase, *κατ' οἶκον*, is commonly expounded against his way. And Beza on 1 Cor. xvi. 19, saith, "Apparet enim Apostolum commendare Aquilæ et Priscillæ familiam quasi sit Ecclesia quædam." And he expounds, *κατ' οἶκον*, Acts v. 42, by "Privatim ubicunque opus erat, ut vere testatur de se Paulus infr. xx. 20;" and so gives us his sense of that place also. And, to let pass ordinary interpreters, and speak only of those critics that may be expected most to befriend Mr Mede's opinion, Grotius, on Rom. xvi. 5, saith, "Eodem modo de illorum domo loquitur Paulus. (1 Cor. xvi. 20.) Quia recens ab exilio redibant

Christiani, credible est cum hæc Paulus scriberet nullos Romæ fuisse communes Christianorum conventus, neque Presbyteros quos alioqui salutaret Paulus. Tali autem tempore quæque domus Ecclesia est, sicut Tertullianus ait, ubi tres, Ecclesia est, licet laici." And on Acts xx. 20 he saith, *καὶ κατ' οἴκους*, "singulos, occasione data;" and on Philem. 2, "In ejus domo complures erant Christiani." And 1 Cor. xvi. 19, *σὺν τῇ κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησία*—"Id est, cum tota familia sua quæ erat Christiani. Quocunque illi ibant, secum ferebant Ecclesiam." So he expoundeth Col. iv. 15.

And Dr Hammond (1 Cor. xvi.) saith, "It is evident what is meant by the church in their house, *i. e.*, all the believers of their family; the same are called, *ἡ κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησία*, (Rom. xvi. 5,) the church or Christians belonging to their family—the prepositions *ἐν* and *κατὰ* being promiscuously used in the writings." And he expoundeth Acts xx. 20 thus: "Willing to use all opportunities of instructing any, both in the public synagogues, and in private schools, and in your several houses, whither I also came."

I confess myself somewhat inclinable to the exposition of the objectors, though I come not quite up to their sense; and I am somewhat stopped by this consideration, that there is mention of the church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla in several cities. And it is not probable that such moveable persons coming as strangers to such places should have the opportunity of making their house still the public meeting-place of the several churches where they come.

And, moreover, besides the texts observed by some, that in Acts viii. 3 will hardly be proved to be



spoken only of church-houses. *Σαῦλος δὲ ἐλυμαίνετο τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους εἰσπορευόμενος.* I confess it was likely that he made his first assault on the assemblies; but improbable that this is all that is there meant.

The apostles then did preach to several sorts of auditors:—[1.] Sometimes to any multitude they could fitly, to speak for their conversion; either in the temple, in the market-place, at the judgment-seat, or any place of concourse. [2.] Sometimes in mixed assemblies of Christians and infidels; admitting unbelievers to be their auditors in order to their conversion. So Paul admitted all that would come into his own hired house. (Acts xxviii. 30, 31.) And it was ordinary for the Church to admit unbelievers to be present, as appears in 1 Cor. xiv. 23–25. [3.] Sometimes there were solemn assemblies of the Church above, where they all came together into one place; that is, it was the place of their most public meeting, where the main body assembled, and no others with them, as in breaking bread, and feasting together, and such acts of special communion. [4.] Sometimes there were occasional meetings of certain parcels of the Church, as that was Acts xii., when they were praying for Peter. And such a meeting I suppose there was in almost every house where the apostles were known to come among Christians. It is not probable but that many would come in to them, if they did but go into any private house to visit or exhort the persons of that house. [5.] Besides these, they ordinarily used to teach particular persons, as the jailer, the eunuch, &c., as often as they had opportunity. Now, our question of Acts xx. 20 is, which of these three last senses it is

taken in. I agree not with the objectors, that it is taken in the first of the three only, though I will not exclude that : but understand it more comprehensively, as extending to all the three last sorts, and comprising all that house-teaching of Christians that was then usual with the apostles ; both, first, teaching the churches in houses : and secondly, teaching such companies of Christians as were in the houses where the apostles came ; as Cornelius (Acts x.) had gathered his friends to hear Peter, so Christians would call their next friends when an apostle came to visit them : thirdly, and teaching the particular families where they had opportunity ; especially the second.—*Object.* “ But this was not an orderly taking the houses of a parish or church before them, and going into every one.”—*Ans.* Very true ; I know of no such parishes that then were ; nor do I make it a minister’s duty absolutely to go up and down from house to house, to each house in his parish, or of his charge. I would not so much as advise you to do this, without necessity ; but first call the people to come to you, and learn of you at your own house, or the church-house, or where you please, so that you will but give them that personal instruction, upon necessary pre-inquiry into their states, which their conditions do require. And then go to those that will not come to you, if they will consent, and you are able. For my own part, I am not able to go from house to house ; there being not one house of many among the poor people where I can stand half an hour in the midst of summer without taking cold, to the apparent hazard of my life ; so that those few that will not come to me, I must send to. And I think it more to the people’s benefit to accustom them to

attend their pastor, than for him to go to hunt up and down after them, he scarcely knows where and when. But men's obstinacy may make that necessary which is inconvenient.

(2.) But I have spoken all this but as on the by as to this objection. My answer to it is this: It is not either only or chiefly on this text, or any like it, that I build my persuasions of you to this duty. In good sadness, can you find nothing but Acts xx. 20, in all these papers, that is urged to convince you of the duty in hand? If you have observed no more, read again, and save me the labour of recitals. If there were nothing but the general command of taking heed to all the flock, and no more but your very pastoral relation to each member, as a master to every servant, and a teacher to every scholar in his school, and a physician to every patient in his hospital, and a shepherd to every sheep in his flock, and a commander to every soldier in his regiment; what need there be more to convince you that you should take care of them, and help every one particularly as effectually as you can? In a word, the sum of the question is, whether you are bound to do the best you can to save the souls of all your parishioners. Do this, and I desire no more. Do you think in your conscience that you do the best you can, if you can exhort, instruct, or catechise them personally, and will not?

As to the objection, "Where are we bound to spend two days a-week in this, or one day, or to take the houses in course, or the like?" I have answered it already in this book, whither I refer you. As if the general precept of "teaching every one, exhorting every man, doing good to all, taking heed to all the

flock," &c., were not sufficient! What if God only bid you pray continually, or on all fit occasions; will you approve of those deluded ones that ask, "Where am I bid to pray morning and night, or in my family, or before and after meat, or before and after sermon, &c.?" Providence will direct you, and honest prudence will discern the season and other circumstances of your duty. What if God hath not told us on what day or hour our lecture shall be, or what chapter I shall read, what psalm I shall sing, what text I shall preach on, or whether on any or not, or how the seals and utensils shall be ordered; must we not, therefore, determine these ourselves, as Providence shall lead us, and as may conduce to the end of our work? I do not think but you do as much, and justly do it, beyond God's particular Scripture determination in your ordinary preaching, as we do in catechising and personal instructing. But methinks with ministers I should not need to say so much to such a rustical objection as this, from the defect of particular precept.

*Object.* 6. "If all ministers should bestow two days a-week, they would have but little time to study, and so the adversaries would have their will when our ministry comes to the unlearned or unskilled in controversies."

*Ans.* (1.) I have answered this already in the book. (2.) I only add, these things are not objected to mere bystanders; we try the work, and can tell by some experience what it is. Is not four days a-week, after so many years in the university, a fair proportion for men to study controversies and sermons? Though my weakness deprive me of abundance of time, and extraordinary works take up six, if not eight parts of

my time, yet I bless God I can find time to provide for preaching two days a-week, notwithstanding the two days for personal instruction. Now, for those that are not troubled with any extraordinary work—I mean writings and conversations of several sorts—besides the ordinary work of the ministry, I cannot believe, but if they are willing, they may find two half days a-week at least for this work. (3.) And perhaps they will find before we have done, that this employment tends to make men able pastors for the Church, much more than private studies alone. He shall be the ablest physician, and divine, and lawyer too, that addeth practice and experience proportionably to his studies; and that man shall prove a useless drone that refuseth God's service all his life, under pretence of preparing for it, and lets men's souls pass on to perdition, while he pretendeth to be studying how to recover them, or to get more ability to help and save them.

*Object. 7.* "The times that Paul lived in required more diligence than ours; the Churches were but in the planting, the enemies many, and persecution great; but now it is not so."

*Ans.* This was the bishops' argument against so much preaching when they put it down. But it savours of a man locked up in his study, and unacquainted with the world. Good Lord! are there such multitudes round about us that know not whether Christ be God or man, the first person in the Trinity or the second; whether He have taken His body to heaven or left it on earth, and what He hath done for them; and what they must trust to for pardon and salvation!—Are there so many thousands round about us that are

drowned in presumption, security, and sensuality, that break the hearts of preachers, and when we have done all, will neither feel us, nor understand us!—are there so many wilful drunkards, worldlings, self-seekers, railers, haters of a holy life, that want nothing but death to make them remediless!—are there so many ignorant, dull, and scandalous professors, so many dividers, seducers, and troublers of the Church!—and yet is the supineness of our times so great, that we may excuse ourselves from *personal instruction*, because of the less necessity of the times? What need is there but faith and experience, to answer this objection? Believe better within, and look more without among the miserable, and I warrant you, you will not see cause to spare your pains for want of work, or of necessities to invite you. What conscientious minister finds not work enough to do, from one end of the year to another, if he have not a hundred souls to care for? Are ungodly men the less miserable, because they make profession of Christianity, or the more?

*Object.* 8. “You have here too confidently determined, that it is ministers’ duties that have large congregations to procure assistance, though they leave themselves by it but that low allowance to live upon which you mention. We must not be wise above what is written. And you will scarcely shew us where this, or the ‘*quota pars temporis*’ for catechising, or taking a set time, are written in the Scripture.”

*Ans.* (1.) Must I go to turn to my Bible to shew a preacher where it is written, that a man’s soul is more worth than a world, much more than a hundred pounds a year; much more are many souls more

worth? or that both we and that we have are God's, and should be employed to the utmost for His service? or that it is inhuman cruelty to let many souls go to hell, for fear my wife and children should live somewhat the harder, or live at a lower rate, when, according to God's ordinary way of working by means, I might do much to prevent their misery, if I would but a little displease my flesh, which all that are Christ's have crucified with its lusts? Every man must give God the things that are God's, and that is all. How is all pure and sanctified to us but in the separation, dedication, and using them for God? Are not all His talents, and must be employed to His service? Must not every Christian first ask, which way may I most honour God with my substance? Are not these things written? Do we not preach them to our people? Are they true to them, and not to us? Yea, more; is not the church-maintenance devoted in a special manner to the service of God for that church? and should we not then use it for the utmost furtherance of the end? If any minister that hath two hundred pounds can prove that a hundred pounds of it may do God more service if it be laid out on himself or wife and children, than if it maintain one or two meet assistants to help the salvation of the flock, I shall not presume to reprove his expenses; but where this cannot be proved, let not the practice be justified.

No wonder that we have so many sensual gentlemen that do little good with all their riches; but see their brother have need, and shut up the bowels of their compassion from him, rather than they will live at lower rates, or not fare deliciously every day; and that they can find no Scripture that commandeth

them such things; when even the preachers of the Scriptures cannot see the wood for trees; they want a letter to express to them the common moral verities. No wonder if these gentlemen can find no Scripture that requireth them to buy in impropriations, to endow or build colleges, to give a common stock for the poor, or the like, or out of two or three thousand pounds portion to a daughter to give one or two hundreds to some pious; charitable use, though the daughter have the less. How should gentlemen find any Scripture for self-denial, or preferring God before themselves, yea their flesh, or children's superfluities and snares, when some ministers of the gospel can find no such Scripture, when the case concerns themselves; or at least can meet with no expositor that can make them understand such difficult texts!

And for the other matters: of the stated time for catechising, and the "quota pars." As I never presumed to impose an unnecessary task on any, nor should do, were it in my power, but leave it to their prudence that are on the place to determine of circumstances; so I know not why any man should be loath to tie himself to this duty, especially in order to a common reformation, and after so long and general a neglect, unless because he is loath to practise it. If set times be not needful for the constant performance of such a work as this, devise for us some way of doing it without a stated time, and do not keep a set time for your lectures, class meetings, family duties, no, nor your studies or secret prayers. When you have shewed me a written word for these, and for your preaching once or twice every Lord's day, then I will shew you more than one text for the things in question.



*Object.* 9. The next objections made are against my urging them to associate; and one is, "Why cannot I do my duty to God, and for my people at home, without travelling many miles to a meeting of ministers? What Scripture binds me to this labour?"

*Ans.* Were I in a disputation, I would give you several formal arguments for all these things; but in this brief way of answering objections, I think it more profitable to them that are in love with truth, to take up with the general grounds of the duty, which may afford them matter for many arguments. And to the objection, "Can you find no Scripture that commandeth Christians to be of one mind, and mouth, and way, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?" Cannot you prove from Scripture that God would have ministers to be one in mind and heart, "as Christ and the Father are one?" (John xvii. 21.) Do you doubt whether you should do the work of God with as much unity and concord as is possible? And do you know that constant communion and correspondence is necessary to that end? You cannot be ignorant how the unity and consent of ministers is their honour, and much of their strength with the people, and takes off much prejudice and odium that would fall on single men; and that singular actions brings us into contempt with them. Doubtless, as many Christians are bound to hold communion together in particular churches, so many particular churches, by their guides, are bound to maintain communion as far as nature makes them capable. And I hope few ministers are ignorant that these ministerial assemblies for concord among ourselves and the churches have been the constant practice of

the churches of Christ, as high as we have any history to acquaint us with their practice, (I mean when the persecution made it not impossible.) And shall we now in the end of the world begin to be wiser, and one single pastor, and perhaps of no seraphical intellects, correct this practice of the universal Church as a needless thing, and say, "Why may not I do my duty as well at home alone?"

You owe duty to your neighbouring ministers and churches for communion, and in order to the common good, and the promoting of your common work. Are you humble men, and yet can you think that yourselves have no need of the advice and assistance of your brethren? I should hardly think you humble if you say so. But if you be so far above teaching, advice, or any other help to yourselves, your brethren have the more need of you, by how much the less need you have of them. There are many young ministers that very much need the helps that such communion may afford them, and the advice of more grave, experienced men, for carrying on the work of the ministry; and many so humble and sensible of their need of such communion, that they would be loath to be deprived of it. One would think we should no more need such a stir to make ministers desire the communion of ministers, than to make Christians desire the communion of Christians, or to make men desire the society of men.

*Object.* 10. "But we have observed in most associations where we have been, that some one, or two, or few more do all, and the rest do but follow them. It is as good, then, to go to these men alone, if we need advice."

*Ans.* There is no one that pretends to any authority over their brethren in our association; neither civil coercive power, nor ecclesiastical directive power. You cannot say, therefore, that any one doth either force the rest, or awe them by any pretended commission from Christ. So that if any have so much power as you speak of, it is likely it is but the power of truth in them, and such as light hath against darkness; or if it be from the strength of their parts and gifts, have not you need even of the gifts of your brethren? and are they not given for the body? It seems by this objection, that you justify our associations from all popular or factious prevalency of the multitude, or major part; and that they lay not the cause upon number and votes, but upon wisdom and the prevailing power of evidence; and that one man that can bring more reason than others shall be heard and regarded by all. What could you have said more to the honour of our associations, to vindicate them from all imputations of pride, and faction, and clamorous running on with the most.

And where you say, It is as good to go to those men in private; I answer, Those men themselves do not think so. Perhaps, they that you call the leaders of the rest, do find themselves more in need of the help of those whom you say they lead, than you do of theirs. Among many, that may be spoken by a man of inferior parts, that came not into the minds of wiser men. Which of you are so wise that needs no addition or assistance? and what minister is so weak that may not sometimes add to the wiser? Moreover, among many, they that are of greater parts have the better opportunity to do the greater good with them,

than with one in a corner. Would you have your neighbours say, "What shall we do at the congregation?—there is but one man that does all, and I can go as well to him at home." It is sooner done to speak to twenty or forty at once, than one by one.

But if, indeed, you think that these leading ministers do mislead the rest, there is the more need of the presence of such as you that discern it. Care you not that your brethren and the churches be misled? If you see it, you can give your reasons that may disclose it; and how know you what your light may do? seeing your brethren are not forced into error, but seduced; if it be so, why may not you do as much to undeceive them?

*Object.* 11. "But, as I hear many say, under pretence of associating, you will but fall into a multitude of factions! Not two counties can agree upon the same terms, but one company go one way, and another go another way; and why should we join with any of them till there be a greater likelihood of union among themselves?"

*Ans.* (1.) A self-condemning, unreasonable objection. Are they more divided where they associate, than you that are single, and every man goes on his own head? What if there were as many ways as counties? that is not so bad as to have as many ways as parishes. Have you no more modest a way to excuse your singularity and disunion, than by charging communion itself with singularity, and uniting with division? (2.) But wherein is it that this diversity of ways consisteth, which you complain of? Tell us the particulars; for I see no such great diversity. Most counties that I hear of that have associated, do only agree to hold communion

in stated meetings, and there to afford the best help they can to one another; and have not proceeded to any more particular agreements, unless perhaps to catechise, or personally instruct the people. And you cannot accuse them for diversity of ways, that descend to no more particular agreements. Indeed, this county, (Worcestershire,) and the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland, have published the articles of their associations and agreements: and I pray you compare them, and see whether one egg be more like another than they are in sense.

But it is likely you mean that our articles are not in the same words, and it is not the same forms "in terminis" that we agree upon. And what of that! I think there be above a hundred catechisms now in England, that yet contain the very same principles of religion. Will you fall out with catechising, and use none, because we all agree not in one, for the terms; or should you not be more encouraged to it, because among so many there is such full agreement in sense, that they are all but as one? How many of the ancient councils of the Church did determine only of the same canons? and yet this was not called a disagreeing diversity.

The truth is, this objection is commonly made by men that place the unity of the Church in matters that God never placed it in. We must not be one, because we subscribe not the same form of words, and agree not in every circumstance and expression. Whereas, indeed, we shall never be one, while unity is placed in such indifferent things. There are no greater dividers of the Church in the world than they that overdo in their pretendings to unity, and lay the

unity of the Church upon that which will not bear it. The Papists must needs centre all the churches in their pope, and by this means have made the agreement of the churches with them to be impossible; whereas, if they would have left out these false means of union, and the concomitants, we might have held our union and communion with them. So if formalists will lay the union of the Church on this gesture, and that vesture, and this order, and these words in prayer, preaching, &c., they will presently make union with them impossible; for there is a possibility of bringing all true Christians to unite in the revealed will of God, but no possibility of bringing them all to be of every formalist's opinion, and to use every gesture or form of words that he and his like shall impose upon them. I speak not against agreement in circumstances, but against unnecessary impositions therein, much more against laying the Church's unity and peace upon them. For example: at the reception of the Lord's Supper all were forced to kneel; at the eucharistical action of singing psalms, when we speak to God in the highest worship that we can perform on earth, no man was forced to kneel, or to any one gesture. In the former we were altogether by the ears, and driven from communion; and to this day thousands do separate from assemblies because they may not kneel, as formerly some did, because they might not have it any other way but kneeling: but in the other case, of singing, where all were left at liberty, I never heard of one contention about the gesture to this day; no, nor of any offence that one took at another. So in reading that parcel, that was then peculiarly called *the gospel*, all were bound to stand; and this bred contention: but

at the reading of the same words in the chapter, all had liberty to choose their gesture; and there I never heard of contention or offence. So I may say in our present case, we do not intend by associating to tie one another to new forms and ceremonies, nor make new terms of union. In this county we only chose out so much of the unquestionable work of presbyters, about that government which had been long neglected, which Episcopal Presbyterians and Congregational are agreed in, and resolved at present to practise that which all are for, rather than to neglect an acknowledged duty, because of by-circumstances in which we differ: so that all these parties may join with us, without deserting the principles of their parties: and I think this is no way of division or discord.

*Object.* 12. "But if this be all, what need we subscribe to Articles of Agreement? Is it not enough that we have all subscribed to the Scriptures already, if you require no more than what is there?"

*Ans.* We require no more but that all agree to perform those duties which God's Word doth command, and freely, without force, accord about those circumstances which Scripture hath not particularly determined, but given as general rules to discern according to providential changes, how to determine them ourselves. I mean only such circumstances in which an agreement may further us in our work, without agreeing in those where agreement is wholly unnecessary, and without laying the Church's peace upon any of them. We associate, not to make new laws and duties, but to accord in obeying the laws of God; and therefore the articles which we agree upon are Scripture articles. And if any scruple subscribing to any that are not the

very express words of Scripture, we will not differ with them, but will give them as much as is necessary in such Scripture words to subscribe. And the reason why we subscribe to these articles, though we have already subscribed to Scripture, is because they are matters long and generally neglected; and we do but hereby awaken ourselves to duty, and bind ourselves faster by renewing our obligations, and manifest our repentance for our former neglects, and our resolution for new obedience. As the people did in Ezra, that had taken heathen wives, and as it was ordinary in the Old Testament, after some notable breach of covenant, to renew this covenant with God: and as we used to do at sacraments and days of humiliation, though we have formerly taken the same covenant, yet we see cause to renew it again and again, especially as against those sins, and for those duties, where we have lately been most faulty.

And if it be no more than is your duty already; whether you subscribe or no, what reason have you to refuse an agreement or subscription to such duty, unless, as I said, because you are unwilling to perform it? He that is resolved to do it, is willing to be as much as may be obliged to it. When it must be done, the strongest bonds are surest.

*Object.* 13. "But some associations do not only practise, but subscribe to such things that we cannot in conscience agree to: as the use of lay-elders, as the Presbyterians do; the calling people to profess that they own us for their pastors, as you do."

*Ans.* I hope you are not of such dividing principles, as that you cannot in conscience hold communion with men that differ from you in as great a matter as this,



if they will but leave you free. Else, if you should plead conscience for such dividing, I would desire you to see that you can plead Scripture as well as conscience for it; for an erring conscience, engaging men against the will of God, is a poor excuse for sin: it is no more than to say, when I sin, I think I do not sin. It is a very good answer that Mr Lawson, in his book against Hobbs's politics, doth give to the common question, Whether an erring conscience bind? He saith, that an erring conscience is not conscience; for conscience is a sort of science, and error is not science, or knowledge.

But if these brethren would force you to subscribe with them in such matters as you mention, which your judgment is against, or else they will hold no communion with you, then it is they that exclude you, and not you that exclude yourselves. But I hope no associations now with us, will be guilty of such a course. I hope they are not resolved to refuse communion with all that are not for lay-elders, or such like matters. Then they would be the dividers, that lay the Church's unity and peace on such a doubtful point. But if they do themselves subscribe to that, may not you desire to join with them, with a modest excepting of that article alone in which you are unsatisfied? which, no doubt, if they be peaceable men, they will admit. And for the instance you give of our calling people to an express consent, viz., (1.) To Christianity. (2.) To their membership in the churches where we are pastors: I answer, It is a strange conscience that can find matter of scruple against this: when we are assured, that people cannot be members or Christians against their wills, and their wills cannot be known to

us but by the expressions of it, may we not call them to express it? Especially since parish-habitation is grown a less fit note than heretofore, and hearing is certainly no sufficient evidence; and people will take it to be a heinous injury to them if we should exercise discipline on them without their consent, and perhaps would have an action against us at law for it! And where consent must be necessarily signified, is not the most express signification more satisfactory to us, and obligatory to them, than an uncertain, implicit, dark signification, which our own consciences tell us, with abundance of them, is really no signification, nor intended by them to any such use, as not knowing what a church is, or what discipline is, but thinking that to be a church member, is no more than to be a parishioner, and come to church? Though we might well prove against the Separatists that this much, with the professions of the rest that had more knowledge, was enough to prove the truth of our churches, when we could do no more; yet if we shall now (after so many years of fullest liberty, when we may reform if we will) proceed no further, but tolerate, yea, plead for all such defects as will but consist with the truth of the churches; yea, pretend conscience against them, it is just with God to lay upon us so much of His wrath, and withdraw from us so much of His mercy as shall leave us no more to comfort us, but that still we are truly men, as our churches are truly churches.

But I must further tell you, that the objection is grounded on a mere mistake and wilful or careless oversight. For our agreement to call our people to a profession of their Christianity and church-member-

ship, is but with this exception—"Except any of us should judge that they can better exercise the fore-mentioned discipline without calling their people to such a profession of consent, in which case we will declare our reasons to our brethren of the ministry, in our meetings, and hear their advice when the case is opened. If, indeed, you can and will exercise Christ's discipline on all in your parish, without their express consent, we shall not refuse communion with you: only let us see in good sadness that you do it. First privately, and at last openly admonish all the scandalous, obstinate sinners in your parish; and if they do not repent and reform, reject them; and then we will not differ with you about calling them to this profession. But if you will not do this, you must pardon me if I conclude that, whatever you pretend, it is not the calling your people to this profession that you scruple in conscience, but it is the trouble and opposition that discipline exercised would draw upon you, that makes your flesh scruple anything that would engage you to it. And if this be so, faithfulness to God, and you, commandeth me to tell you, that the searching day of God is at hand, when self-seeking hypocrites shall have their reward. If I may speak according to my experience of the state of our ordinary congregations, I must needs conclude, that if you did but perceive that you must exercise Christ's discipline impartially, we should need no other argument to bring you to call for your people's consent, than your own safety and self-love, and that very flesh would be for it that is now against it. For I imagine, that if you should exercise this discipline on all your parish,

especially in great and bad congregations, you would hardly escape long from being knocked in the head, without a special preservation of God.

*Object.* 14. "But some associations are forming canons, and putting laws upon us which we know not that we are obliged to obey."

*Ans.* (1.) Associations sometimes draw up articles of agreement, whereto the several members oblige themselves by consent: but I know of none with us that presume to impose any laws on others. (2.) If the things you speak be made already your duty by God, either expressly by a particular command, or else by a general word determined by Providence, as about some necessary, variable circumstances; then it is no man, but God that imposeth on you, and it is not your refusing your consent that shall disoblige you or excuse you. But if they be things evil that are imposed on you by men; put in the reasons of your dissent, and take the leave of differing in that one point without withdrawing unnecessarily from their communion. If it be but about indifferent circumstances, as I would not have any, no, not by an agreement, much less by imposition, make common determinations of such without any need; so if they did, I must tell you that union and communion of churches is not indifferent, but necessary; and therefore reject it not upon the account of such things as you say yourselves are but indifferent.

*Object.* 15. "But we are not satisfied with their practice of suspending men from the Lord's Supper, that are not excommunicated: nor do we know any warrant for it."

*Ans.* Suspension is either penal or not penal. That

which is not penal is of two sorts:—(1.) Sometimes I deny to give men the sacrament, merely because I have no call or obligation on me to do it. In this case, the proof lies on you, viz., to prove my obligation. For example: I take not myself obliged to give the sacrament to all the county, if they require it; nor to any neighbour parish that have a pastor of their own; nor to any of this parish where I live that are separated members of another church; or that through hatred of discipline will be members of no particular church; or that will be members of no particular church, and yet will not come near me to acquaint me with their reasons. Nor am I bound to watch over, or administer sacraments to any that will not take me for their pastor in an ordinary stated course: no, nor at all, when I have so much to do with my own flock, that I cannot do such offices for others without neglecting as great duties to those whom I am more especially related and obliged to. Thus I suspend from the sacrament many thousands—that is, I do not give it them that I have nothing to do with, or no obligation to give it to. (2.) Sometimes we may forbear to give men the sacrament, while we are admonishing them of their sin, and calling them to repentance, or doing some necessary previous duty. As if the whole congregation would have the sacrament on Thursday, I may desire them to stay till the Lord's day, and in the meantime to humble themselves and prepare. If you will call this a suspending of the whole church, you may speak as you please. So if you know a man that hath offended his brother, you may persuade him, yea, require him ministerially, by authority from Christ, to leave his gift at the altar, and go first and

be reconciled to his brother, and then come and offer his gift. Though if he disobey, I will not presently without further trial censure him.

These acts are but negative, (a not giving the sacrament,) and not properly privative, and therefore not properly suspension. Duties must be done in right order: no duty is at all times to be performed. I am not bound to give a man the sacrament when I meet him in an alehouse, nor when I am admonishing him about a scandal; nor when three or four, or a dozen, shall send to me to bring it them to a private house, without any more ado. All things must be done decently, orderly, and to edification: and the forbearing a disorderly, indecent, unedifying administration, is no proper penal suspension.

And I am even ashamed that the Church is troubled about this question voluminously, by good men, that are for discipline and excommunication, whenas the things that we make such a stir about, are cases that are not likely to fall out in a congregation once in twenty years. For if a man have offended, and no man have admonished him, nor the fact by notoriousness or accusation be brought to the church, or officers, we are not bound to take notice of it, so far as to suspend any: nor do any that I know of plead for such a thing. But if the case be duly brought to the pastors, cannot they go to the person, or send for him before the very hour of the sacrament? Cannot they try whether he be penitent or not? And if he be penitent, we yield that he is not to be penally suspended. If he be not after other admonition, and the case is brought to the church, how can the officers be bound at the same time to give the sacrament to an

impenitent person, and also to avoid him for his impenitency, or to tell the congregation, in order to his recovery? If these men are for discipline, they must confess that I am bound either to tell the congregation of this offender, (and that I must do when he demandeth communion,) or else, if telling the officers be enough, I must require them to avoid him, if he be impenitent.

(2.) And this brings us to the other sort of suspension, which is penal and properly so called; and this is nothing but an avoiding of the communion of the offender, "pro hac vice." Where note: that it is one thing to be unsatisfied of the fact, and another to be unsatisfied of the person's repentance. In case the fact be not manifest, we confess there must be no suspension, save what prudence requires on the first mentioned grounds: as not properly penal. But if the fact be manifest any of these three ways—by notoriety, or violent presumption, or valid testimony—and yet the person express not his repentance, we are bound by God to avoid communion with him till he repent; and therefore though I cannot sentence him as habitually obstinate, and therefore shall yet stay longer in a course of admonition before we reject him, as from his church relation, or state of communion; yet on the proved act of sin, till he manifest his repentance, I must forbear the actual communion with him, and deny him actual communion with us: for I cannot take him to be penitent till he profess it (probably); and if I take him not to be penitent, I must take him to be yet in his sin, *e. g.*, to be an adulterer, a drunkard, &c., and so am frequently commanded to avoid him, and forbidden to have communion with him. And

this suspension is nothing but initial, actual excommunication; even exclusion from the act of communion, before (upon the proof of fixed obstinacy) we exclude from the state of communion. This is plain, and methinks is enough to end, or at least, to quiet this needless controversy. But if this be all, if you would indeed excommunicate only, and not suspend, this need not hinder any association. If you will go further than others, you may: as I confess you have great cause to go further than the most.

*Object.* 16. "But, say others, is not denying them the Lord's Supper a sufficient exercise of discipline on the most? What do you more to those that join not with you?"

*Ans.* Either your not giving them the sacrament is penal, or not. If not, it is no exercise of discipline at all. Do you exercise discipline on all the county, when you give them not the sacrament? If it be penal, it is irregular and harsh dealing to punish and initially excommunicate, for so it is, one half of a parish without an orderly trial, or calling them to speak for themselves, or without taking Christ's course of first admonishing them. So that it seems to me not very much to differ from them that gather churches irregularly, by casting off the most without a trial as no church members. And it is absurd to deprive them of actual communion so many years, and yet to let them remain in a *state* of communion, without any question. And if it be not a penal suspension, but they keep away themselves, it is gross neglect to let them alone so many years in the omission of church-communion and God's ordinances, while they are members.



As to our case, and the second part of the objection, I answer: We take not ourselves to have a pastoral charge of those that separate from us, and wilfully refuse to be members of our charge. We cannot make them our flock against their wills. We cast not out men that cast not out themselves, but only in an orderly regular way of discipline; that is not our fault, but their own.

And yet I must tell you, that I let not them all so pass: but though I think not that I have such a charge of them as the rest, yet I sometimes publicly admonish the most notorious, and pray for them, and require the church to avoid them, as to private familiarity, as they withdraw themselves from sacramental communion. For I think if a man call himself a brother, that is, a Christian, and yet live scandalously, I must avoid him, and warn my people so to do, though he never joined himself to any church. Though I know what Beza's conjectural observation is on Acts xxi., that they are called merely *disciples* as they are Christians not yet under the church order and officers, and they are called brethren when they are under officers and order. The observation hath its use; but it is not so always, but often otherwise.

*Object.* 17. "But are not there seasons when discipline may be forborne?"

*Ans.* Yes, no doubt, and preaching too; but that must not be ordinarily. It is hard that there was scarcely ever yet a season in England to execute it. I marvel when it will be seasonable, if not now!

*Object.* 18. "But why do you go without the magistrate, and lay his interest aside?"

*Ans.* (1.) We go not without his licence, for he grants

us liberty. (2.) Nor without his encouragement. (3.) But if we had neither, for discipline, sacraments, preaching, or praying, should we not use them? Is not Christ our Master? Is not His authority sufficient? How did all Christian churches till Constantine's days?

See our Agreement, (Artic. 6, et Reg. 20,) whether we go without or wrong the magistrate. Our monthly meeting in this church for matters of discipline consisteth of two or three justices of peace, two or three presbyters, three or four deacons, and about twenty-four delegates of the people, of the most wise and pious men, chosen yearly by themselves to represent them, not prohibiting any other to be there, disclaiming any proper office, but only looking that the church have no wrong, and doing that which private members may do.

*Object:* 19. "But some of the Prelatical men are offended at our leaving out the clause of *Christ's descent into hell* in our profession."

*Ans.* (1.) The Creed is part of our profession; and if these men cannot find it, and that clause in our papers, it is not our fault. (2.) The rest is about our exposition of the Creed, for our people's understanding; and either that clause is plain and commonly agreed on, as to the sense, or not. If it be, then what need we expound it? If not, methinks they should rather commend our modesty that thought ourselves unmeet judges of so great a controversy where the Church is so divided. (3.) It seems a late clause that came not into this Creed for some hundred years after Christ. (4.) The word *hell* was never put into the Creed by the Greek or Latin Church; and if it were a full and plain translation of the Greek *âδης*, or the Latin *inferi*, we should the

more easily receive it without scruple; but if we should change this English word by a stricter translation, you would be offended much more. See Dr Hammond in his Practical Catechism, pp. 286, 287, against the local descent into hell at large. Or, if you would see much more, read that learned treatise of Sandford and Parker, de Descensu Christi, and Bishop Usher, in his answer to the Jesuit, de Limbo, et Descensu Christi ad inferos. Read well but those two discourses, and you will but pity the self-conceitedness and confidence of such dry and raw discourses as Mr Ashwell and many of his train, that seem to place more hope of their success in reproaching the contrary-minded, and in bold pretences to antiquity and universality, than in any evidence that should compel assent.

If these men have the moderation of true Protestants, let them hear the words of one of them, Bishop Usher, de Limbo, p. 417—"And to speak truth, it is a matter above the reach of the common people to enter into the discussion of the full meaning of this point of the descension into hell; the determination whereof dependeth upon the knowledge of the learned tongues, and other sciences that come not within the compass of their understanding. . . . It having here likewise been further manifested what different opinions have been entertained by the ancient doctors of the Church, . . . I leave it to be considered by the learned, whether any such controverted matter may fitly be brought in to expound the rule of faith, which being common both to the great and the small ones in the Church, (August. Ep. 57, ad Dard.,) must continue such verities only as generally are agreed on by the common consent of all true Christians." Or if they have more

respect to the judgment of a Jesuit, let them hear one of greatest name there cited,—Suarez, tom. 2, in 3d part; Thom. Disp. 43, sect. 4. Si nomine articuli. . . . “If by an article of faith we understand a truth which all the faithful are bound explicitly to know and believe: so I do not think it necessary to reckon this among the articles of faith; because it is not a matter altogether so necessary for all men; and because that, for this reason peradventure, it is omitted in the Nicene Creed; the knowledge of which creed seemeth to be sufficient for fulfilling the precept of faith. Lastly, for this cause, peradventure Augustine and other fathers expounding the Creed, do not unfold this mystery to the people.”

And saith Bishop Usher, *ibid.*, “That He descended not into the hell of the damned by the essence of His soul, or locally, but virtually only, by extending the effect of His power thither, is the common doctrine of Thomas Aquinas and the rest of the schoolmen. Card. Bellarmine at first held it to be probable that Christ’s soul did descend thither, not only by His effects, but by His real presence also; but after having considered better of the matter, he resolved that the opinion of Thomas and the other schoolmen was to be followed.”

And whereas some of them do with confidence persuade us that this article was in the Creed from the beginning, they might also from a Jesuit have learned more modestly; John Busæus, de Descensu Christi, Thes. 33, cited by Bishop Usher, de Limbo, p. 309—who saith, “Saint Cyprian, or Ruffinus rather, in his Exposition of the Creed, denieth that this article is read in the Creed of the Church of Rome or the churches of the East; and some of the most ancient

fathers, while either they gather up the sum of the Christian faith, or expound the Creed of the Apostles, have omitted this point of doctrine. But at what time it was inserted into the Creed, it cannot certainly be determined." So far the Jesuit. And yet I will not imitate Mr Ashwell's royal authority on his title-page, and so believe it to be from the apostles, till another certain author is found out, as he saith, of the Creed; but I will contrarily believe it is not by the apostles, because it cannot be proved by the affirmers to be by them, and because I can prove a time since them when it was not in the common Creed.

And saith Bishop Usher, *ibid.* p. 310, "The first particular church that is known to have inserted this article into her creed is that of Aquilia, which added also the attributes of *invisible* and *impassible* unto God the Father Almighty in the beginning of the Creed, as appeareth by Ruffinus, who framed his Exposition of the Creed according to the order used in that church. But whether any other church in the world, for five hundred years after Christ, (mark this,) did follow the Aquilians in putting the one of these additions to the Apostles' Creed more than the other, can hardly, I suppose, be shewed out of any approved testimony of antiquity." He goes on further to prove this by instances of many authors' recitals of the Creed, and out of some ancient manuscripts, as is there to be seen, pp. 310, 311. Mr Ashwell thankfully confesseth some things that he learned of him. If he had had the patience to have learned these and many more, before he had so far exalted himself against those that are not of his opinion; he had not done amiss.

Whether the Arians first put it into the Church

Creed, I leave men to conjecture as they see cause when they have perused the said Bishop's allegations, p. 308; but certainly, when the Nicene fathers had none of it, the symbols of the Eastern Church, not knowing it, as Ruffinus tells us, these bastard fatherlings the Arians, saith the Bishop, did not only insert this clause, "He descended to the places under the earth," but added, for amplification, "whom hell itself trembled at." The like did they in another and a third creed.

And as Ruffinus testifieth that this article was neither in the Eastern nor the Roman Creeds, so he adjoined presently, as the Bishop noteth, p. 339, "yet the force or meaning of the word seemeth to have been buried, which some," saith the Bishop, "think to be the cause, why in all the ancient symbols that are known to have been written the first six hundred years after Christ, that of Aquilia only excepted, which Ruffinus followed, where the burial is expressed, there the descending into hell is omitted, as in that of Constantinople, for example, commonly called the *Nicene Creed*; and on the other side, where the descent into hell is mentioned, there the article of the burial is passed over, as in that of Athanasius: and to say the truth, the terms of *burial* and *descending into hell*, in the Scripture phrase, tend much to the expressing of the self-same thing." &c. So he.

These good men, therefore, that (some of them over their pots in an alehouse) do learnedly reproach us for not expounding the article of the descent to hell, or not twice expressing it, should have considered, that with us they more reproach the Nicene and twenty other creeds, yea, that of Marcellus in Epiphanius,

which is nearest to that now called the Apostles' of any so ancient a form that I have met with; and they should have thought it enough in us to retain it in our Creed, without presuming to expound it, till they can answer what Bishop Usher, Parker, and other Protestants in this cause have delivered; or if they be of their mind, they should confess that it is expressed in the terms which we in our explication do retain.

But, as they must confess, the Creed was not delivered by the apostles in English, and so the word *hell* was not in the original, so, if we must stick to the Creed indeed, we must translate it truly, and you must help us to some word that is of as comprehensive a signification as *ἀδης* is; which, as is most largely proved by Usher and Parker, besides many more, signifieth the "state of the dead" in general; or as applied to souls, "the invisible state of separated souls;" whereas, whatever etymology of the word *hell* be, yet we are sure that the common use (which is the master of language) hath among the vulgar appropriated it to the damned's place or state of torment. Saith Bishop Usher, p. 388:—"Some learned Protestants do observe, that in these words there is no determinate mention made either of *ascending* or *descending* either to heaven or hell, taking hell according to the vulgar acceptation; but of the general only, under which these contraries are indifferently comprehended; and that the words, literally interpreted, import no more than this, HE WENT UNTO THE OTHER WORLD." Allow us but this translation, and we shall please you; and surely you will not say, that the apostles agreed on your translation.

If you say, "Then the words are superfluous, as in-

timating no more than His death before expressed ;” I answer, that you may as well say, the apostles superfluously expressed Christ’s reviving after His rising. (Rom. xiv. 9.) “ For this end He both died, rose, and revived.” When indeed His reviving expresseth not the first reunion of soul and body, for that was before His rising; but His state of life among the living after. So here, His death expresseth His entrance into that state; but *ἀδης* signifieth the world of souls, or state itself of the dead, which dying He presently passed into. But of this Bishop Usher hath said enough in answer, *ib.* pp. 407, 408, and forward.

But yet for my part, I shall further tell you, that as I take the controversy to be of no greater moment than Suarez, Usher, and others do express, so also I suppose our difference about it is not so great as many do imagine: lay but aside the metaphysical controversy about the locality of spirits, and the Popish conceit of Christ’s fetching the Old Testament fathers from hell, which Usher shews that Marcion in all likelihood first hatched, and then our difference is but small; for what would you have that we do not grant you? Would you have us yield that Christ’s body lay in the grave? Why, who denieth it? Would you have us yield that His soul was in the region of the dead, or in a state of separation from the body? Who is there that questions it? Would you have us yield that this state was penal both to soul and body? We easily grant it you. Not that Christ had the pain of sense, or the loss of heaven, but the penalty of death: the soul’s being separated from the body was a penal state, as such. If any say that Christ’s soul was in Paradise, and there is no pain; I answer, There



may be somewhat penal, where there is not that which vulgarly is called pain: and what glory soever the separated soul of Christ did partake of, yet the separation from the body, as separation, was penal. There remaineth a desire in separated souls to be reunited to their bodies, and therefore it is a better state; and glory is not perfect till the man be perfect. Death is a penalty to the whole man, and not to the body alone; and thus far it is a most undoubted truth, that both to the separated soul of Christ, and now of the saints with Christ, there is something penal in this separation and imperfection remaining, though joined with exceeding glory. Saith Bishop Usher, p. 390:—“Heaven itself may be comprised within the notion of *ἀδης*: heaven, I say, not considered as it is a place of life and perfection, nor as it shall be after the general resurrection; but so far forth only as death, the last enemy that shall be destroyed, (1 Cor. xv. 26,) hath any footing therein; that is to say, as it is the receptacle of the spirits of dead men, held as yet dissevered from their bodies; which state of dissolution, though carried to heaven itself, is still a part of death's victory, (1 Cor. xv. 54, 55,) and the saints' imperfection. (Heb. xi. 40.)” Thus he. And Peter plainly saith, “Whom God did raise up, loosing the sorrows of death: forasmuch as it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” (Acts ii. 24.) And “Christ being raised from the dead, dieth now no more: death hath now no more dominion over him,” saith Paul, (Rom. vi. 9.) So that He was, as to His whole man, under some power or dominion of death for a time. Of this penalty on Christ's separated soul, and ours, see most fully Parker, l. 2, sect. 46 ad 50.

What would you have yet more granted? Is it that Christ triumphed over Satan and hell, and convinced the unbelieving, impious, damned souls of their sin and remediless misery? Why, we do not deny you; for as the damned man (Luke xvi.) is said to see Abraham and Lazarus in his bosom, and the wicked in hell have such a knowledge of God and heaven, as sufficeth to convince them of the loss and misery, and to torment them; so we deny not but they might have such a sight of Christ, and He might make such a manifestation of Himself to them.

Would you have us grant that he went to *âδης*, to procure the deliverance of the captives of *âδης*? we deny it not: His humiliation is the cause of our exaltation; His death and going to *âδης* was to purchase deliverance for all His members, dead and living, that the dead bodies might in time be raised, and the separated souls be reunited to the bodies, and the whole man perfected. Would you have us believe that He went to bring the glad tidings of this to the spirits of the just? we do believe it; so that they that believed in Him before might intuitively behold their Lord in whom they believed, in their own present state, and might be the assurance of the resurrection of their bodies, and their final perfection.

But if, besides all this, you would have us believe that Christ's soul was locally in its essence in the hell of the damned; and that thence He fetched the souls of the old fathers out of the limbus, that is part of hell, here we must leave you:—[1.] Because that else we must be worse than the Papists, whose schoolmen are content with a virtual presence, and deny a local. [2.] Because we know not what locality of spirits is:

and [3.] Because in the latter branch, we are loath to be either Marcionites, or Papists, till we see more reason for it; especially, we have no mind of your speculations in our Creed.

*Object.* 20. The last objection that I have been troubled with, is against the title that we put over the old Creed, *the ancient Western Creed*. And what is the matter here? Engagement to their opinion makes them jealous; and jealousy suspecteth the most innocent syllables. Was not this the *ancient Western Creed*? Yes, no doubt; they mean not to deny it; but they think we intimate hereby a distinction between the Eastern Creed and the Western; and consequently intimate, that this Creed was not the universal Creed of the Church, and composed and delivered for that use by the apostles.

But our intimated distinction can be supposed necessary to intimate no more, than that the East and West did ordinarily make use of several creeds in baptism and other solemnities; and that this was it that the West made use of. So that whether the East also, and all churches used this sometimes, or whether it were thus formed by the apostles, are questions that we never intended to decide.

But being called to it, I must give a further account of my own opinion. You cannot in modesty, surely, either deny the aforesaid ground of the distinction from the use of the several churches, nor yet the antiquity of the terms of the distinction; much less can you think that learned and wise men have not used it, and brought it to our hands. He that is your chief author for the apostolic composure of it, doth give you himself the matter and terms of this distinction—I

mean Ruffinus ; and Bishop Usher useth it frequently in the aforesaid dispute, in his *Dissertatio de Symbolis*, and in other writings, to say nothing of Pithæus, Vossius, or any others. Why then doth the quarrel begin with us ?

I have read Mr Ashwell, and others of his opinion, as impartially as I could, being as willing to believe that the apostles were the authors of this symbol as not, if I could see any evidence for it ; but I must confess the reading of such writings as his do more confirm me in my former opinion, which is as followeth :—

(1.) I do believe that Christ himself is the author of the ancient Creed ; expressly in *Matt. xxviii. 19*, “Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” And that the Creed at first contained but these three articles : and that all that were baptized, at age, were to profess this belief, viz., that they believed in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And I desire them that are confident of the contrary opinion, to confute what Parker hath so copiously brought for the proof of it : and learned Ludov. Crocius that followeth him.

(2.) And yet I do fully believe, that before the New Testament was written, the apostles taught their catechumens and persons admitted to baptism the sum of the gospel or Christian religion in a few distinct articles. For it is certain that they could not deliver all the history or doctrine of Christ to every convert ; and as certain, that they must deliver all the essentials before they could make a Christian, and that every Christian that was converted by them was made such by the power of these essential truths ; for

the essentials of the subjective Christianity are the image and effects of the essentials of objective Christianity or faith; as the image in the wax is of that in the seal.

(3.) I am persuaded that the method of the apostles in delivering their Creed, or essential verities, was according to Christ's platform; even to deliver the doctrine of the Trinity, and what was found necessary to the explication of any one of the three articles; and consequently, that they ordinarily taught the same doctrine that is now in our Creed to all their converts; yet enlarging it, especially on the second article, which was it that the world did most resist.

(4.) I do believe that it cannot be proved, and therefore should not be affirmed, that the apostles did in any one precise form of words, explain the three articles laid down by Christ; but as they ordinarily preached the same truths, and that much in the same or like phrase, not affecting novelty; so they did not compose this into any precise form of words, but delivered the same great truths in such expressions as they found meet for the persons with whom they had to do.

(5.) Thus I believe that every Christian and church was a living gospel, or book, in which the Creed, and all essentials of Christianity, doctrinal and practical, were written by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of the preaching of these fundamental truths; and this before the Scripture of the New Testament was written.

(6.) This I believe was the great tradition of the essentials of religion, distinct from Scripture: baptism itself was a notable means to deliver down these truths.

(7.) Yet I am not against a strict agreement upon such a form of profession "in terminis" without liberty to change a word ; but think that exactness is as necessary in this, both for the sake of truth and unity, as in most matters that are left to man.

(8.) The reasons why I cannot believe that this present form of words, as now in our hands, was either composed by the apostles, or the universal Creed from the beginning, are these following, among many more :—

[1.] Because of the no-proof that is brought by the affirmers that should prove it.

[2.] Because I find the fathers in the first ages constantly giving up the Creed of that Church in other words, and in forms all differing one from another, and not one of them giving us this very form of above three hundred years at least after Christ. Ignatius, Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, thrice recite the Church's faith, and so do many others ; and all in several forms of words, and not one of them in this form. So that it would make a man shake the head to read such kind of proofs as Mr Ashwell's, that this is the Apostles' Creed ; he heaps up other forms to prove the apostolic composure of this form. What did he think of his readers when he offers them with highest confidence such proofs as most effectually disprove the thing he brings them for ? Who can think that all these men would offer to give us the very symbol of Christianity in forms of their own, and various forms, and none of them use the Apostles' form, if such a thing in precise terms had then been by them commended to the churches ? Those willing men that can make their own faith, may believe many such matters as these ; but so cannot I. The first that I remember

to have read that is like the present form, though maimed, is that of Marcellus, in Epiphanius, 72. Heresies, which are delivered with such expressions adjoined, as would make a man imagine that it was the matter and not the form of words which he professeth to have received from his ancestors: nor is there any one cited by Mr Ashwell himself of those elder times, that seems the same form with ours, but only this of Marcellus; and that of the Latin Chrysostom and one of Tertullian's de Veland. Virg. seems to be part of this. And among such abundance of forms of words, it were strange if they could possibly miss sometimes of delivering these few principles in the terms we now use. And for that of Marcellus, it is in many things different from ours; and that of Tertullian is so different that no man can prove that ever the author had seen our form. And as for that of Chrysostom, if it were his, he was about four hundred years after Christ; but indeed there is no such matter in his works. No wonder if Mr Ashwell could not find it in Sir H. Sevil's edition, of Fronto Ducaeus des, but only in the Latin edition of Erasmus, saith a far greater antiquary, Bishop Usher, de Limbo, pp. 310, 311, "For as for the two Latin expositions thereof that go under the name of S. Chrysostom, the latter whereof hath it, the former hath it not, and the others that are found in the tenth tome of S. Austin's works among the Sermons de tempore; because the authors of them, together with the time wherein they were written, be altogether unknown, they can bring us little light in this inquiry." All the rest of the three first centuries at least, that Mr Ashwell citeth, are set as if it were

on purpose to make his reader wonder at his self-confutation.

[3.] Another of my reasons is, because I find so many clauses new in this form that we now have, and find withal that the arising of new heresies was an avowed reason of adding new clauses to the Creed in those days, that it makes me much suspect that all the rest, except the three essential articles, were brought in by degrees, as heresies gave occasion, and never formed all at once.

That several new clauses were added to this, Bishop Usher may satisfy you in his *Dissertatio de Symbolis*, and other writings, *ibid.*—"Quo tamen hodie Romana Ecclesia utitur Symbolum, additamentis aliquot auctius legi, res ipsa indicat . . ." The additions not found in any of the more ancient copies are these, "Creator of heaven and earth," added to the first article: which in likelihood was against that rabble of heretics that feigned the world to be created by angels, yea, bad angels: also the word "conceived" is added; the oldest forms having it "born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary." Also the word "dead" is added, "he descended into hell," and the name of "God" and the attribute "Almighty" to the article of Christ's sitting at the Father's right hand. Also the word "Catholic" is added to the "holy Church," and so is "the communion of saints" and "the life everlasting." All which are a considerable part of so short a form. And that clauses were used to be put into the Creed upon occasion of heresy, is well known of other creeds; and Ruffinus confesseth of their Aquileian Creed, thus, "His additur invisibilem: et impossibilem sciendum quod duo isti Ser-



mones in Ecclesiæ Romanæ Symbolo non habentur : constat autem apud nos additos hærescos causa Sabellii, illius perfecto quæ à nostris Patri passiana appellatur. . . . Ut ergo excluderetur talis impietas de Patre, videntur hæc addisse majores," &c. Ruffin. in Symb. c. 7.

Saith Bishop Usher, in his Sermon of the Church's Unity, p. 17—"This Creed, though for *substance* it was the same everywhere, yet for *form* was somewhat different, and in some places received more enlargements than in others. The Western Churches herein applied themselves to the capacity of the meaner sort, more than the Eastern did ; using in their baptism that shorter form of confession, commonly called the Apostles' Creed, which in the more ancient times was more brief also than now it is : as we may easily perceive by comparing the symbol recited by Marcellus Ancyranus, with the expositions of the Apostles' Creed written by the Latin doctors, wherein the mention of the Father's being 'maker of heaven and earth,' the Son's 'death,' and 'descended into hell,' and the 'communion of saints,' is wholly omitted. All which, though they were of undoubted verity, yet . . . . and need not necessarily be inserted into that symbol, which is the badge and cognisance whereby the believer is to be differenced and distinguished from the unbeliever. The Creed which the Eastern Churches used in baptism was larger than this ; being either the same, or very little different from that which we commonly call the Nicene Creed."

And he begins his Dissertation de Symb. thus,—  
"Licet apud omnes tum orientis, tum occidentis Ecclesias ut unus Dominus, et Baptismus ita et una

fides fuerit; una tamen et eadem verborum formula fidei symbolum, quo in cultus Domini professione, et Baptismi susceptione, illæ sunt usæ, non fuisse conceptum, omniumque Romanum fuisse brevissimum, in symboli explicatione, Ruffinus Aquileinsis Presbyter jamdudum nos docuit: de additamentis etiam apud Occidentales ad Romanum hoc oppositis in præmio suo sic præfatus."

And he useth the distinction in his preface, "Meam de Occidentalis et Orientalis Ecclesiæ Symbolis sententiam," &c. Et passim, pp. 18, 13, 19, 20, 21, 26, &c.

[4.] And it is enough to debilitate the force that some imagine to lie in the title apostolic, that the Nicene Creed was as confidently, and for aught ever I yet saw proved, as anciently called the Apostles' Creed as this, and said to be delivered from the apostles. Saith Usher, Dissert. p. 16, "Sed et ab Occidentalibus consimiliter Ecclesiis longius istud Symbolum et Apostolicum habitum et Nicænum etiam nominatum fuisse, observare liceat. Sic enim habet Ordo Romanus in præfatione Symboli cujus recitationi præmissa, ante administrationem baptismi: Audite suscipientes Evangelici symboli Sacramentum, a Domino, inspiratum, ab Apostolis institutum, cujus pauca quidem verba sunt, sed magna Mysteria.—Et in Cœnæ Sacræ celebratione Latina Missa, quæ circa annum DCC. in usu fuit, de eodem adjicit Finito symbolo Apostolorum dicat Sacerdos, Dominus vobiscum."

And p. 17, he had before said, "Hanc fidei formulam, ut ab Apostolis Ecclesiæ traditum, et à Nicænis Patribus promulgatum, laudat Epiphanius." And Cyril, or John of Jerusalem, calls the Jerusalem Creed by the name of *Ἀγίας καὶ ἀποστολικῆς πίστεως*, Catech.

18. Bishop Usher, de Limbo, p. 309, saith, that "The Creed of the Council of Constantinople, much larger than our common Creed, was itself no less than the other (N.B.) heretofore both accounted and named the Apostles' Creed: and it is not to be thought it would leave out any article that was then commonly believed to have been any parcel of the Creed received from the apostles." And he citeth for the title Epiph. in *Ἀγκυρ*, p. 518, and the Latin ancient missal before mentioned. And citing Epiphanius again to the same purpose in his Sermon on Unity, he addeth that "Cassianus avoucheth as much, where he urgeth this against Nestorius, as the Creed anciently received by the Church of Antioch, from whence he came; and that the second General Council at Constant. approved it as most ancient and agreeable to baptism," apud. Theod. lib. 5, cap. 9.

Many other reasons that stick with me are at large expressed in Parker de Descen. lib. 4; which whoever will read impartially with judgment, I dare venture him easily upon Mr. Ashwell's answer to them; the sum of which alloweth the fathers to make additions, as being but an explication; whenas our question is only of the form of words. If any of them may be altered, and additions made, who knows which of them be apostolical? and why may not others now do the like? What commission can those fathers shew more than other pastors of the Church?

Far am I from believing him, that none but an apostolical spirit could have known by the Scriptures which were fundamental articles of faith, thus far to have summed them up, when Scripture so expressly tells men which are the principles, and which life and death are laid upon.

And further am I from believing him that there is so much difference between the Creed and the Scripture as he expresseth, as if there were no understanding nor keeping our religion for all the Scripture, were it not for the Creed, but the whole frame of our religion would fall instantly to the ground; and the contempt which he spitteth in the face of the Scriptures, I must needs say, I do dislike, and think it most unseemly in a man that is so tender of having the nakedness of the fathers opened, and that hath no more sensible an answer to give to those testimonies of the Church of France and of England, so valued by him, and of Cyril and Paschasius, who all take the Creed on the authority of the Scripture, from whence it is gathered. (See his, pp. 115, 168, 169, and 178 to Object. 9.) It is past my understanding, that the bare words that Christ "was crucified, dead, buried," &c., should teach a man more plainly to what end it was that Christ did all this, whether only for example, as the Socinians, or for ransom, sacrifice, propitiation, &c., than the Scriptures, that at large set forth these ends. As plain as the Creed is, he must needs reserve the undoubted exposition and applying of this rule to the Church and ancient fathers, "in whose writings," he saith, "the apostles have left it us, these being their successors, to whose care and custody they not only committed the oracles of God in writing, and the Creed by word of mouth, but the interpretation also of both, as they heard them expounded from their own mouths while they preached and lived amongst them; for in vain had the apostles given them the words, if they had not given them the sense withal, to stop the mouths of heretics."—True, it were in vain, if the

words themselves are nonsense. I know the apostles have successors so far, as to have the care of expounding this Scripture delivered to them, by the ordinary helps of grace, art, and nature, discerning the sense by the words; but oh that I knew where to find that church that could give me the sense of all God's oracles, by this undoubted tradition, as from the apostles themselves, or that I knew the names or characters of those fathers that had this *depositum* by tradition from the apostles, and where I may find it left to us! Is it each father individually, or is it the greater number together? And how shall we take the vote, or know which of them to account a father, and which not? Surely, when I read them telling us no more of the sense of the oracles, and so often erring and disagreeing, I cannot believe that their memories were all so good, as to deliver down from father to son an exposition of the Bible, without writing; and if ever any of them had such a voluminous commentary in his brain, from the hand of an apostle, which was not thought meet to be given in writing, the issue by this time may convince us that either it was intended only for themselves, or else that indeed such a world of matter would have been more surely kept in writing than this tradition hath hitherto kept it; for I think most of us love our fleshly ease so well, that if we knew where the book or the church were that would give us such a certain exposition of Scripture, as from the apostles, we would be glad of it, not only to the quieting of our minds, but also for the sparing our time and labour that we now bestow in studying.

Yet still I say, as before, that I doubt not but the principles were preached before the gospel was writ-

ten, and that thousands were made Christians by the reception of those principles; and that all Christians and churches of them successively contained these principles written in their hearts; and that the great articles of the Creed, believing in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were in terms imposed on the Church by Himself; and that the meaning of them was still taught to the catechumens and the Church. And that the churches did well to keep the sum of faith in certain forms of words; and I would they had made fewer, and changed them less: and I think it meet that they be still used in baptism, and on other occasions of public confession of faith in our congregations.

But yet I am not convinced that the apostles did compose this form of words, or any other to that use; nor that it was composed for some hundreds of years after Christ, though the same articles were then professed in several forms of words, and those articles were all delivered from Christ and His apostles: nor do I believe that the form now called the Apostles' Creed was any more theirs, or more ancient than some other forms; nor do we owe it any more belief or reverence than we do the Jerusalem or Nicene Creed; and yet I truly much reverence both, and believe them all. Nor do I think that ever this Creed was the form which the universal Church did use above others; but think that in the third century the Nicene was the more common. So much (and perhaps too much) to these objections.

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TO THE  
REVEREND AND FAITHFUL MINISTERS OF CHRIST  
IN THE SEVERAL COUNTIES OF THIS LAND,  
AND THE  
GENTLEMEN AND OTHER NATIVES OF EACH COUNTY,  
NOW INHABITING THE CITY OF LONDON.

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REVEREND AND BELOVED BRETHREN,—The whole design and business of this discourse being the propagation of the gospel, and saving of men's souls, I have thought it not unmeet to acquaint you with another work to that end, which we have set on foot in this county, and to propound it to your consideration, and humbly invite you to a universal imitation. You know, I doubt not, the great inequality in ministerial abilities, and that many places have ministers that are not qualified with convincing lenity, and awakening gifts. Some must be tolerated, in the necessity of the Church, that are not likely to do any great matters towards the conversion of ignorant, sensual, worldly men; and some that are learned, able men, and fitted for controversies, may yet be unfit to deal with those of the lower sort. I suppose, if you peruse the whole ministry of a county, you will not find so many such lively, convincing preachers as we could wish. I take it for granted, that you are sensible of the weight of eternal things, and the worth of souls; and that you

will judge it a very desirable thing that every man should be employed according to his gifts, and the gospel in its light and power should be made as common as possibly we can. Upon these and many the like considerations, the ministers in this county resolved to choose out four of the most lively, yet sober, peaceable, orthodox men, and to desire them once a-month to leave their own congregations, to the assistance of some other, and to bestow their labour in the places where they thought there was most need ; and as we were resolving upon this work, the natives of this county inhabiting the city of London having a custom of feasting together once a-year, and having at their feast collected some moneys by contribution, for the maintaining of a weekly lecture in this county, besides other good works, did, by their stewards, desire us to set up the said lecture, and to dispose of the said moneys in order thereto ; and their judgments upon consultation did correspond with our design. So that the said money being sufficient to satisfy another that shall, in their absence, preach in their own places, we employ it accordingly, and have prevailed with some brethren to undertake this work.

I propound to your consideration, reverend brethren, and to you, the natives of each county, in London, whether the same work may not tend much to the edification of the Church, and the welfare of souls, if you will be pleased speedily and effectually to set it on foot through the land ? Whether it may not, by God's blessing, be a likely means to illuminate the ignorant, and awaken the secure, and countermine seducers, and hinder the ill-success of Satan's itinerants, and win over many souls to Christ, and estab-



lish many weak ones in the faith?—And not doubting but your judgments will approve of the design, I humbly move, that you will please to contribute your faculties to the work—viz., That the Londoners of each county will be pleased to manifest their benevolence to this end, and commit the moneys to the hands of the most faithful, orthodox ministers, and that they will readily and self-denyingly undertake the work.

I hope the gentlemen, natives of this county, will be pleased to pardon my publishing their example, seeing my end is only the promoting of men's salvation, and the common good.

And that you may more fully understand the scope of our design, I shall annex the letter, directed to the several ministers of the county, which the lecturers send to the ministers of the place, and receive his answer, before they presume to preach in any congregations.

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TO

ALL THE REST OF THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

IN THIS COUNTY,

OUR REVEREND AND BELOVED BRETHREN, GRACE AND  
PEACE IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

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REVEREND BRETHREN,—The communication of the heavenly evangelical light, for the glory of our Redeemer in the conversion, edification, and salvation of

men's souls, is that which we are bound to by many obligations, as Christians, and as ministers of Christ for His Church, and therefore must needs be solicitous thereof; and it is that which the Spirit of grace, where it abideth, doth proportionably dispose the heart to desire: by convictions of the excellency and necessity of this work, and of our own duty in order thereto, and by the excitation of undeserved grace, our hearts are carried out to long after a more general and effectual illumination and saving conversion of the inhabitants of this county in which we live; which, while we were but entering upon a consultation to promote, it pleased God, without our knowledge of it, to put the same thoughts into the hearts of others. The natives of this county of Worcester, who dwell in London, meeting at a feast, (as is their yearly use,) collected a sum of money for the setting of eight poor boys to trades, and towards the maintaining of a weekly lecture, and have committed the execution of this last to our care; and upon consultation with their stewards; and among ourselves, both they and we are satisfied, that a moveable lecture, 'on the Lord's day, is the likeliest way for the improvement of their charity, to the attainment of their ends;—for many people through poverty cannot, and many through negligence will not come to a week-day's lecture; experience telleth us, that such are usually attended but little by those that have the greatest need;—and thus the benefit may extend to more than if it were fixed in one place.

We have therefore desired our reverend and dear brethren, Mr Andrew Tristram, minister at Clent, Mr Henry Oasland, minister at Bewdley, and Mr Thomas Baldwin, minister at Wolverley, and Mr Joseph Treble,

minister at Lench, to undertake this work, and that each of them will be pleased, every fourth Lord's day, to preach twice in those places where they shall judge their labours to be necessary; and as we doubt not but their own congregations will so far consent for the good of others, so we do hereby request of you our brethren, that when any of them shall offer their labours for your congregations, in preaching the said lecture, you will receive them, and to your power further them in the work. For as we have no thoughts of obtruding their help upon you without your consent, so we cannot but undoubtedly expect, that men fearing God, and desiring their people's everlasting good, will cheerfully and gratefully entertain such assistance. And we hope that none will think it needless, or take it as an accusing the ministry of insufficiency; for the Lord doth variously bestow His gifts. All that are upright are not equally fitted for the work; and many that are learned, judicious, and more able to teach the riper sort, are yet less able to condescend to the ignorant, and so convincingly and fervently to rouse up the secure, as some that are below them in other qualifications; and many that are able in both respects, have a barren people; and the ablest have found by experience that God hath sometimes blessed the labours of a stranger to that which their own hath not done. We beseech you, therefore, interpret not this as an accusation of any, which proceedeth from the charity of our worthy countrymen in London, and from the earnest desires of them and us to further the salvation of as many as we can. And that you may have no jealousies of the persons deputed to this work, we assure you that they are approved men,

orthodox, sober, peaceable, and of upright lives, happily qualified for their ministerial work, and zealous and industrious therein; and so far from being likely to sow any errors, or cause divisions, or draw the hearts of people from their own faithful pastors, that they will be forward to assist you against any such distempers in your flocks. Not doubting, therefore, but as you serve the same Master, and are under the same obligations as we, so as many as are heartily addicted to His service will readily promote so hopeful a work, we commend you and your labours to the blessing of the Lord.

Your Brethren and Fellow-labourers in the Work of the Gospel,

*Kidderminster—*

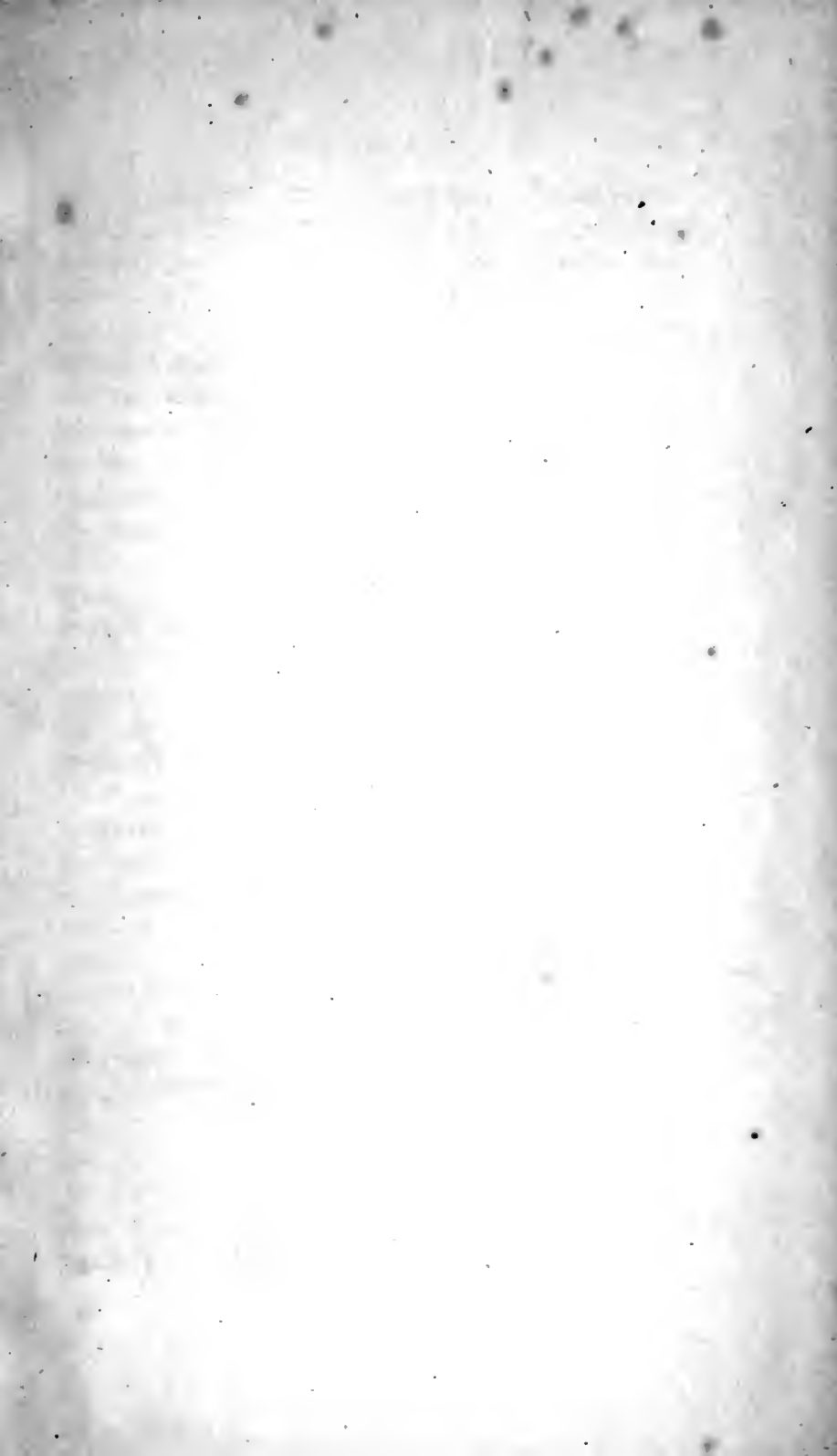
In the name, and at the desire of the Ministers of this Association,

RICHARD BAXTER.  
JOHN BORASTON.  
JARVIS BRYAN.

*Evesham—*

In the name of the Ministers of this Association,  
GILES COLLIER.  
GEORGE HOPKINS.  
JOHN DOLPHIN.

THE END.



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