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*Ministers cautioned against the
Occasions of Contempt.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

Ministers of the Province

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS-BAY, in NEW-ENGLAND,

AT THEIR

Annual Convention,

In *BOSTON*; May 31. 1744.

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N. B. The Things passed over for Want of Time,
when the Sermon was preached, are inserted in
their proper Places.

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A

Convention SERMON.

TITUS II. 15.

--- *Let no Man despise thee.*

THE Epistle, out of which I have taken the Text, was sent by *Paul* to *Titus*. It would take up too much of the Time allow'd me, to enter upon the Character of this eminent Servant of GOD ; especially in his Capacity as an Officer in the Church of CHRIST, under which Consideration, and not as a private Christian, he is here wrote to.

I shall only say, he was one of *Paul's* Converts, a Fellow-Labourer with him in the Kingdom and Patience of JESUS CHRIST, and his Companion in Travels. It was with *Paul* that he went to *Crete* ; and by him he was left there to serve the Ends of the Gospel. Some say, he was now constituted *Bishop* of *Crete* ; but 'tis remarkable, he is not spoken of as the *Bishop* of this Place, by any of the Fathers within the three first Centuries : Nor does the Scripture at all favour such

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a Notion. It rather represents him as tarrying here on some *temporary* Occasion, than as a *fixt Officer*.

The Story is thus,

Paul and *Titus*, upon their coming to *Crete*, found Things in a very unsettled State. For though considerable Numbers had embraced Christianity, they had too much neglected *Order*. They had few or no *ordained Elders* among them ; and, perhaps, were not as yet formed into distinct Churches : Or, if this was the Case, they had not got into a *regular State*, without which 'tis impossible Societies should subsist long without falling into Confusion. Now, *for this Cause* it was, that *Titus was left in Crete, that he might set in Order the Things that were wanting, and ordain Elders in every City* : Which, when he had done, the more special End of his Continuance in this Place was answered, and he might travel elsewhere, as in all Probability he did.

But however this be, his being at *Crete*, in the Service of CHRIST, and under peculiar Circumstances of Difficulty, was the Occasion of *Paul's* writing this Epistle to him ; in which, many are the Advices he gives him for the Direction of his Conduct, as one intrusted with the Management of the Affairs of CHRIST'S Kingdom.

He is very particular in minding him of the *necessary Qualifications* for the sacred Office, that he might put none into it, who were not fit for so important a Trust. And he the rather chose to enlarge upon this Head, as *many unruly and Vain-talkers and Deceivers* were scattered up and down, *subverting whole Houses, and teaching Things they ought not for filthy Lucre's Sake*. It may seem strange, that, in the Days of the *Apostles*, there should be such Numbers of *false Teachers* : But so it was in Fact ; yea, and they were grown to such
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an Height in *Impudence*, even in those primitive Times, that they could exalt themselves above the very *Apostles*. And in Order to this, they were so far Masters in the Art of Deceit, as to *transform themselves into Angels of Light* : Nor did they stick at any Thing, so they could but lessen the *Apostolic* Reputation, and wind themselves into the Affections of the Populace. The *Apostle* seems very sollicitous, that the Church might be rid of these *false* and *dangerous Teachers* ; and, as the best Expedient to this End, directs, that none might have committed to them the Dispensation of the Gospel, but *well qualified* Persons ; one essential Requisite in whose Character he has declared must be that, *able, by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and convince the Gainsayers.*

Upon which it is natural to remark, if none are allow'd to be intrusted with the Ministry but those who have *Ability to convince Gain-sayers*, it must certainly be the Duty of such, when they are in the Ministry, to make Use of this *Ability* against those, who *teach Things which they ought not.* How else will they answer one of the express Ends of their being put into the sacred Office ? And to what Purpose is it, that this *Ability* must be found in them, if 'tis not their Duty to make Use of it, as the Occasion of the Church shall render it needful ?

But among all the Directions given to *Titus*, for his Conduct as a *Minister*, there is no one of more Weight than that in the Text, *Let no Man despise thee.* And 'tis of common Obligation on all, whom it has pleased God to put into the Ministry. They should all behave so as not to be despised, so as to give no *just Occasion* to be so. That's the Meaning of the Words. Otherwise, Ministers would have a hard Task indeed. Their Duty would be an utter Impossibility. For 'tis not in their Power, though they should be *as wise as Serpents,*

Serpents, and harmless as Doves, to pass through the World, and not be despised, They may, through the Supply of the SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST, behave so circumspectly and inoffensively, as that none may have Reason to treat them with Contempt; but they can't command the Wills of other Men, they have not the Government of their Passions, or Prejudices, or Lusts. The GREAT SAVIOUR himself, though a Prophet of unspotted Innocence, was yet *despised of Men*. And shall the Disciple be above his LORD? Shall the World vilify the MASTER, and the *Servant* be better treated? The Spirit of too many is such, that we may expect, be we as cautious as we will, to be derided. And this indeed seems to be implied in the Text it self. The Exhortation, *Let no Man despise thee*, plainly supposes a too great Proneness in People to treat Ministers with Contempt; and their Duty lies, not in People's not despising them, but in not deserving their Contempt, in doing nothing that may lay a just Foundation for it.

In further speaking to the Text, I shall,

- I. Say something of that *Disposition* there is in *People* to despise the Ministers of CHRIST.
- II. Show wherein they should take Care to avoid the *Occasions* of Contempt.
- III. Represent the *Obligations* which lie upon them to such a Care.

The whole will then be followed with some suitable *Application*.

I. I am, in the first Place, to speak of that *Disposition* there is in *People* to despise the Ministers of CHRIST. Not that I would insinuate, as if they were generally faulty in this Respect. Many there are, GOD be thanked, who acknowledge the special Relation they bear to JESUS CHRIST, and treat them as *Stewards of the Mysteries of GOD*; esteeming them highly in Love, both for

for their *Office*, and *Work's Sake*. And some, it may be, think more highly of them than is meet. Those, to be sure, do so, who have their *Persons in Admiration*; blindly receiving all they say, as though it were infallible Truth. This is doing them too much Honour; yea, 'tis placing them in the Room of CHRIST, and calling them *Master* in Opposition to the *one Master in Heaven*. Brethren, we renounce all claim to such undue Reverence. We don't pretend to *have Dominion over your Faith*, but only to be *Helpers of your Joy*. And instead of an implicit Faith in our Dictates, we commend to you the Example of the noble *Bereans*, who *searched the Scriptures daily*, to see whether the Things taught them were the Truths of GOD, yea, or nay: Nor dare we advise you to *hold fast* what we deliver to you, in the Course of our Preaching, only as you perceive it to be *good*, upon full *Proof* from the Word of CHRIST. *To the Law, and to the Testimony*: If what we say does not agree herewith, there is no Light nor Truth in it.

You may, perhaps, have conceiv'd so high an Opinion of the uncommon Sanctity of some particular Ministers, in Distinction from others, and the divine Teachings they are under, as to suppose them to have got beyond all Danger of Mistakes; you may be ready to think it impossible you should err, while you follow the Instructions of Men filled with such extraordinary Measures of the HOLY GHOST: But you ought to remember, 'tis not always those who make the greatest Pretences to the SPIRIT, who are most favoured with his *real* Influences; nor are any since the Days of Inspiration, so led by the SPIRIT as to be infallible. Alas! the best qualified Ministers are but Men; Men of *like Passions* with your selves: And of this they too often give Proof by the Errors they run into, in Principle as well as Practice. They may not therefore be depended on, as though you could not be misguided by

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them. Be their Gifts, or Graces, or Zeal, what they will ; or let their Pretences to the *immediate* Conduct of the Divine SPIRIT be as peremptory as they will, you must not believe this, or the other Thing, to be the Truth, as it is in JESUS, upon their Authority : No, but you must bring what they say, with an unprejudiced Mind, to the HOLY BIBLE ; closing in with it, or rejecting it, as you find it, upon Trial, to agree or disagree with that *one only Test* of all religious Truth : Nor will you otherwise be able to excuse your selves another Day. It won't then suffice to plead, that you were told this, or that, by those you esteemed Men *extraordinarily* assisted by the SPIRIT ; for you had the *Scriptures* to repair to, and might have examined what they said by that sacred and unerring Rule : Which, if you neglected to do, believing *Man* rather than GOD, how will you hold up your Heads ? 'Twon't lessen, but aggravate your Fault, to pretend you submitted your Consciences to meer humane Dictates ; for it will then appear, that your embracing any Thing for a Truth of GOD, upon any Authority short of his, was setting up that Authority in his Throne, and paying that Honour to the Creature, which is due only to the Creator.

But if there are some, who rise too high in their Respects to Ministers, are there not others, on the contrary Extreme, who fall as much too low ? And is not this the Spirit evidently prevailing at this Day ? Are there not many who vilify the Office it self, treating it with Sneer and Ridicule ? And what Wonder, if the Persons of Ministers don't escape the Scorn and Contempt of such ? They have indeed a pitiful Thro't of all of this Profession ; and spare none, though of the most shining Accomplishments. If they know nothing more of a Man than that he is a Minister, 'tis enough with them to finish his Character : This alone will give them a low mean Opinion of him ; though without either Candour or Justice. Not

Not but that there have been, among the *Clergy*, both *weak* and *vicious* Men. It would be a strange Thing indeed if their hadn't. But why must the whole Order suffer Reproach on this Account? Is this fair? It is thought to be so in other Professions? If there are any who make themselves vile, let them bear all the Indignity they deserve: But where is the Equity of blaming the Innocent with the Guilty? Are there not Men of Worth in the sacred Function, as well as in other Employments? Men of Capacity and Integrity, yea, and of extensive Usefulness, through their abundant Labours in the Cause of GOD? And shall they all, notwithstanding, be condemned, and by the Lump too, as a Parcel of simple, or else crafty and designing Men?

This, I know, has sometimes been suggested, if not plainly spoken out, to the Prejudice of their Reputation; and with all the Embellishments of Wit and Railery. But if Men, professedly of no Principles, are Enemies to those, whose Business it is to plead the Cause of Virtue and true Religion, what is it more than might be expected? Nor would they act up to their Character, if, rather than not asperse them, they did not make a handle of any Thing; and instead of solid Argument exert themselves in prophane Banter,

I may not impertinently add here, 'Tis not only among atheistical vicious Men that Ministers are treated with Contempt. They have appear'd strangely prone to despise one another, and to take all Occasions to do so; and this has been too much their Way, in all Places, and Ages of the World. If some Ministers han't had Light to think, or speak, just as some others would have them, how commonly have they been the Objects of their Contempt? What Names of Ignominy and Reproach have been cast upon them? And how has the Spirit of Contempt been propagated from Ministers to People, to the great Hindrance of the

Gospel? Perhaps, some of the Ministers of CHRIST, and it may be as faithful Ministers as any in the Gospel-Church, have suffered more from their own Brethren, and such among the People as have been set on Fire by them, than they ever have, even from foul-mouth'd Infidels. Says the excellent Mr. *Baxter*, speaking of the Sectaries of his Day, " They have quite out-strip-
 " ped the *profane Scorners* of the Ministry.—By ma-
 " ny Years Experience in conversing with these Men,
 " I can speak it knowingly, that the chiefest of their
 " Zeal is let out against the faithful Ministers of
 " CHRIST. He is the ablest of their Preachers, that
 " can rail at them in the vilest Language. It is their
 " most common Discourse, in all Companies, both god-
 " ly and profane, to vilify the Ministry, and make
 " them odious to all; partly, by Slanders, and partly
 " by Scorns. Is this the Way to win Souls? Where-
 " as formerly they thought, that if a Man were
 " won to a Love of the Ministry, and Ordinan-
 " ces, he was in a hopeful Way of being won to
 " God; now these Men are diligent to bring all
 " Men to scorn them, as if this were all that was ne-
 " cessary to the saving of their Souls, and he only shall
 " be happy, that can deride at Ministers and Disci-
 " pline." He adds, " If any Man doubt of the
 " Truth of what I say, he is a Stranger in *England*."

I will not go about to draw a Parallel between the late Times in this Land, and those referred to by this pious and learned Writer; but thus much I may be allow'd to say, that the *Body of the Ministers* were never treated with more Insult and Contempt than by Multitudes, and of those too, who once esteemed them the Glory of *New-England*: Nor were they ever more hardly censured than by some of their *own Order*, from whom they might have expected better Things. It will not be denied, that they have had all Manner of Evil spoken against them, and this, in the Face of crowded

crowded Auditories. And are there not Numbers, in many Places, who have learned, from their admired Teachers, to give them no better Names than *Pharisees, blind Leaders of the Blind, Opposers of CHRIST*, and what not? And han't this Contempt been thrown upon as valuable Ministers as any the LORD JESUS CHRIST has in the Country, of as known *Soundness in the Faith*, and as *exemplary a Walk* in Conformity to the Precepts of the Gospel?

Let us not be discouraged, my *Brethren*; what tho' we are despised, not only by Men of no Religion, but those who pretend to a great Deal? This was the Lot of *inspired Apostles*; yea, of JESUS CHRIST himself: And it has often been the Lot of his most faithful Ministers ever since. Meerly our being despised, is not our *Fault*, tho' it may be our *Unhappiness*. The Fault is, to deserve Contempt; and we cannot, it must be own'd, be too much upon our Guard, that there may be no just Reason to charge it upon us: Which leads me to the next Thing, namely,

II. To shew wherein Ministers should take Care to give no *Occasion* of Contempt. And their Care should be exprest in the following Particulars.

1. If they would not be despis'd, they should see to it that they ben't *ignorant*. It was required under the *Jewish Economy*, that the *Priest's Lips should preserve Knowledge*, because the People were to *ask the Law at his Mouth*. And the same Thing is equally necessary, under the Dispensation by JESUS CHRIST. Gospel-Ministers should be as *Scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven*; they should be like the good *Houholder, who can bring out of his Treasure Things new and old*. 'Tis mentioned by the *inspired Paul*, as an *essential Qualification* of a Guide to Souls, that he be *apt to teach, and able, by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and convince the Gain-*

Gainsayers. And can the Minister be thus fitted for his Office, without considerable Degrees of Knowledge? He ought, certainly, to be a Man above the common Level for natural Capacities : Nor is this enough ; but his Powers ought to be well cultivated by a good Education. He ought to have Skill in the learned Arts and Languages, so as to be ready to make use of them in the Service of the Sanctuary, as Occasion may call for it : Nor otherwise will he rise above just Contempt.

It may reasonably be expected of Ministers, that they should have made considerable Attainments, particularly in the Knowledge of *Divinity*. How else should they be Teachers of others in this noble Art? Shall Men be ignorant in their own Profession? How incongruous is this? What can more strongly tend to render them despicable? What will actually bring upon them greater Contempt?

Not but that illiterate Men are sometimes mightily cried up ; raw ignorant Novices highly applauded and admired : But 'tis only among such as have need to *abound yet more and more in Knowledge and Judgment* : As for others, who, by Reason of Use, have *their Senses exercised to discern both Good and Evil*, they readily perceive the Insufficiency of Teachers, *understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*. Nor would it be strange, if, in their Behaviour, they should express the low Opinion they entertain of them. And the Contempt due to such *blind Guides* will, with Justice, be reflected on others of the same Order, if they appear forward to invite them into their Pulpits ; especially, if they do it to the Neglect of those who are of known established Merit, and hereby baulk their own Judgment to fall in with the popular Humour.

It may be worth Consideration, We live in an Age, wherein there is some Learning as well as a great deal of

of Ignorance : And there are, among our Hearers, a considerable Number, eminent for their good Sense and acquired Accomplishments : And it must needs be distasteful to such, to behold those set up for *publick Teachers, who need themselves to be taught which be the first Principles of the Oracles of GOD.* They can't help conceiving a mean Thought of such Medlers with what they are neither qualified for, nor called to ; and their being careffed, not only by the *Populace,* (which is no Wonder) but by those cloathed with the *sacred Character,* is a Damage to Ministers in general. It makes their Credit run low ; and in vain will they complain, if they are treated as a Set of Men knowing very little, though they pretend to know a great Deal.

It will, doubtless, be here said, the *Apostles* themselves, the first Preachers of the Gospel, were a Set of ordinary Men, destitute of the Advantage of Learning. And 'tis readily own'd, the most of them were so. But then 'tis observable, they were not allow'd to go forth from *Jerusalem,* to teach the Nations, 'till they been had *endued with Power from on High.* i. e. 'till the HOLY GHOST had, in a miraculous Manner, fitted them for their Work. So that 'tis a Mistake to think the Apostles commenc'd Preachers, while unfurnish'd for the sacred Employment. 'Tis true, they did not pass thro' a Course of Study preparatory to their Mission as Ministers ; but 'tis as true, that the Want of this was abundantly made up, by the Effusion of the HOLY GHOST upon them in miraculous Gifts ; enabling them not only to speak with Tongues, but without previous Meditation, and so as to be *infallible Guides* to Men, in the Way to Salvation.

Some, perhaps, while they are meer Novices, may take upon them the Office of the Ministry, expecting the Bestowment of the SPIRIT, in *extraordinary* Gifts ; as in the Days of the Apostles. But they herein err, not

not considering the Difference between the State of Things *now*, and when the Gospel was *first* made publick. It was necessary the Christian Revelation should be *approved of GOD, by Signs, and Wonders, and Miracles, done in the midst of the People*; and that it should also be infallibly delivered to the World, as the standing Rule of Men's Faith and Practice, which, it could not have been, if holy Men had not spoken, and wrote it, as mov'd and inspired by the HOLY GHOST: Whereas, there is no Need of the like *extraordinary* Influence of the Divine SPIRIT, *now* that Christianity has received its Confirmation and been establish'd, in the World, as a Religion coming from GOD. Accordingly, the Way of becoming qualified to be Ministers of this Religion is, not by any miraculous Interposition of Heaven, but by Attendance to Reading, Meditation and Prayer. In this Way, we may hope, thro' the Blessing of GOD, to be furnish'd with all futable ministerial Gifts: But if, instead of Labour and Pains, in the Use of *ordinary* Means, we expect the Descent of the HOLY GHOST in *Tongues of Fire*, or depend on *extraordinary Revelations, or immediate Impressions*, we shall only render our selves meet Objects of Contempt. Who have all along been the ablest Defenders of Christianity? Who have set its Doctrines in the clearest and most consistent Light? Who have explain'd and urg'd its Precepts, in the most instructive and convincing Manner? Who have been the grand Supporters of its Worship and Order? Can this Honour be claimed by your Pretenders to *immediate Revelations, and extraordinary Influences* from above? Must it not rather be given to those, who, by hard Study, and a considerable Stay at the School of the Prophets, have, through a Divine Blessing on their Endeavours, got their Minds furnish'd with desirable Measures of Knowledge and good Understanding? There is no Room for Debate on the Matter. No Man, since the Days of the Apostles, was ever futablely qualified for the Ministry, but in
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the Way of Labour and Pains, in an Attendance on the *ordinary* Means of Instruction : And those who have left this Way of GOD's Appointing, in Expectation of *extraordinary* Supplies from the SPIRIT, have too commonly, sooner or later, run wild, to the exposing, not only themselves, but the whole Ministry, yea, Religion it self, to Contempt.

But possibly, it will be further urged, does not GOD sometimes take Occasion, from the Labours of Men of small Parts, and little Learning, to serve the Ends of his own Kingdom ? And if GOD approves of Persons of such a Character, why should not we ? The Answer whereto is easy. A Distinction ought always to be made between GOD's Approbation of a Thing, and his taking Occasion from it to do Good : Nor can the former be at all collected from the latter. 'Tis readily allow'd, the alwise merciful GOD may over-rule the Ministrations of weak ignorant Men for spiritual Advantage to Souls ; but it cannot be argued from hence, that he looks upon such Persons as fit to be intrusted with the sacred Ministry. In Order to know his Mind in this Matter, the great Question ought to be, what are the *Qualifications* the BIBLE, that public, standing, authentic Revelation of the Divine Will, makes necessary to be found in those who would be Gospel-Ministers ? And if it appears, that it requires *Knowledge*, and *considerable Degrees* of it, those only are fit to be put into the Ministry, who are thus qualified. There is, no Doubt, a Latitude in this Case. A Man may be qualified for the Ministry, tho' he should not be furnisht with Knowledge in the highest Degrees : But then, he must have Knowledge in *such a Proportion as to answer the Scripture Demands*, or he is certainly an unfutable Person to be employed as a Minister.

And this is a Matter of greater Importance than many may be ready to imagine. For 'tis remarkable,
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when GOD would represent a People as in the most deplorable Circumstances, 'tis in such Language as that, *Iſa. lvi. 10, 11. His Watchmen are blind: They are all ignorant; they are dumb Dogs, they cannot bark. — They are Shepherds that cannot understand.* On the contrary, when he is returning to a backsliding People, in a Way of Mercy, and would bestow the richest Blessings on them, that is mentioned as one of the greatest, *Jer. iii. 15. I will give them Pastors according to mine own Heart, which shall feed them with Knowledge and Understanding.* And again, *Chap. xxiii. 4. I will set up Shepherds over them, which shall feed them.*

2. Ministers, if they would not be despised, must not set a *bad Example*. The Design of their Office is to disengage Men from their Vices, and persuade them to a sober, righteous and godly Life, in Conformity to the Precepts of the Gospel. And shall they, whose professed Business it is, to turn Men from the Power of Sin and Satan, be the Servants of Unrighteousness? How unseemly is this? Thou that sayest, a Man should not commit this, or the other evil Deed, dost thou do the same thy self? Thou that magnifiest the Law in thy preaching, dost thou in thy Practice dishonour GOD by breaking it? How shocking is such a Conduct? And what but Contempt can be the Effect? 'Tis observable, when the *Jewish Priests*, in the Days of *Malachi*, departed from the Way of the LORD, and corrupted his Covenant, *The LORD of Hosts said unto them, Therefore have I made you CONTEMPTIBLE, and BASE before all the People.* And the like may be expected by all Ministers, who behave after the same ill Manner. 'Twould be just in GOD to give them up to Contempt: Nor if they were base in the Eyes of the People, would it be beyond their Desert. A vicious Man, and yet a Preacher of Righteousness, how gross the Inconsistency! A Man of GOD, and yet vain, or proud, or covetous, or intemperate, or idle and

and unfaithful, how palpable the Absurdity ! There is not, on the Earth, a more meet Object of Reproach. He has forfeited all Right to the good Opinion of Men ; and should he claim their Reverence, in Virtue of his Office, he would only render himself still more contemptible.

Nor may it be thought, that such an one would be likely to do much good. Who would believe, or regard, what he said ? He would rather harden Men in Sin, than recover them from it. He would rather make them suspicious of the Truth of Religion, than concerned to become the Subjects of it. There are, in one Word, no such effectual Hinderers of the Gospel, and Obstacles in the Way of its Success, as wicked Ministers : And the greater the Contempt they meet with, the better.

Only let it be remembred, those only ought to be esteemed *wicked* Ministers, who *visibly* appear to be so. If there is an agreeable Harmony between the Manner of their *Life* and *Profession*, they ought not to be loaded with bad Names, and treated with the Contempt due to abandoned Sinners. This, it may be feared, has been too common a Practice in these Times ; but it's being a common Practice won't make it a Christian one. We ought not to look into the *Hearts* of Ministers instead of their *Lives*, and judge them to be *Pharisaical* and *unconverted*, from a pretended Knowledge of their inward Principles and Springs of Action. This is to assume to our selves the Prerogative of GOD, who only has an Inspection into humane Hearts, and allows us to judge of one another only from what is *outward* and *visible*. *By their Fruits shall ye know them.* This is the Rule our SAVIOUR has given us ; and 'tis a Rule particularly refering to the Case of *Ministers*, and the only one by which we may

form a Judgment of their Character. 'Tis true, they may not be the Men *inwardly*, they appear to be *outwardly* ; but this is none of our Business. The Determination of Men's State, does not belong to us, but to JESUS CHRIST, who, when he comes in the Glory of his Father, will bring to Light the hidden Things of Darknes, and manifest the Counsels of all Hearts.

I may add to what has been said, Ministers, if they would command Respect, must be *Men of exemplary Holiness*. They must not think it enough, if they keep at a Distance from every Thing mean and base ; if they abstain from all gross and notorious Crimes : But they should express a Care to shew out of a good Conversation their Works with Meekness of Wisdom. It should not content them, that they are blameless as the Stewards of GOD, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to Wine, not given to filthy Lucre ; but they should be Lovers of Hospitality, Lovers of good Men, sober, just, holy, temperate : In all Things shewing themselves Patterns of good Works, and Examples of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity. This was the Direction PAUL gave TIMOTHY, as that which would not only set him above Contempt, but procure for him all suitable Respect : Nor could he have advised to a more effectual Expedient to beautify his Character, and secure a good Reputation. There is a strange Power in *exemplary Virtue* to command Reverence. It will, beyond the finest Accomplishments of Learning, or the greatest Eloquence in Preaching, render the Minister amiable in the Eyes of People ; they can't but love and honour him ; yea, even profane Sinners, if not given up to a reprobate Mind, will treat him with a decent Esteem, while they behold his good Conversation in CHRIST. And this also will give a singular Energy to his Preaching. A *bad Life* will turn the Edge of the keenest Discourses, delivered from
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the Pulpit ; but when the Minister exhibits, in his Behaviour, a Pattern of what he preaches, his Doctrine will be likely to strike the Mind with a divine Force, and answer the saving Ends to which it is designed.

3. Ministers, if they would not be despised, must not expose themselves by an undue Performance of the *public Offices* of their Station. 'Tis justly expected they should manage these with a becoming Dexterity ; for they profess to have Ability to do so. And if they are *Blunderers* wherein they pretend to be *Masters*, how should it be but that they should sink in the Esteem of Mankind ? 'Tis thus in all other Professions : Nor will the Sacredness of the ministerial Character prevent its being so here. Ministers may want the Art of managing in the common Businesses of Life, and not be thought the worse of ; because they pretend to no Skill in Affairs of such a Nature : But they do pretend to have Skill in managing the *public Offices* of Religion. Praying, and Preaching, and over-seeing the Affairs of GOD's House, are the proper Duties of their Calling ; and if they are really wanting in a Faculty decently to perform these Duties, their Character must run low in the Opinion of all sensible Judges. But to be distinct here,

(1.) Ministers should take Care to manage their *public Prayers* so as not to expose themselves to Contempt. It is not indeed to be expected, they should all be able, in the like easy, natural, flowing Language, to lead in the Addresses of a Congregation to the Divine Majesty. Some, it has pleased GOD to furnish with the Gift of Prayer, to an eminent Degree. They never shine brighter, than when they are called, and it may be on a sudden, to represent some special Case before the Throne of Mercy. Their Mouths are fill'd with Arguments, and they can utter themselves to the Ravishment of the devout praying Assembly.

bly. But though all are not alike gifted; yet all, methinks, should be able to go out of the common Road, as Occasion may call for it, without rambling, or stammering, or running into Tautologies. If any are wanting in such an Ability, it may be fear'd, whether they have taken that Pains, in the Use of Means, which is proper, in Order to their attaining the Gift of Prayer. Or, if it should be the Case of some, that they are born down with Over-moderesty of Temper, or possess not the Faculty of conceiving quick enough for a ready Utterance, they might do better to pray by some well-compos'd Form, than to run the Hazard of falling into Contempt by disgustful Hesitations.

Nor is it enough that Ministers pray well as to *Matter*: They should take Heed to the *Manner* also, that it be with Seriousness, in Opposition to all Levity and Airiness of Temper; with an apparent Awe and Solemnity of Spirit, and with such an awakened Fervour and Devotion, as shall make it evident, they realise the Worth, especially of those spiritual and eternal Blessings, which they ask at the Hands of the great and good GOD.

I shall add here, they should be particularly careful not to mingle their own Passions and Prejudices with their Prayers: Nor should they oblige a whole Assembly to be of their Mind, in Matters of doubtful Disputation, or else come to an undesired Pause in their Devotion. Ministers, when praying in publick, are to be considered as the Mouth of the Congregation; and as such, there is a manifest Impropriety in their going into the Use of such Petitions, or Thanksgivings, as a great Part of the Congregation can't, in Faith, join with them in offering up to GOD. I the rather mention this, because it may have been too much a Practice, among some Ministers, more especially in the late Times, to express themselves in Language,
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they could not but know, if they allowed themselves to think, a considerable Number of those they were praying with could not give their hearty Amen to. What others may think I know not ; but to me, it appears a Matter of no small Importance, that there be an Agreement between those who pray, respecting the Things they pray for. And our SAVIOUR himself seems to have taught as much, in that Declaration of his, Matth. xviii. 19. *I say unto you, that if any two of you shall agree on Earth, as touching any Thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.* And it is as futable an *Assembly of worshipping Christians* should be agreed, respecting what they ask of GOD in Prayer, as that *two private Persons* should : Nor otherwise may they encourage a hope, that it shall be done for them according to what they desire. And if this was more thoroughly considered, it might put Ministers upon greater Care, so to adapt their Prayers, as that all might harmonise in sending them up to the Throne of Mercy.

(2.) Ministers should take care that their *Preaching* be such as may give no Occasion of Contempt. And here suffer me, with an honest Freedom and Simplicity, to mention some of the many Things which call for the Care of Ministers, if they would not be despised.

And to be sure, they should not in their *Preaching invade the Province of others*. Their Work does not lie at large, but is restrained within proper Bounds. They are Pastors to particular Flocks: These are their special Charge; they have taken the Oversight of them, and should employ themselves in feeding them with Knowledge and Understanding. Not that they are so confin'd, that they may not preach but to their own People. This they may do ; but it should always be within the *Rules of Order*. They should not go into other Parishes

rifies to keep up an unreasonable Difaffection in People to their own Ministers : Neither should they presume to preach there, trusting in themselves that they are righteous, but harbouring in their Breasts uncharitable Suspicions of their Brethren, as carnal and unconverted.

It may look like Zeal for CHRIST, and a vehement Desire to do good to Souls, for Ministers to go about from Parish to Parish, spending themselves and being spent, through their abundant Labours : And they may be caressed on this Account by many Persons, as having more of the Spirit of CHRIST and his *Apostles* than their Brethren. But whatever Charity may be disposed to hope, GOD only knows the true Spring of such a Conduct. It may, possibly, be Pride and Self-Conceit, or a vain Itch to be admired and applauded : And among all who ascribe it to such a Cause, (as there are many that will) they will be contemned. But be the Motive what it will, ever so Christian, or Noble, the Practice, I believe, is bad ; as tending, in the natural Course of Things, to introduce Confusion and Disorder : Nor has it ever yet fail'd of sinking the Credit of the Ministry, in a less or greater Degree.

But after all, if any are fond of going about from Place to Place, thinking they shall hereby have Opportunity of doing GOD good Service ; why won't they go where they will invade no Man's Right, nor occasion Schisms and Separations. Are there not those, even in this Province, and among the English too, (to our Shame be it spoken) who are destitute of the Gospel, in the Ministry of it ? And are there not vast Numbers, in the neighbouring Governments of VIRGINIA and NORTH-CAROLINA (not to say any Thing of the Natives) who live almost in heathenish Darkness ? And would it not discover as much Love to Souls, and as disinterested Zeal to serve the Redeemer's Kingdom,

Kingdom, for Ministers to travel up and down, preaching the Gospel to these People, as to go about from Place to Place, where the Gospel is preached every Sabbath-Day, and by Persons call'd to the Work, qualified for it, and fixed in it? *There* is Room for *itinerating*: And the more abundant any are in it, the greater will be their Glory: Nor will any one be dispos'd to withhold from them the Praise that is their just Due.

Ministers also should take Care, that their Preaching may favour of *Pains* and *Industry*. Not that they may'nt preach, if they han't had Time to labour a Discourse. Necessary Avocations, or the Suddenness of a Call to speak, may justify their going into the Pulpit, when their Preparations have been more hasty than they would have chosen: And, at such Times, a tolerable Measure of Candour in Hearers would make the Allowances that may reasonably be expected. But, *ordinarily*, their Sermons should appear to be the Fruit of *Labour* and *Study*. The wise Man says, *The Preacher sought to find out acceptable Words*. He is speaking of himself, who, though he excelled all Men in Understanding, yet did not turn People off with any Thing that came next to Hand; but took Pains to express himself in agreeable Language. And he is herein to be imitated by all Preachers. Not that fine Turns of Wit, high rhetorical Flights, calculated chiefly to entertain the Fancy, need be any Part of their Care; but yet, they should endeavour to cloath their Discourses in a becoming Dress. Their Language should be far from low and vulgar, yet easy and natural: Their Words fitly spoken, and such as may be likely to please Men to their Edification. And they should the rather be concern'd about this, as wisely chosen Words, according to what follows in the next Verse, are as *Goads and Nails fastened by the Masters of Assemblies*. i. e. "There is the like Power in them to

excite and stir up the Minds of slothful Men to the Practice of Virtue, that there is in a *Goad* to prick the Ox forward : Nor do they only sting and move the Mind for the present ; but are apt to stick as fast in the Memory as Nails do, when they are driven into a Board.”

Nor ought Ministers to think it enough, if they are careful about the Language of their Sermons ; but the *Matter* and *Method* also should be the Effect of Meditation and Study. Their Business is, *rightly to divide the Word of Truth*. 'Tis the *Word of GOD*, and not the *Traditions* or *Commandments of Men* ; 'tis the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, and not *Lectures of meer Reason*, they should bring their People. The *Matter* of their Preaching should be the pure Gospel of CHRIST. And they should *rightly divide* it. i.e. They should dispose it in due Order ; giving its Truths their proper Place and distributing them to the proper Persons. And this they should do like Men of Skill ; and in order to it, should apply themselves to their Work with Care and Diligence. So *Paul* advised *Timothy* ; calling upon him to *study*, if he would *approve himself to GOD a Workman that needed not to be ashamed*. And he elsewhere recommends to him *Reading and Meditation*, that *his profiting might appear to all Men*. And if such an *extraordinary* Person as *Timothy* was obliged to the Use of Pains and Study, much more is this a Duty in the *ordinary* Officers of the Church.

Not that a Minister, if he has tolerable Qualifications for his Work, need be at much Pains to make Sermons that will please some sort of Hearers. But even these Hearers ought to be *edified* as well as pleas'd. And though through want of Judgment, they may 'nt be able to distinguish between an *extempore* Discourse, and one that has cost the Preacher a great Deal of hard Study ; yet the latter, if as it ought to be, will be much better

better adapted to promote their spiritual Profit ; and there is more Reason to expect a divine Blessing will accompany it to this End. Besides, a proper Respect ought to be paid to all Hearers ; to the *strong* as well as the weak, to the *knowing* as well as the ignorant : And this there may be, where suitable Care has been taken to prepare what is to be delivered in public ; for it may be accommodated to the Capacity of those who are *illiterate*, and yet so contrived as to fall in with the Relish of the more *intelligent* : Whereas, if it is crude and indigested, though it may not be disliked by the weak and injudicious, it will be despis'd by those of better Understanding.

It will, perhaps, be said, those Ministers who take little or no Thought before-hand what they shall say, are the Men who depend on the SPIRIT of GOD ; and the Help they obtain from him more than makes up for the Want of Preparation by Study. None, I would hope, will esteem Preparation by Study an Argument of the Want of a just Dependance on the SPIRIT ; for so far is this from the Truth of the Case, that they who are most careful to make suitable Preparation, take the Method in which they may most reasonably expect the divine Influences ; and they are the most likely Persons to be favoured with them : Whereas, it may be fear'd, those, who venture into the Pulpit without Fore-thought, presume upon the SPIRIT rather than trust in him ; and 'tis too often apparent, that they receive no great Help from him. For who more confus'd, many Times, in their Discourses ? Who more rash and unguarded in their Expressions ? Who more vain and arrogant in their Boastings ? Who more wild in their Imaginations ? And, in a Word, who deliver the Truths of the Gospel with a greater Mixture of Mistake and Error ? And shall it be pretended, that such Preaching is the Effect of *extraordinary* Communications from the SPIRIT ? 'Tis a gross
D 2 Reflection

Reflection on the blessed SPIRIT of GOD to suppose such a Thing.

It may take with some People to be told by Ministers, they knew not the Text they should preach from, till they came into the Pulpit ; and they may be ready to think the Men inspir'd ; especially, if they are able to deliver themselves with Freedom and Zeal. But People ought to know, there may be great Warmth and Volubility in Speech, without any extraordinary Help from the SPIRIT. And the plain Truth is, the SPIRIT of GOD does not assist Ministers *now*, as in the *first* Days of the Gospel. He did it *then* by *immediate Revelation* ; he does it *now* in a Way more *humane*, by his Blessing on their Studies. And while Ministers, in this Way, depend on his Help, they may humbly hope to obtain it : Whereas they will deceive themselves, and impose on People, if they go about to excuse their Neglects in the Use of *ordinary* Means, pretending to *extraordinary* Communications from above.

Ministers likewise should preach as those who are in *earnest*. The Business they are engaged in is the most solemn that can be. They have to do with Souls, one of which is of more worth than the whole World : And 'tis their *Salvation* or *Damnation* they are to treat with them upon. And shall they be cold and lifeless in an Affair of such infinite Importance ? Matters of everlasting Life and Death should not be spoken of, in ordinary Discourse, but with a becoming Sollicitude : Much more, when Ministers bespeak Men in the Name of GOD, upon the Concerns of Heaven and Hell, should they do it with all Solemnity of Spirit. And if, when they are talking upon these astonishing Truths, they speak as if they were asleep, or had not upon their Minds a serious Sense of their awful Weight and Reality, how can it be that they should affect the Hearts of their

their Hearers? They will rather be disposed to slight both them and what they say? Tho', that they might not do this injuriously, they should be very careful they don't run into Mistakes, taking that for *Dulness* in some, and an *awakened Fervour* in others, which may be no certain Indication of either. The Tempers of Ministers are very different, and so are their Organs of Speech; infomuch, that if they had all the same Concern about spiritual and divine Things, they would not be alike in the Manner of its Discovery. And it ought to be particularly notic'd, *meer Loudness of Voice* is no Sign at all of a sutable Frame of Mind. There may be the *still small Voice*, and the Heart, at the same Time, seriously and thorowly warm'd with a Sense of eternal Things; as on the other Hand, there may be a *noisy boisterous Fervency*, that is only *histrionical* and *affected*: And it very ill becomes the Minister, and tends rather to harden Sinners than do them any spiritual Good. There is very little therefore to be collected meerly from the Voice of the Preacher. The *Manner* is more to be regarded: And if he really feels what he says, be his Voice great or small, it will ordinarily be perceived by discerning Hearers. And he should always endeavour to speak, not as tho' it were a Task, and he cared not what he said; but as having upon his Mind an awakened Sense of the Worth of Souls, and the Weight of everlasting Concerns.

Further, Ministers, in their Preaching, should apply to the *Understandings* of their Hearers, and not lay out all their Endeavours to work on their *Passions*. Not that 'tis improper to speak to the *Affections*; for they have their Use in Religion, and it may serve a great many good Purposes to excite and warm them. But then, it ought to be remembered, the *Understanding* is the leading Power in Man, and ought, as such, in the first Place, to be applied to. To be sure, the *Understanding* ought not to be neglected. Light and Heat should

should always go together, and keep Pace with each other : Nor unless there is a due Proportion of the former, will it turn to any good Account, if there be ever so much of the latter : Nay, Heat in the Affections, without Light in the Mind, will serve rather to make Men wild, than religious ; as has been too often verified by sad Experience. Whenever the Passions therefore are address'd to, a good Foundation ought to be first laid in the Understanding : Or otherwise, the Discourse should be manag'd so as to inform the Mind, at the same Time it kindles the Affections. And now the Preaching is suted to work, in a regular Manner, upon the Powers of humane Nature ; and if the Effect is not the spiritual Edification of Hearers, they can reasonably reflect the Blame no where but on themselves.

A rambling incoherent Discourse, delivered in terrible Language, and with great Vehemence of Voice and Action, will have, I am sensible, a more powerful Tendency to disturb the Passions, especially of some People. But where is the Advantage of throwing the Passions into a Tumult ? Of what Service can it be to raise them to such a Height, as that the due Exercise of the reasonable Nature shall be obstructed ? 'Tis true, Men may, in this State, appear to be religious, and this to an extraordinary Degree ; but their Nature all the while is inverted, those Powers got to be uppermost which were made to be kept under Restraint : And while they continue in this Condition, under the Government of their *Passions*, instead of their *Understandings*, they are in extreme Hazard ; for there is no Wildness, whether in Theory or Practice, but they are liable to be driven into it. The short of the Matter is, as Men are reasonable Creatures, they are to be preached to as such. The Address should be made, not so much to their Passions as to their Understandings ; at least, all proper Care should be taken to enlighten the Mind, and convince

convince the Judgment, as well as to move the Affections. And if instead of speaking to the *Minds* of Men, Ministers will lay out all their Pains to work upon their *Passions*, as though herein lay the whole Value of Religion, they will certainly expose themselves to all, who have any tolerable Acquaintance with the Frame of humane Nature.

Moreover, Ministers in their Preaching should insist upon the great and *important Truths* of Religion, and not bestow their greatest Pains upon less necessary Points; the *Circumstantials* and *Externals* of Divine Worship: Much less should they spend their Breath about needless Questions, which *minister to Strife*, rather than *godly Edifying*. These are not the Things which should take up their Thoughts and Labours, unless they intend to bring themselves into Contempt. If they would acquit themselves with Honour, they must dwell upon those Truths, which have a near and close Connection with the Salvation of Men's Souls; such as the undone State of Man by his Apostacy from God, and the Method of his Recovery, as reveal'd in the Gospel. And as 'tis by JESUS CHRIST, and him alone, that a new and living Way has been open'd for the Entrance of Sinners into the holy Place, HE should be the great Subject of all our Sermons. Their main Scope should be, to unfold the Mystery which was hid from Ages and Generations, but made manifest in these last Days, by the Incarnation of our JESUS, and the several Offices he has sustained and executed, in our Nature, and in Order to effect our Salvation.

I may observe here, the Scripture ever takes notice of three Things with Reference to the Affair of Man's Redemption. The first is the *Grace* of GOD *purposing* it. It's particular in its Care to fix our Thoughts on the Good-will and free Mercy of GOD, as the true, original, eternal Source of this Blessing. Next to the Grace

Grace of GOD, it gives all due Honour to the *Merits* of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. 'Tis with a View to him, for his Sake, and on his Account, that the Sinner is spoken of as justified and saved. These great Gospel Favours are granted to him, not for any Works of Righteousness which he has done, but in Consideration of the mediatorial Performances and Sufferings of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. This Righteousness of the Redeemer is considered as the Ground and Reason, that on the Account of which he is interested in the Mercy of GOD to eternal Life. But besides the Grace of GOD, and the Merits of CHRIST, there is what the Scripture calls a *Meetness* for the Inheritance, a Preparedness in the Frame of the Sinner's Heart for the heavenly Glory, wrought in him by the Power of the HOLY GHOST. And without this, 'tis as impossible he should be happy as that Light should have Communion with Darkness, or CHRIST with Belial. He must be chang'd from a Servant of Sin, to a Servant of Righteousness; he must be made to put off the old Man, and to put on the new Man, or he cannot inherit the Kingdom of GOD.

And now, these are the Things which should comprehend the Sum of our Preaching; and the rather, because, in their proper Place, they are all necessary, and equally necessary, in order to Salvation. Had it not been for the infinite Compassions of the All-merciful GOD, he never would have purposed, or accomplished our Redemption. Had it not been for the LORD JESUS CHRIST, what he did and suffered in our Nature and Stead, we should have had no Title to Salvation, no Righteousness that would have been a sufficient Ground for the Bestowment of this Mercy. And if we are not transformed by the renewing of the HOLY GHOST; if we are not made holy in the internal Frame of our Minds, in Conformity to the Image and Will of GOD, neither the Grace of GOD, nor Merits of the

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REDEEMER will be of any Avail to our Salvation: For while under the Dominion of Sin, and in Slavery to evil Passions and corrupt Inclinations, we harbour Misery in our Breasts; and could we be supposed, in this Condition, to have a Right to Heaven, and to go there, we should really carry the very Seeds of Hell along with us: Nor could we be happy, as reasonable Creatures, even in that Place of Blessedness.

Some, perhaps, may think it enough, if, in their Preaching, they magnify the Grace of GOD, and do honour to the Righteousness of CHRIST; but 'tis necessary also that they explain to Men, and urge upon them, that Holiness of Heart and Life, without which they cannot see the Lord; together with the *Office* and *Influence* of the HOLY SPIRIT in the Work of Sanctification. These Things are all insisted on in the *Bible*, and severally represented as having a necessary Connection with Salvation: And they should, in like Manner, be insisted on by Ministers in their Preaching. There is no Inconsistency between the Truths, but a perfect and glorious Harmony. Men may, 'tis true, confound them in their Thoughts; they may place their own Holiness in the Room of CHRIST, or the Grace of GOD; making it serve a Purpose it was never intended to, nor is sufficient for: And so, under the Notion of exalting the Grace of GOD, or the Righteousness of the REDEEMER, they may entertain a Thought of inherent personal Holiness, as a Thing almost insignificant. But in either of these Cases, they abuse the Doctrine of the Gospel, conceiving amiss of these Truths. For they *all* have their Use in the Affair of Salvation; yea, in their proper Place, they are *all* necessary: Nor can there, be Salvation without them *all*. And People should be told so by Ministers. 'Tis indeed the Business of their Office to set these Truths in a clear and distinct Light; and to this End should their Preaching be mainly calculated.

Only, as there is Danger lest proud Man should ascribe too little, in the Affair of Salvation, to the Grace of GOD, and depend upon his *own Works* instead of the *Righteousness by Faith*, Ministers should be particular in guarding against this Fault: Tho' they should take Care, in the doing of it, that they don't run into the contrary Extreme; speaking after such a Manner of personal evangelical Holiness, as to make it of very little Service: Whenas 'tis a Matter of such Importance, that without it we are barr'd Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, both by the Appointment of God, and the Frame of our own Natures. And they should the rather be constant in affirming, that they which have believed in GOD might be careful to maintain good Works, because 'tis too common a Thing for profess'd Christians to be negligent of a good Life; yea, it would be well, if they were not sometimes in a Temper of Mind to take Occasion, even from the Grace of GOD, to continue in Sin.

Moreover again, Ministers should be *uniform* in their Preaching; making it appear that they are Men of fixed and steady Principles. Not that they may not change their Minds, if they have unhappily fallen into Error, and just Grounds of Conviction are laid before them. It would be to their Honour, in this Case, to own their Mistake; and no wise Man would think the worse of them for it, but the better. But a Change of Sentiment, arising from a thorow deliberate Examination, is a Thing quite different from a fluctuating and inconstant State of Mind: And if, from such a volatile Disposition, Ministers are perpetually wavering in their Thoughts, to Day of this Mind, and to Morrow of another, it will very much tend to weaken their Credit: Nor may they expect any Thing short of Contempt, if they *temporise* in their Sermons, speaking one Thing to one People, and another Thing to another; on Purpose to sute their Humours, and recommend themselves

themselves to the several Parties there may be among them. Such a *Man pleasing* Conduct is beneath the *Man*, much more the *Christian*, most of all the *Minister*. How much more becoming is it to deliver our Minds, at all Times, and before all People, as we may be call'd, with an open Frankness, an honest Freedom and Simplicity ? It may, for the present, 'tis true, be of some Disservice to our Interest ; but, in the End, it will bring us into Esteem, and secure for us a lasting good Reputation : Whereas, if we shift and change, to gain the Applause of this, and the other Party, we shall not only act a mean and base Part, but take the ready Way to expose ourselves to Contempt : And it seldom happens, but such *Servility* meets with its just Desert, sooner or later.

In fine, Ministers should not be wanting in a Care about the *external Manner* of their Preaching. This indeed is a Matter of the least Importance ; though, perhaps, most recommending to the Generality of People : For which Reason, it would not be mispent Labour, if Ministers took some Pains that they might be Masters of a *good Pronunciation*, and *becoming Gesture* : To be sure, they should avoid disagreeable *Tones* and *Whines* ; as also unnatural *Distortions of Countenance*, and *Motions of the Body* : Neither should they turn *Mimicks*, endeavouring to *speak* and *act*, not like themselves, but those they admire : They may herein Aim at being more agreeable, but they really make themselves ridiculous. Above all, they should take Heed of *speaking* and *acting* as if they were beside themselves ; for, in this Case, People will be apt to take them to be so, and treat them with the Contempt due to such.

These now, and such like are the Instances, in *Preaching*, which should employ the Care of Ministers, if they would not be despised. I go on, and say,

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(3.) They should be equally careful they don't expose themselves by an undue Conduct, in Point of *Church-Order*. Government is as necessary in *Church* as State; tho' the Ends to which it is designed, and the Manner of Administration may be different. And so far as it lies with Ministers to preserve *Order* in the Churches, they should be religiously careful to do it; at all Times discountenancing such a Behaviour, in the House of GOD, as tends to Confusion. The Apostle *Paul* has set a noble Example in this Kind. When there were, among the *Corinthians*, those who left their own Business, and took upon them the Work that was proper to *Ministers*, he exhorted and commanded them to *abide every Man, in the same Calling wherein he was called*; assuring them, that all were not *Apostles*, or *Prophets*, or *Teachers*. And when they spake many at once, in the Place of Worship, so as to endanger its being said they were *mad*, he corrected this Abuse; minding them that GOD was not the *Author of Confusion, but of Peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints*; and directing, that *all Things should be done decently and in Order*. The present Ministers of CHRIST, 'tis true, may'nt pretend to determine in Matters of this Nature with the Authority of Apostles: Or if they should, they would only expose themselves to Contempt. But yet, they may advise and rebuke, and back their Counsels and Reproofs, with such Arguments from Scripture and Reason, as are fited to inform the Understanding, and convince the Judgment: Nor should they suffer the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, in this, or any other Use of them, to lie by neglected, where Persons break in upon the Rules of Decency, or otherways walk in a disorderly Manner. They should use them indeed with Prudence and Caution, and a becoming Tenderness and Compassion: but with a due Concern also for the Honor of CHRIST, and the Well-Being of the Church: And when these make it necessary, they should, so far as it belongs to them, exercise the proper

per *Discipline*, and not be mov'd from their Duty herein, neither thro' dastardly Fear, on the one Hand; nor a criminal Respect of Persons, on the other. If *Discipline* is an Ordinance of JESUS CHRIST, it ought to be made Use of, in Obedience to him, upon all futable Occasions: Nor may Ministers expect any other than to be *base* in the Esteem of People, if they sneak & cringe, and prostitute this Institution of the Son of GOD to the Prejudices, Passions, or Humors of Men. 'Tis *Discipline*, my *Fathers* and *Brethren*, not the meer Name, but the vigorous and impartial Execution of the Thing, that must preserve and establish our Churches. Our Fathers found the Advantage of it in their Day; and it would be of like Service in ours, wisely and faithfully administred, both for the Credit of the Ministry, and the Edification of these Churches in Peace and Holiness.

4. In the last Place, Fourthly, Ministers should take Care they don't hurt their Character, by an undue Performance of the *more private Duties* of their Calling. Their Duty is not confin'd to their *public* Administrations: They have a great Deal to do in *private* among their People. They must visit the sick, comfort the Mourners, instruct the ignorant, warn the wicked, reduce the wandring, strengthen the feeble-minded, bind up the broken-hearted; and, in short, sute their Counsels, and Warnings, and Consolations, to the respective Cases of those they have to do with. And they should be always in Readiness to attend *these Duties* of their Station; not spending so much of their Time about secular Employments, or in Studies foreign to their Office, as to take them off from the faithful Discharge of them: Neither should they be partial in their Respects; but endeavour, by all Means, to do Good to *all*, preferring no one before another.

In a Word, Ministers will unavoidably have frequent Occasions to converse with their People: and they should ever be careful to do it, after such a Manner as not to be thought morose, haughty, or unfociable; yet should they keep at a Distance from every Thing light, and vain, or mean. They should be condescending, but not servile; they should be pleasant and affable, yet solid and grave; and though they should not be backward to religious Discourse, yet they should take Care that it be brought in so as not to look forc'd and affected: And the whole of their Conversation should be such, as may have a Tendency to preserve in the Minds of People, both a Love to them, and a Veneration of them.

And having thus, in a plain, though imperfect Manner, considered a few of the many Instances, wherein the Care of Ministers is necessary, if they would not expose themselves to Contempt; I now go on,

III. In the last Place, to represent the Obligations which lie upon them to express this Care. And these are solemn and weighty. The *Honour* of CHRIST calls for it; the *Success of their own Ministry* depends very much upon it; Nor can they otherwise give a *good Account of themselves another Day*: To which I might add the Regard they owe to the *Credit of the Clergy in Common*. These are the Particulars the Time will permit me but briefly to touch upon.

I. The *Honour* of CHRIST is concerned in the Care of Ministers not to be despised. They are his Servants, as they act in his Name, and by Authority derived from him. And shall they esteem it a small Thing, whether they are base, or honourable in the Esteem of Mankind? If they are despised, and the Contempt comes through their own Faulty Imprudences, will not the Disgrace, however unjustly, be reflected on him

him who sent them ? What greater Abuses have been offered to the Name of CHRIST, than those which have been occasioned by the Follies and Vices of Ministers ? And shall the Thought of being thus injurious to our LORD and SAVIOUR sit easy on our Minds ? Shall we be unmindful of our Character, and take no Pains to act up to the Dignity of our Office, when our MASTER will suffer so much through our Neglect ? Whose Honour should we be tender of, if not his who has separated us from our Brethren, and called us by his Grace to the Ministry of the Gospel ? The Honor of the REDEEMER should lay near our Heart : And yet, what more distant from it, while our Conduct is such as tends to make us contemptible ; for the Contempt will finally, though injuriously, be turn'd upon CHRIST himself.

2. The *Success of our Ministry* depends very much upon our not being held in Contempt. If People have a despicable Thought of us, of what Advantage will our Preaching be to them ? They will conceive the same Opinion of our Sermons, as they do of our Persons : And should we preach the pure Truths of GOD, and do it with the Eloquence of Angels, it would have little or no good Effect upon them. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* of old seem, in this, to have been well acquainted with humane Nature. For when they would obstruct the Ministry of our SAVIOUR, it was by base Attempts to lessen his Reputation. *Is not this, say they, the Carpenter's Son ?* And they wickedly misrepresented him to the People as one of a bad Character, a Profaner of the Sabbath, a Friend to Publicans and Sinners ; and, in short, a Person of no Religion himself, and that would keep them from having any too, if they minded what he said ; rightly judging, that, if they could but destroy his Credit, they should, at the same Time, render his preaching insignificant : And so it unhappily prov'd, in respect of Multitudes, in that Day.

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And the Effect will be the same *now*, and in all *future Time* to the End of the World. There is indeed no such Thing as preaching so as to answer any good End, where Ministers have lost their Reputation, and instead of Respect are tho't of with Contempt by People. "We may observe (as One expresses it), when Men "are prepossess'd in Favour of any one, every Thing "almost which he speaks, appears weighty and signi- "ficant. Opinion gives Lustre to, and begets a high "Esteem even of his Weaknesses. When Opinion "hath rais'd a Man up to a great Height, there must "be something sublime and extraordinary in all his "Performances. On the contrary, when a Man's Cre- "dit is sunk and under Water, what little Regard is "paid to what he says? He is under such an unhappy "Disadvantage, that if he could speak like an *Oracle*, "it would hardly stick and make an Impression."

And what a powerful Argument is this to engage our Care that we don't expose our selves to Contempt? Are we content to live useles? Are we willing to go on in a Round of attending the Duties of our Calling, and do no good? Thus 'tis likely it will be, if we do not look to our selves, and take suitable Care to maintain a good Character. It is this that must prepare Men's Minds for a favourable Reception of what we preach.

3. If we do not use the proper Measures to keep from Contempt, we shall not be able to give a *good Account of our selves another Day*. Not but that it may be our Lot to be despis'd, notwithstanding the most faithful Endeavours to deserve the Esteem of People; In which Case, the greater the Contempt we have pass'd through, if we have behav'd well under it, the brighter will be our Crown in the Day of CHRIST. But if we have brought Contempt on our selves, by our Follies and Vices, the Fault is our own. And if
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by thus rendring our selves despicable, we have not only hindered the Efficacy of our Ministry, but unhappily been the Occasion of the Ruin of those Souls, we might have saved ; how dreadful will be the Account we must give up unto GOD! Should the People of our Charge accost us at the Bar of CHRIST ; We were stumbled at your Imprudences ; we were unhing'd, in our religious Sentiments, by your Unsteddiness ; we became indifferent to the Practice of Piety, through your Want of Zeal in recommending it to us ; we gradually lost all serious Sense of Divine Things, hardened our selves in Sin, and settled in Profaness and Infidelity, from the loose, vain, evil Example you set before us : I say, should our People thus bespeak us, before the Tribunal of Judgment, how would it cut us to the Heart, and pierce our very Souls ? Should they go on, and say ; Had you behav'd so as to gain our Esteem and Reverence ; had you preached, and conversed, and lived, so as to render Religion amiable in our Eyes ; had you been faithful in your Warnings, skilful in your Counsels; and watched for our Souls as those who were earnestly desirous of their everlasting Salvation, it had not been with us, as it is at this Day. To you it is, in a great Measure owing ; to your Negligence and Unfaithfulness; to your Want of Love to our Souls, and Care of their everlasting Well-Being, that we are now plac'd at the left Hand of CHRIST, and must be doom'd to a Departure from him, into the Place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth. Would not such a Charge as this make every Joint of us to tremble ? Should not we be struck with Horror to be thus challeng'd by the Souls committed to our Oversight, in the great and terrible Day of the LORD ? There is no Guilt like that of the Blood of Souls. It crieth for Vengeance : And O who can conceive the Weight of Vengeance we must suffer, when Multitudes of lost
Souls

Souls shall rise up, and call for it to be poured out upon us !

But besides the Souls of our *own proper Charge*, we shall, if we make our selves mean, be accountable for all the Damage that may herefrom arise to Religion in general ; which will be greater than we can well imagine. Contempt will easily and naturally be derived from our *Persons* to the Cause we are managing ; inſomuch, that if we are *base* in the Opinion of the World, Religion will be ſo too. When *Eli's* Sons, by their ſhameful Miſconduct in the *Priest's Office*, had *made themſelves vile*, the next Thing we hear of is, that *Men abhor'd the Offerings of the LORD*. And the Effect will be the ſame now. If Miniſters behave ſo as to forfeit their Credit, it will make Way for the Prophanation of divine Ordinances, or a Neglect to attend on them ; and from Careleſſneſs about the Things of Religion, Men will proceed to violate its ſacred Laws, and from one Degree of Wickedneſs they will go on to another, 'till they have made themſelves abandoned Sinners. And do we think the Blame of this no Ways belongs to us ? It will *all*, if we have juſtly expoſ'd our ſelves to Contempt, be charged on us, to the aggravating our Condemnation, in the Day of reckoning. And better would it have been for us, if we had never been born. In vain ſhall we plead that we have prophesied in CHRIST'S Name, that we have broken the Bread of Life, and poured forth the Wine of Salvation ;—It will rather expoſe us to the more angry Reſentments of our Judge : Nor will any of the Sons of *Adam* drink deeper of the Cup of the LORD'S fiery Indignation. I may add, in the laſt Place,

4. We are bound to the Uſe of all proper Care not to fall into Contempt, becauſe of the *Damage* which may hereby accrue to the *Ministry in Common*. Were the Hurt confined to our ſelves, the Obligation would be
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the less; but it will probably spread from our *Persons* to the *Profession*, and *all* in general will suffer through our Mismanagement. This, it must be owned, is very unfair. The Body of the Clergy ought not to be tho't the worse of, because some may make themselves vile. But such is the Temper of the World, that they will not restrain their Contempt to the *particular* Ministers who may deserve it, but will extend it to *all* of the same Order. And very severe have been the Reflections on the *whole Clergy*, as occasion'd by the ill Conduct of a few. It is too common, indeed, upon the Miscarriage of one, to hear it said, they are all alike; and sometimes the *Office* it self must be aspersed, and even the Wisdom of GOD called in question for establishing it. And shall not a Regard to the *ministerial Order* make us careful of our Credit? We should certainly take heed, we do not expose our selves to Contempt, because if we do, it will not rest on our own Persons, but will more or less affect the *whole Body of Ministers*.

The APPLICATION remains. And

1. We learn from what has been said, that the Work of Ministers is *very difficult*. The Pains they must take to keep from being despised shows it to be so. How hard a Thing is it to attend the various Duties of our Office, so as to deserve the Esteem of People, and Preserve in their Minds a becoming Respect for us? Unless we are Men of good natural Abilities, and acquired Accomplishments; at the same Time, maintaining a Care of good Works, it is impossible: And even in this Case, what Caution and Prudence, what active Zeal and Diligence, what Resolution and Courage, are necessary? *O who is sufficient for these Things!* If an *Apostle* of JESUS CHRIST cried out under the Weight of Care that lay upon him, how much more Reason have we to do it, who are not endowed with his *Graces* or *Gifts*? We can't be too

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sensible of the Need we stand in of divine Help : Nor can we too frequently repair to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find the Grace that may be sufficient for us.

2. What Reason have Ministers to be *humbled*, that they have taken no more Care to preserve themselves from Contempt ? Who of us can say, that our Conduct has been unexceptionable ? That we have behav'd in our Office so as to give no Occasion of Re-proach ? Dare we, any of us, the best of us, lay our Hands upon our Hearts, and justify our selves before GOD ? We have all, at one Time or another, acted below our Character, in a less or greater Degree : And the more sensible we are of it, and humbled for it, the more worthy we shall be of Respect and Honor. And have we not, some of us, so expos'd our selves as that *human Frailty*, cannot be our Excuse ? Are we none of us, by criminally neglecting our Studies, less knowing in Things pertaining to the Kingdom of CHRIST, than we might and ought to have been ? Have we none of us too often ventured into the Pulpit, when we have had nothing to say there, but what, through Want of previous Meditation and Care, has been crude and indigested, and fitted rather to bring us into Dis-credit with judicious Hearers, than to profit their Souls ? Have we, none of us, been too careless of our Lives, behaving after such a Manner as to prejudice People against Religion, rather than recommend it to their Love and Practice ?

I say not these Things to suggest Evil of the *Body of the Ministers of this Generation* ; for I really believe, and would take this Opportunity to declare it, that they are as pious, and faithful, and laborious a Set of Men, as any Part of the Christian World is favoured with. I am indeed sensible they are too commonly despised at this Day, and to as great a Degree as was ever known in the Country ;

Country ; but I trust in GOD, the Contempt is injurious. Not that I think it is so, in Respect of them all : And 'tis, perhaps, principally owing to *some of our own Order*, that the Credit of the Ministry runs so low. Are there none among us, whose Conduct, in the late Day of Trial, has led People into a mean Thought of Ministers in general ? Did we all discover that Knowledge of the World, and of the Frame of human Nature, and act with that prudent Forecast, which might have been expected of Men of our Character ? Did we all stand up for the *Order of the Gospel*, and in *Defence* of its *Truths* and *Ways*, with the Courage and Faithfulness which became the Servants of JESUS CHRIST ? Have we, none of us, too much connived at those *Errors in Doctrine*, and *Irregularities in Practice*, which have had a dreadful Tendency to sink the Credit of the *Ministry*, yea, and of *Religion* too, in the Land ? Have we, none of us, invited into our Pulpits Men of mean Parts, and no Learning, at whose Performances we our selves have been ashamed ? Have we, none of us, taken Part with those, who have treated the best Ministers in the Country with Neglect, to say nothing worse ? Have we, none of us, had the *Persons* of some particular Ministers in *Admiration*, to the reflecting an unjust Odium on others ? Have we not flattered them beyond all Bounds of Modesty, and by our Flatteries strengthened their Influence to hurt the Reputation, and together with it the Usefulness of the *Ministry*, GOD has set up in *these Churches* ? And what is worse than all this, have we, none of us, acted in the proper Charges of our Brethren, so as to leaven the Minds of their People with evil Surmifings against them, though Men of as good Reputation for their ministerial Gifts and Faithfulness, as our selves ? Have we not spoken of them in a Manner so censorious and uncharitable, as to bring them into Disesteem, in their own Parishes ? Have we not sided with People in the Disgrace they have heaped upon them ? Have we not encouraged

encouraged them in their Alienations, Difaffections and Separations? Or, if we have had too much Policy, or too little Courage, to be *open* in these Things, have we not by *secret Whispers*, and *Closet-Insinuations*, done the Business as effectually? I charge nothing upon any in particular; but GOD knows, and we all know, that there has been great Guilt as to these Things: And so far as we are any of us, Sharers in it, we have Reason for deep Humiliation before GOD. A *despised* Ministry will be a *useless* one. Wherein therefore we have had a Hand in bringing our Brethren into undeserv'd Contempt, we have done great Disservice to the Interest of the REDEEMER; nor could we, in any Thing, have more pleas'd the Enemy of all Righteousness: For his Kingdom is never more likely to be in a flourishing State, than when the Ministry of a Land is injuriously held in Contempt. The good LORD humble and pardon us all, wherein we have been faulty! And may we be more upon our Guard in Time to come!

3. Ministers should do what they can to *keep one another from being despised*; not by countenancing one another in Wickedness; nor yet by standing up for each other, in that which is a Dishonour to Men of our Character. This would be to bring, both our selves, and the whole Ministry, into Disgrace. But we should be tenderly concerned for the Reputation of our *Fellow-Labourers* in the LORD, and ready, in all futable Ways, to advance it. We should be disposed to prefer our Brethren in Love, to hope well, and believe well, and speak well of them, so far as there is Reason to do so. And if it is the Unhappiness of any to be treated with Disrespect, not because they are in themselves worthless; or have acted a mean and base Part, but because they have to do with such as are unreasonably prejudiced against them, we should both pity them, and use our best Endeavours, as we may have Opportunity, to wipe off the Dirt that is thrown upon

on them. To be sure, we should not encourage *Busy-Bodies* in coming to us with their idle tatling Stories; neither should we strengthen *contentious* Men in their Alienations and Disaffections; much less still may we allow our selves in *secret Whispers* to the Disadvantage of our Brother, while we dare not tax him to the Face, with the Evil we insinuate behind his Back.---Ministers may do a great Deal to support the Reputation of one another; and if they would heartily endeavour to do it, so far, I mean, as they might with Reason and Justice, we should soon see the *Clergy* in better Repute than they enjoy at this Day.

4. How careful should Ministers be to *introduce none into the sacred Office* who are like to be despised? We are the Persons to whom it belongs, according to the Appointment of JESUS CHRIST, to separate Men to the Work of the Ministry: And we ought to be cautious on whom we *lay Hands* for this Purpose. We should not *suddenly* do it in an Affair of such Importance; nor indeed at all, till first satisfied, that the *Qualifications* of the Persons are such, as that there is no Prospect of their falling into Contempt. And in Order to this, there should be some *Trial* of them before they are intrusted with the Care of Souls. It might be best, if we countenanced none in *preaching* 'till they had first been *examined*. I know it has been a long Custom for *young Men* to go into the Pulpit, when they themselves think fit to do so. Perhaps, the Churches in this Land are the only ones, who take so little Care in a Matter of such Consequence to the Interest of the Kingdom of CHRIST. 'Tis high Time it was rectified: And if, as a Means to so good an End, Ministers would be peremptory in refusing their Pulpits to *all* Candidates, 'till they had pass'd their *Trials* before proper Judges, it might be of singular Service.

To be sure, all reasonable Care should be taken, that none be set apart for the Service of CHRIST, in the Gospel-Ministry, but *faithful Men*; such as are both *apt*, and *able to teach*; such as are of *good Behaviour*, and have a *good Report without*. Raw, ignorant, unfurnished Men, ought never to have committed to them the Administration of divine Ordinances. Says the Apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 6. *Not a NOVICE, lest being lifted up with Pride, he fall into the Condemnation of the Devil*. And if, in Opposition to his Advice, we are active in the Ordination of such Persons, or taking them into our Pulpits, how can we excuse ourselves before GOD? Should they sink into Contempt, as in all Probability they soon will, the Reproach would reach us; nor can it be but we should be accountable for the Scandal hereby brought upon the Ministry.

5. We see, from what has been said, the Reason we have to be thankful for the *Means of Education* among us. Not but that some, in these Days, have expressed a mean Opinion of *Learning*, and of the *Colleges*, where are the best Means for the Acquirement of it. It is a Pity any in *holy Orders* have been so unadvised as to lead People into this Thought. They are herein very unlike to our pious *Fore-Fathers*, who had such a Sense of the Necessity of *Learning* as a Qualification for the *Ministry*, that they soon founded a *College* in the midst of a thousand Straits and Difficulties; from whence, through the Smiles of Heaven, our Churches have, all along, been supplied with *able Ministers*; Men who have been a Credit to the sacred Function, and, I may say, an Honour to the Country. And shall this, and the other School of the Prophets more lately erected, be now slighted and neglected? We ought rather to rank them amongst the richest Blessings, which call for our Thankfulness to Almighty GOD; Nor can we lay ourselves out too much to strengthen the Reputati-
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on and Usefulness ; esteeming them the best Security against an *ignorant*, and therefore a *contemptible* Ministry.

And it were to be wished, the young Men, in these Schools, would wisely improve the Price put into their Hands to get Wisdom and Understanding. And let me advise the *Candidates of the Ministry*, those in particular who may be here present, not to rush too hastily into the *sacred Employment*, lest they expose not only themselves, but Religion also to Contempt. Give yourselves to Reading, Meditation and Prayer ; and continue in these Things, 'till you have attained, under the Divine Influence, a suitable Furniture, both of *Gifts* and *Graces*, for the Service of the Sanctuary. And don't trust your own Judgments in a Matter of so great Importance. And, if you should be urg'd to enter upon Preaching, by those who know not whether you are qualified for the Business, be not overcome to yield to their Entreaties ; but wait 'till you are declared *fit*, by such as are proper Judges in the Case. And don't be discouraged from Labour and Pains to get furnish'd with considerable Measures of *Learning*, both *Divine* and *Humane*, because, as the Times are, it may be of little Service to recommend you to the Esteem of many People. The State of Things, it is to be hop'd, won't always continue as at present : or however, you will find the Advantage of previous hard Study, thro' your whole Life ; besides that you will be hereby qualified to be greater Blessings, in your Day, wherever the Providence of GOD shall fix your Place of Labour.

6. *People* should learn, from what has been said, not to despise Ministers, nor do any Thing that may tend to bring them into Discredit. I mean not, *Brethren*, to blame any of you for entertaining a mean Tho't of Ministers, or expressing the low Opinion you have of them, when, by their Behaviour, they have forfeited a Right to your Regards. 'Tis fit and proper your Sentiments of, and

Conduct towards us, should be adjusted to our *visible* Character? And if we make our selves *contemprible*, we ought to be *base* in your Esteem. But then, you should take Care you don't despise us, when we give you no sufficient Occasion to treat us with Contempt. You should not watch for our Halting, [nor aggravate every Infirmity we may be betray'd into; but be ready to make all reasonable Allowances in our Favour, considering we are Men of like Passions with yourselves, and liable not only to the same, but to more and greater Difficulties and Temptations. Don't despise us for common Frailties, but rather cover them with the Mantle of Charity. Don't take up, and harbour in your Breasts, unjust Prejudices, either against our *Persons*, or the *Office* we sustain: In such a Case, should we behave ever so circumspectly, you would turn every Thing to our Disadvantage: Nor would it be in our Power, should we both *preach* and *live* like *Angels*, to make you think well of us. Take Heed especially, that you do not despise us for those Things, which ought rather to recommend us to your Veneration. If we reprove you for your Vices, don't be disaffected to us; for this we must do, or we cannot be faithful to him who sent us. If we see you expos'd to Danger, or turning out of the *good old Way*, don't take it amiss if we are free in telling you of it; for we are moved hereto from the Love we bear to you. If we stand up in Defence of the *Faith* and *Order* of the Gospel, don't say we are *carnal*, and treat us as though we were your Enemies, and the Enemies of JESUS CHRIST; for 'tis in Obedience to him, and out of Compassion to your Souls, that we thus run the Hazard of your Displeasure. In a Word, divest your Minds, as much as may be, of every wrong Bias, and candidly form your Sentiments of us, not from *this* or the other particular Action, not from our being of *this* or the other Party; but from what appears in our *general*

neral Conduct : And if this is such as will allow you to think honourably of us, be in a Temper to do so ; and do not carry it towards us with Neglect, much less Contempt, unless there is evident Reason given for it : And then, if we find Fault, we shall be unjust to you, and partial to ourselves.

And you should not only take Care, that you do not despise us, but that you do not do any Thing that may tend to bring us into Discredit. If any of you should not relish our Manner of preaching, as not being so well suited to your particular Turn of Mind, do not prejudice others against it, who may be both gratified and profited by it. If any of you should be so defective in your Charity as to suspect, whether we are the Men *inwardly* we appear to be outwardly, do not leaven the Minds of others with the like evil Surmising ; don't speak of us as *Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing* ; do not so much as *whisper* a Thing so injurious to our Character. If any of you should be fond of the Preaching of Men of small Capacities and no Learning, do not so insist upon our taking them into our Pulpits, or separating them to the Work of the Ministry, as to force us to disoblige you, or expose ourselves to those who have more Knowledge and Judgment.

And here let me recommend to you one Thing, which, if duly considered, would be of great Service to the *Credit* of the Ministry ; and that is, that you be well satisfied, not only of the *good Disposition* of your Children, but their *Promptness to learn*, before you devote them to the Service of GOD, in the *Gospel* of his SON. Don't think it will tend, either to *their Reputation*, or the Benefit of the *World*, to give them an *Education*, with a View to the *Ministry*, if their *natural Abilities* are of the *lower Size*. They may better *serve their Maker, and Generation*, in some other

Employment. They may have a *Genius* for one or other of the various *Busineses* of Life, though not a Turn of Mind fitted to make them shine as *Ministers* : And 'tis Pity, their Usefulness in the World should be obstructed, by a Mistake in their Education which can't easily be afterwards mended. And if your Circumstances in Life should set you above your Neighbours, either in Point of Riches, or Honour, do not think it will be a Disgrace to you, to devote your Sons to the Work of serving at GOD's *Altar*, if they appear to be peculiarly dispos'd to it, and form'd for it. 'Tis true, they will not, in this Station of Life, be in the Way of *worldly Preferments* ; but yet, what more noble Employment than that of *Co-workers* with CHRIST, in forming Men to a *Meetness* for the eternal Service and Enjoyment of GOD in Heaven ? And if your Sons should be *Instruments* in turning many Sinners to Righteousness, would not this reflect an Honor, even upon you, both in this World, and that which is to come ?

Let me further say, as Ministers, when low in the World, and hard put to it for a Liveliness, are too often despised, take Care you don't withhold from them more than is meet. And where 'tis the Lot of any to be fix'd among People, who, thro' Prejudices against the Gospel, do little towards their Subsistence, suffer me to bespeak for them your charitable Assistance ; for those especially, who, at the Desire of this *Convention*, and as encouraged by Promises of Help from them, have gone forth into such difficult Service. One Design of our being now together is, to contribute to the Support of these *Missionaries* ; and, I doubt not, you will join with us in this Act of Piety. We have had Experience of your Goodness in former Collections, and trust the present one will be enlarged through your *Liberality*. May we all, both *Ministers* and *People*, freely give as we have freely received ; and to our Bounties let

let us add our Prayers, that these Servants of the LORD may be carried through all their Difficulties, and succeeded in their Endeavours to do Good to Souls, to the Joy of their Hearts here, and the brightning their Crown of Glory hereafter.

In fine, and above all, see to it, as you have any Value for our Credit, that our Ministry be not lost upon you. If you reap no spiritual Profit by our Labours for the Good of your Souls, but continue in your Sins, and grow worse instead of better, nothing will have a more dreadful Tendency to bring us into Disgrace. The Language of your Impenitence will be, that we are a useles Set of Men : Nor will the Enemies of Religion fail of improving it to our Reproach. Whereas, if, under our Ministry, you are effectually taught to deal justly, and love Mercy, and walk humbly with GOD, this would put to Silence those who might be dispos'd to speak Evil against us, and procure for us a Name better than precious Ointment. If, by Means of our Preaching, you are convinced of Sin, and turn'd from the Power of it ; if your Tempers are rectified, and Manners reform'd ; if you are really brought to love GOD and your Neighbour, and, in one Word, to possess and exercise that Faith and Humility, and all those Christian Graces, wherein the Image of GOD and the Power of Religion do truly consist, we shall not need any other Recommendation ; you will then be a living standing Proof of our Usefulness : And we should herefrom be under Advantage to do still greater Service, to our own Comfort in this World, and our shining, in the next, as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars forever and ever.

And now, may we all, both *Ministers* and *People*, receive what we have heard, so far as it is the Truth in *Jesus*, in the Spirit of Love and Meekness. 'Tis probable, we shall never all of us be together again in
this

this House. The Faces of some, who were present the last Year, we shall see no more, 'till we meet in the Day of the appearing of the SON of MAN. May we look to ourselves, and so behave in our Stations, as that we may then be found at the right Hand of CHRIST, and have Admission into that Kingdom, prepared before the Foundations of the World, where we shall no more be in a Temper to despise, nor shall ever give Occasion for Contempt ; where we shall no more treat one another with Bitterness, Anger and Clamour, but live together in perfect Love and Peace ; where, instead of differing and contending with each other, we shall all be of one Mind and one Heart ; joining with the innumerable Company of Angels and glorified Saints, in saying with a loud Voice, Blessing, and Honor, and Glory, and Power, be unto HIM THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE, and unto the LAMB for ever and ever. Amen, and Amen.

F I N I S.

