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*The Importance of the Ministerial Office, and
the Difficulty of rightly discharging it :*

CONSIDERED IN A
DISCOURSE

Delivered in

N O R W I C H,

JUNE 20, 1745.

AT THE
ORDINATION

Of the REVEREND

Mr. ABRAHAM TOZER.

By *RICHARD FROST.*

To which is added

6.

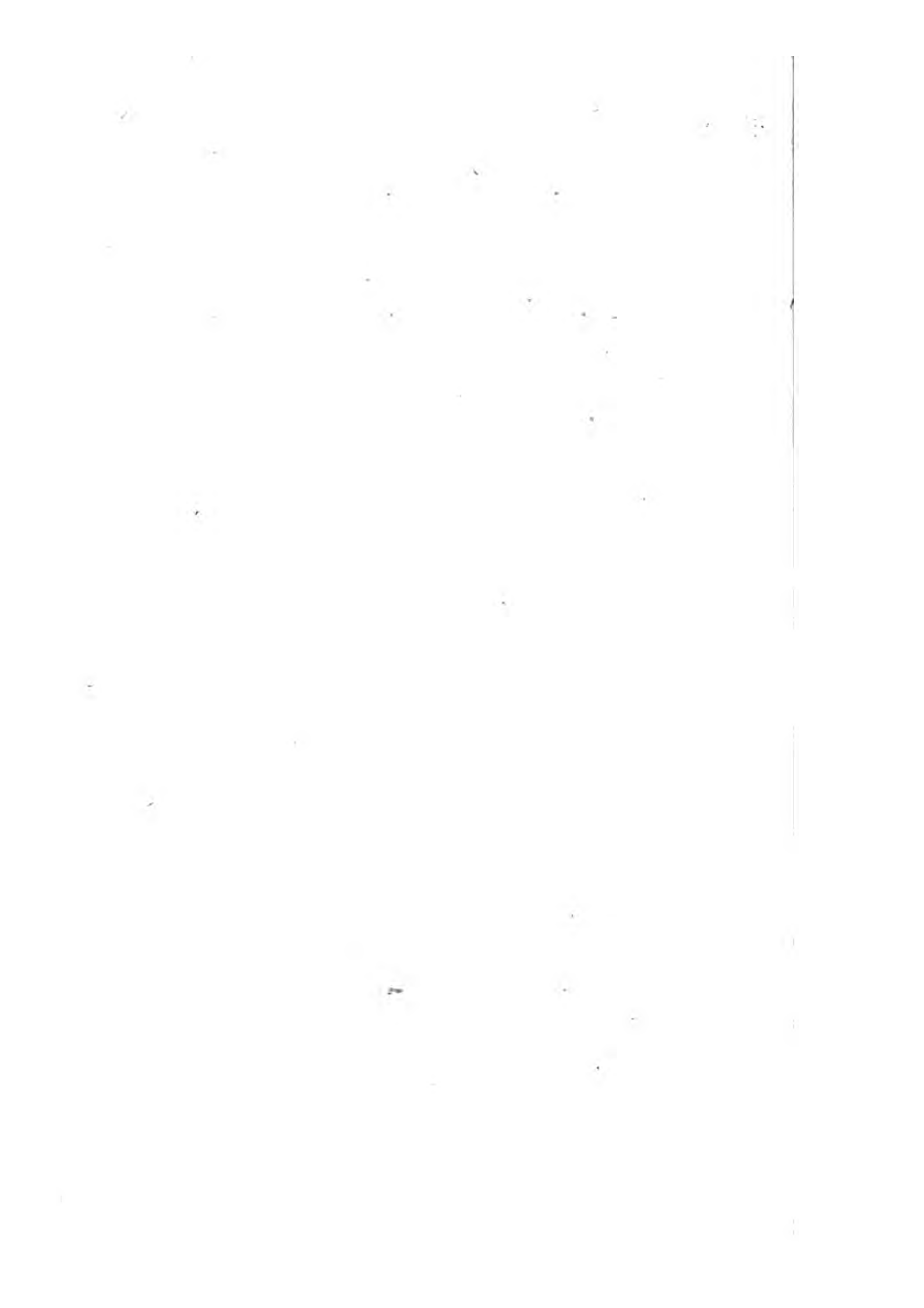
The **C H A R G E,**
By P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by J. WAUGH, at the *Turk's-Head*
in *Gracechurch-Street.* MDCCLV.

[Price One Shilling.]







2 COR. ii. 16.

— *And who is sufficient for these Things?*



WHOEVER attentively reads over the foregoing Context, will soon discover, this Exclamation of *St. Paul* relates to the Office of a *Gospel Minister*. At the 12th Verse, he had taken Notice, that *when he came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, a Door was opened to him of the Lord*: By which Phrase, either the *free Liberty* our Apostle had to *preach Christ* there, or the *great Success* GOD blessed him with in that important Work, is denoted; or probably both these: Since in the 14th Verse, he *triumphs in Christ*, who had diffused the *Savour of his Knowledge by him in every Place*. Whatever Reception the Gospel preached by *St. Paul* found with the Hearers, *his Labour was not in vain in the Lord*; who crowns the Fidelity and Diligence of his Ministers

4 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
in their Work, be the Success more or less. Some indeed *bear the Gospel*, and thro' Unbelief, Hardness of Heart, and their being inflaved by diverse Lusts and Pleasures, it becomes *a Savour of Death unto Death to them*; (ver. 16.) their Condemnation is aggravated by it: But *to others*, it is *the Saviour of Life unto Life*; such as cordially believe and embrace it, and act suitably to its Divine Precepts, shall experience it, *thro' the mighty Working of the Spirit of Christ*, effectual for implanting Spiritual Life in their Souls which leads to Life Eternal. So then, this Gospel will have a mighty Effect, one Way or other; and will either turn to a Testimony for, or against, all who sit under it, according to the different Reception it meets with. The Gospel preached is one and the same: It is *the everlasting Gospel of the blessed GOD*, and contains the Way and Means of Reconciliation between his offended Majesty and rebellious Creatures. And it is *tendered* by the Apostles and Ministers of JESUS, with equal *Sincerity* and *Affection*, to one as to another: But it works differently on different Subjects. Thus the same Sun, that refreshes the sound and strong Eye, hurts that which is weak and distempered.

Now upon this View of the Matter the Apostle breaks out in the following Exclamation, *Who is sufficient for these Things?* His Mind was greatly struck with a Work, on
which

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 5

which such awful Events depended: As if he had said, “ Of what vast *Importance* is the
“ Work of the sacred *Ministry*, and at the same
“ Time, how *difficult* rightly to discharge! Who
“ among the Sons of *Adam*, who *dwell in*
“ *Houses of Clay*, and who, beside the Weak-
“ nefs of their Nature, have the Leaven of
“ Folly and Sin mingling in all their Perfor-
“ mances, is sufficient to sustain the Burden
“ of such an Office, and equal thereto?”
The Reply is, “ None of *themselves* are *sufficient*
“ for it; and the few who are so, are indebted
“ to the *Grace of GOD* for the *Sufficiency* they
“ have.” So that the Answer to this Query
must be drawn from the *5th Verse* of the
next Chapter: *Not that we are sufficient of*
ourselves, to think any Thing as of ourselves;
but our Sufficiency is of GOD. When Mi-
nisters engage in sacred Work, with awful
Sentiments of the Nature and Importance of
it, and that the Consequences one Way or
other enter the Eternal State; it will push our
Souls forward to the utmost holy Diligence
in preparing for it, and powerfully excite us
faithfully to discharge it.

The Word *ικανος* is used about 30 Times
in the New Testament, and denotes sometimes
Worthiness; as where it is said, *Whose Shoes I*
am not worthy to bear^a; and again, *I am not*
meet (not worthy) to be called an Apostle, be-
cause I persecuted the Church of GOD^b: And
some-

^a Mat. iii. 11.

^b 1 Cor. xv. 9.

6 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office;*
 sometimes, *Fitness, Aptitude, or Sufficiency*
 for the Discharge of any Work or Office;
 as where the Apostle says to *Timothy, The*
same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall
be able to teach others also^c; i. e. well qual-
 ified for instructing others. These two Senses
 are adapted to our Text. “ Who is *worthy* to
 “ undertake the Ministerial Office; or suffi-
 “ ently *qualified* for the right Discharge of it?”
 But we must not carry the Words to too
 great a Length, so as to suppose, *no Mini-*
sters are in some good Degree, so far as to be
 approved of GOD, *fit for this Work*. This
 would reflect upon the Wisdom, Power, and
 Goodness of our Lord JESUS, the great Pro-
 phet and Head of the Church. And were
 this the Case, what Purpose would our pre-
 sent Assembling answer? Besides the Apostle
Paul, we read of *Timothy, Titus, Apollos*, and
 many others in the Apostolick Age, whom
 GOD rendered *fit* for this sacred Employment,
 and whose faithful Labours were abundantly
 owned by him. And in all succeeding Ages the
 Lord JESUS has taken care to raise up *meet In-*
struments to subserve his glorious Designs, and
 to propagate the Knowledge of Christianity
 in the World; and he will always do it. The
 blessed JESUS furnishes Men for the Mini-
 stry by *the Gifts of his Spirit*; He inclines
 their Hearts to it by *the Graces* of that Di-
 vine Agent; and prospers their Labours by
speaking

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 7
speaking to the Heart, what his Ministers can only speak to the outward Ear. But in discoursing of this Subject, I shall attempt,

- I. To shew the just Grounds on which this Exclamation is founded. And then,
- II. Make a suitable Application.

As to the First of these: Various are the Topicks, from which the *Importance* and *Difficulty* of the *Ministerial Work* might be urged. I shall select the Six following.

- i. When we consider the infinite *Majesty* and *Excellence* of the *All-glorious GOD*, in whose Name we speak when we *preach the Gospel*, and to whom we address when we are the Mouth of others in *Prayer*, we may well cry, *Who is sufficient for these Things?*

It is an Apostolick Canon, *If any Man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of GOD^d*. Let every publick Teacher be very careful to deliver nothing, but what is *the sincere Word of GOD*, or plainly, and justly deducible from it. With what Plainness and Authority, what Truth and Gravity, should an *Embassador of Christ* deliver himself! *Now then we are Embassadors for Christ, as tho' GOD did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto GOD.^e*
An

^d 1 Pet. iv. 11.

^e 2 Cor. v. 20.

8 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*

An Embassador you know, in a foreign Court, represents the Prince who sent him, and what he delivers is supposed to be the Purport of those Instructions he received from his Prince. If he either willfully keeps back any Part, or goes beyond his Instructions, he is liable to answer for it, with the Loss of his Head: And the greater the Dignity is of the Prince whom the Embassador personates, the more careful should he be, that in all his Words and Actions he may so behave, as to be a Credit to his Master. Now that great Prince in whose Name we speak, is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*^f, Sovereign of the World by Right of Creation and Redemption. And as there is an high *Honour* conferred on a Man by being *the Lord Christ's Embassador*, so there is no small *Difficulty* and *Danger* attending it; since nothing vain and trifling should be delivered by us from *this Place*, in which we personate *the Son of GOD*, the great *Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession*^g. Our glorious Prince doth not receive Information of what is transacted thro' his wide extended Empire, by the Eyes and Ears of others; as all earthly Princes are obliged to do: But He himself is all Eye, and all Ear. He perfectly knows, how each of us acquits himself of the important Messages wherewith he has intrusted us, and is exactly acquainted with every Circum-
stance

^f Rev. xvii. 14.

^g Heb. iii. 1.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 9
stance of our Conduct in the high Character
we bear.

When instead of preaching *Repentance to-wards GOD*, and *Faith in our Lord Jesus*, and a *Life of Gospel-Obedience* flowing from a true Repentance and a lively Faith, many shall be found at Christ's Bar, who *preached themselves*; with what Confusion will they be covered there? When the great Judge, with Indignation frowning on his Brow, and Lightning sparkling from his Eyes, shall demand, "*Who hath required such Things at your Hands?*" Wretch that thou art, "didst thou not know, (thou couldst not but know,) *the Pulpit* was a Place consecrated to *my Honour*; and how didst thou dare to turn it into a *Stage* to raise *thine own Applause* upon?" *Woe be to him* who is called to that Work, *if he preaches not the Gospel*^h! And *Woe to him too, that hath in his Flock a Male, and offers to the Lord a corrupt Thing*ⁱ! But what complicated, what tremendous *Woes* shall fall upon and crush the Head of *that Man*, who, instead of making a *pure Oblation* to his God and Saviour, substitutes *himself* in the room of the Blessed *GOD*, and intentionally offers all his Incense to that *wretched Idol, Self?*

The *Ministers* of *JESUS* are also to be considered as *the People's Mouth to GOD*. And in this View, we are to *offer up* their
B Prayers,

^h 1 Cor. ix. 16:

ⁱ Mal. i. 14.

10 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
 Prayers, Intercessions, and Praises: We are
 to *weep between the Porch and the Altar, and*
cry, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not
thine Heritage to Reproach.^k We are to *trans-*
act with GOD for Men, with an infinitely
 pure and holy GOD, who hates all Hypo-
 crisy, Pride, Levity, and Carnality. *Abraham*
 thought, (and well he might,) it was a great
 Thing for him, who was *but Dust and Ashes,*
 to *speak to Jehovah,* and plead for guilty *So-*
dom.^l He pleaded but on one particular Oc-
 casion: We are to plead for guilty Mortals,
from Sabbath to Sabbath, when we lead the
 Worship of the glorious GOD in the Assem-
 blies of his People; and *from Day to Day,*
 in our Closets, and Family Devotion. May
 we not then assume the Prophet's Language,
Woe is me, because I am a Man of unclean
Lips, and I dwell in the Midst of a People of
unclean Lips; for mine Eyes have seen the
King, the Lord of Hosts^m! The more atten-
 tively our mental Eye is taken up with
 the View of the all-glorious GOD, the more
 fervently shall we *pray,* that He would *purge*
away the Iniquity of our Heart, and *purify*
our Lips: Since the Sin of either of these
 unpardoned, or unsubdued, would fatally ob-
 struct the right Discharge of our Ministry.
 And this brings me to another Consideration:

2. The

^k Joel ii. 17.

^l Gen. xviii. 27.

^m Isai. vi. 5.

2. The *Nature of our Work*, is a Proof both of the *Importance*, and of the *Difficulty* of it; as it is *Spiritual*, and takes in a large *Compass*.

If we seriously survey the *various Characters* ascribed in the *New Testament* to *Gospel Ministers*, each of which requires peculiar *Qualifications* rightly to discharge, these will at once afford us an *incontestable Proof*, both of the *Importance* of the *Work*, and of its *Difficulty*.

Are we *Pastors*? As such we are to *feed the Flock*, which *GOD* has purchased with his *own Blood*ⁿ. Now what *Fidelity* and *Vigilance*, what *Tenderness* and *Care*, are necessary, to fill up this *Character* so as to be approved by *JESUS*, the *chief Shepherd of Souls*^o?

Are we *Teachers*? We need *Knowledge*; since *if the Blind lead the Blind*, the *Consequence* will prove *fatal to both*^p. We need *Patience*; for we must expect many of our *Scholars* will be *dull of hearing*, *froward*, and *captious*; dreaming they know more than their *Instructors*.

Are we *Captains*, *Leaders* in *Christ's Army*? *Courage*, *Vigour*, and *Holy Resolution*, tempered with *Sagacity* and *Prudence*, are needful, worthily to maintain our *Post*.

B 2

Are

ⁿ Acts xx. 28. ^o 1 Pet. ii. 25. ^p Mat. xv. 14.

12 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*

Are we *Stewards*⁹? Wisdom, Fidelity, and Circumspection, are required from us, that we may *make up our Account well*, and be pronounced *blessed* by CHRIST JESUS, the *Lord High Steward* of Heaven; And whom He is pleased to *blefs*, they are *blessed indeed*^r.

Are we *the Salt of the Earth*^r? Persons, who are by Office to *season others* with Wisdom and Piety, and as much as in us lies, to preserve them from *the Corruption* of false Doctrines and licentious Practices? Woe unto us, if we *lose our Savour*; if we either renounce the Truth, or grow sensual and carnal in our Department! If this should prove the Case of any of us, (which God forbid!) we can justly expect nothing, but *to be cast out, and trodden under Foot of Men*.

Are we *the Lights of the World*^r? It is necessary, we should both *shine* and *burn*: That we should *shine* by the Light of clear and heavenly Doctrine, and lead our Hearers to JESUS, the *Eternal Sun of Righteousness*, for spiritual Illumination and Guidance: And that we should *burn* with Love to GOD, and fervent Zeal to promote our Redeemer's Honour and Interest.

These short Sketches may shew, that from the *various Names* given in Scripture to the *Ministers* of JESUS, the Nature of their
Work

⁹ I Cor. iv. 1, 2. ^r I Chron. xvii. 27. [†] Mat. v. 13. [‡] Mat. v. 14.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 13

Work may be fairly collected, and the Talents and Diligence needful to discharge it with Approbation. And may we not well cry out, *Who is sufficient for these Things?* If sustaining any one of these Characters reputationably, may be reckoned a Province sufficient to fill up a whole Life, and that, no idle One; what Diligence and Application should that Man employ, who has the united Weight of all these lying upon him? Sure of all Men living an idle Minister is the most useless among Mortals: But that is too little to say: He is the most pernicious too; since his Example is liable to prove fatal to all around him.

Our Business lies with GOD and Souls; and these are *not to be trifled with*. We are to explain the Doctrines of Christ, to defend them against Gainsayers, to vindicate the Religion of JESUS against those who sit in the Chair of the Scornful, and to shew, both by our Discourses, and in our Lives, that they are all Doctrines according to Godliness^u: It is our Province to place GOD's preceptive Will before our People in the strongest Light, to explain the Divine Commands suitably to their spiritual and vast Extent, as reaching the Thoughts, Desires, and Purposes of the Heart; giving Law to the whole Soul, as well as ruling the Language of the Tongue and the Actions of the Life,
We

^u † Tim. vi. 3.

14 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*

We are to *use our utmost Endeavours* to awaken the Secure, to reduce the Wandring, to support the Feeble, and to edify and comfort the Saints of JESUS. And methinks, when we seriously review what has been already hinted, we may be ready to say with *Moses, O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the Hand of him whom thou wilt send*^x ! The Sense of which *the Septuagint* well expresses, *Lord, chuse some other able Man, whom thou wilt send!* Where it is implied, that *Moses* judged himself *unqualified* for the arduous Work. But we must check such a Thought, from the Consideration, that *our Sufficiency is of GOD*^y ; and from the Promise of Christ, *Go ye and teach, — and lo, I am with you always, even to the End of the World*^z ; i. e. faithfully obey my Command, and depend upon it, I will assist, protect, and encourage you, and bless your upright Endeavours.

3. The *present State* of those to whom we minister, proves both the *Importance*, and the *Difficulty* of our Work.

The Persons we apply to, are either *Unconverted*, or *Converted*. If the former : How sad *their Case!* How hard *our Office!* We set before them *the dreadful Threatnings* of GOD's *Righteous Law*, levelled against those who presume to violate it; and endeavour to impress

^x Exod. iv. 13. ^y 2 Cor. iii. 5. ^z Mat. xxviii. 20.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 15
 press these Home upon Conscience with a
Thou art the Man^a. “Thou art the miser-
 “able Wretch, who liest exposed to all the
 “Vengeance of a Sin-hating God: And is
 “this a Case for a Man in his Senses,
 “contentedly to remain in for a single
 “Hour? *Flee for thy Life, Man; for De-*
 “struction is just behind thee: O flee to
 “JESUS, as *the City of Refuge*, where alone
 “thou canst be *secure from the Avenger of*
 “*Blood!*” But alas! We speak as to the
 Deaf: They are regardless of the most aw-
 ful Warnings, and believe not what we say, be-
 cause the Evils threatned are invisible.—
 Or we set before them *the Offers of the Gos-*
pel, and display the incomparable *Love* of a
 compassionate *dying Saviour*. We try whe-
 ther *Mercy* may not melt those Hearts, which
 Vengeance has not alarmed. But they are
hardened thro’ the Deceitfulness of Sin, and
 have no Relish for these Blessings, because they
 are Spiritual and Heavenly. While we *plead*
for Christ with Sinners, we know before-hand,
 that their Prejudices against a Life of Godliness,
 their Lusts, and carnal Interests, plead power-
 fully against all we can offer. We *dissuade*
them from what by corrupt Nature and long
 Custom in Sin, and by the sensual Gratifi-
 cations it has afforded to them, they are
 very fond of: And we *persuade them* to
 what *the carnal Mind, which is Enmity*
 against

16 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
against GOD, rises up in direct Opposition
against.—And is this the Case with a
considerable Part of our Hearers? What little
Hope then of Success! What a Miracle is the
real Conversion of any! How must *our In-*
sufficiency make us despair of any Success, if
a greater Power than Human did not accom-
pany the Preaching of the Gospel!

If our Hearers are *converted*, a more agree-
able Scene opens to us. But even *these* are
many of them, in a considerable Degree, ig-
norant, weak, selfish, or conceited, soon of-
fended, and easily prejudiced. Where is the
faithful Minister of JESUS, who has not
gone thro' some painful Exercises with Chri-
stians, who have laboured under one or more
of these spiritual Maladies? *Who is weak,* (may
he say with the Apostle,) *and I am not weak?*
Who is offended, and I burn not^b? “ Who
“ *is weak in Grace,* and so apt to fall into
“ Sin, and I do not *condescend to their Weak-*
“ *ness,* by teaching them according to their
“ Capacity, and bearing with their Infirmi-
“ ties? And who is *drawn into Sin* by others,
“ and I am not *filled with Zeal* to have the
“ Offence removed, and *with Grief* that any
“ of Christ's Flock should be scandalized?”
And who doth not see, how greatly this adds
to the Burden of the Ministerial Office,
when *the Man of GOD,* from an holy Soli-
citude for the Welfare of all *Christ's Mem-*
bers,

^b 2 Cor. xi. 29.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 17
bers, has a Fellow-feeling with them under all their Trials?

What *Prudence* doth it require, for a Minister to *accommodate himself* to Persons, whose Cases are so various? To be *true* to the Lord *Christ*, and to our own *Consciences*, and yet thus *become all Things to all Men*^c, is sure no easy Matter. It is necessary, that both *Saints* and *Sinners* should have *their distinct Portion*. An indiscriminate *general Way of Preaching*, tho' it may be reckoned a *polite*, is never like to prove an *edifying one*. It is granted, that when we are preaching *the Terrors of the Lord*, to awaken the *stupid Sinner*, they are too often disregarded by him, while the *trembling Saint* applies them to his own Case; and so those Hearts are made sad by us, whom it is our earnest Desire to encourage and comfort. If we describe the *Happiness* of the Person *whose GOD is the Lord*, and set before our Hearers the rich Inventory of *the Promises* and *the unsearchable Riches of Christ*, the sincere but fearful *Christian*, who should entertain and feast his Soul with this heavenly Provision, is *afraid to taste it*, lest he should take what doth not belong to him; while the *carnal Professor* is apt *eagerly to catch it*, and buoys up himself with a false Hope of Peace and Security, tho' his Heart is still unrenewed, and his Conversation vain and frothy. But yet, cast-

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18 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
ing our Hearers into *several Classes*, and suitably addressing each, is greatly preferable to a Minister's speaking to his whole Audience, as if they were *alike Children of GOD*, and Heirs of Blessedness.

4. Every *faithful Preacher* of JESUS must expect to meet *Opposition* and *Discouragement* in the Discharge of his Duty.

A Minister of the Holy JESUS, and an Enemy of *Satan*, are convertible Terms. Whoever endeavours in serious Earnest to set up and promote the Kingdom of the Blessed Redeemer in the Souls of Men, *proclaims open War* against *the Prince of Darknes*: And if you strike at *his Kingdom*, depend upon it, he will strike at *your Reputation*. The Devil will be very active in raising Prejudices and *secret Opposition*, if GOD restrains him from Instances of *open Persecution*. Where the Gospel of JESUS is sincerely preached, a Door is opened for poor miserable Sinners, to escape out of *Satan's Territories*, and to enter into *the Kingdom of GOD's dear Son*: But if all the Stratagems the cunning *old Serpent* is Master of, will avail, he will keep Sinners still where they are. *The Enemy of all Righteousness will not cease to pervert the right Ways of the Lord*^d, either by secret Whispers, or by open Clamour. And the *Emissaries*
of

^d ACTS xiii. 10.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 19
of *Satan* join in the Cry; and from the real Faults of some, and the Weakness, Imprudence, and Follies of others, take Occasion to run down the *whole Ministerial Order* as *needless*, and perhaps as *hurtful to Society*. So that an upright, holy, zealous *Minister* of the Lord *JESUS*, whether among the *Conformists* or *Nonconformists*, must count upon meeting with *all the Opposition* in the Discharge of his important Work, which *the Prince of Hell* is permitted to raise against him.

Yet if *all our Opposition* arose from the Malice of *Satan*, and the Rage and Fury of *the openly Prophane*, it were *more tolerable*: But too often our Discouragements spring from such, as are *reputatively Good Men*, and from some who are *really so*. Now Opposition from this Quarter greatly sinks the Spirits, as it is least expected, and as it is very unreasonable and ungrateful. One would think, that *all, who love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity*, should with Pleasure join in promoting his Interest; and rejoice to see it promoted by others, who in lesser Matters may have *some different Sentiments* from themselves. Provided *Christ be preached*, especially if I have Reason to hope, it is done with a sincere and honest Intention to render Souls *wise to Salvation*, *I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice*^e. And unless the contrary

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to

^e Phil. i. 18.

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to this evidently appear, *Christian Charity* obliges me to think and *hope the best*. But alas! we see but too plainly, that thro' the Remains of Carnality and a Party Spirit, in Persons who denominating them from the better and prevailing Part are *Good Men*, it is in Fact otherwise. For myself I resolve, (and hope, my Brethren, I speak your Sentiments too,) that wherever I see a Person, *Minister*, or *private Christian*, wear *Christ's Livery*, (behaving holily, justly, and unblameably in all Manner of Conversation,) tho' he may not appear *in my particular Colour*, I will own him as *my Brother*, and love, and embrace, and treat him accordingly. But a different Temper will prevail *in some*; and we must expect to feel the disagreeable Effects of it.

5. Our own *Indispositions*, whether *natural* or *moral*, greatly add to the *Difficulty* of the Work.

The *Gospel* of JESUS, great and invaluable as *the Treasure* is, is put into *Earthen Vessels* [†]. *Bodily Infirmities* frequently call *Ministers* off from their preparatory Studies: And at other Times, when the Wheels are clogged, tho' they do not wholly stand still, how slowly do they move! *If the Spirit be willing*, (and it is well, if we can truly say that,)

[†] 2 Cor. iv. 7.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 21
 that,) yet *the Flesh is weak*^s, so that we cannot do *the Things we would*^h, or cannot do them as we would. *The Prophets* not only *die as others*ⁱ, but are subject to the *same Disorders*, whether *acute* or *chronical*, to which their Hearers are liable. And by *the latter* (to which a sedentary studious Life more disposes them, than others,) many a worthy Minister has languished in Retirement and Confinement, who would gladly have been at his delightful Work. But let this Thought comfort such, that *our gracious Master* takes *the Will for the Deed*^k.

We have also our *moral Infirmities*, as well as others. *Elias* was in that Sense too *a Man subject to like Passions as we are*^l: And it holds true of the *Ministers* of JESUS under *the New*, as of the *Prophets* of GOD under *the Old Testament*. We feel in ourselves the sad Remains of *indwelling Sin*; we lament them before GOD; we labour to subdue them: And yet after all, while in *a Body of Sin and Death*, we cannot wholly eradicate these vicious Propensities. So far as any *sinful Passion*, or *inordinate Appetite* gathers to an Head, it abates our Zeal, and enervates our Labours. And the *Out-Breakings of Sin*, discernible in our Conduct, are apt to prejudice Persons against our Endeavours to promote their Eternal Interest. Now in such
 a Si-

^s Mat. xxvi. 41.
^k 2 Cor. viii. 12.

^h Gal. v. 17.
^l Jam. v. 17.

ⁱ Zech. i. 5.

22 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
a Situation of Things, *how hard* is it to acquit ourselves well in *the Office of a Gospel-Minister*? Were we (as one expresses it,) *Angels by Nature*, as well as *by Office*, it would lessen our Danger; but we are *Men under the Scars of our Apostacy*. And therefore, *who among us is sufficient for these Things*? I shall only mention one Consideration more.

6. The *solemn Account* we must render of this *our Ministry*, and how we have fulfilled it, greatly adds to the *Weight of our Work*, and should deeply impress our Spirits in all our Ministrations.

The Day is hastening, when CHRIST, *our great Lord* will say to each of us, *Give an Account of thy Stewardship*^m. “How hast thou discharged *the weighty Trust* committed to thee? Where *the Talents* I lodged in thy Hands employed with Diligence and Fidelity, to answer the great Purposes of *that Commission* I honoured thee with? Hast thou *watched over* and *fed the Flock*, as became a diligent and faithful *Pastor*? And was it thy daily Care to *live over those Holy Doctrines*, thou didst inculcate upon others?”

After we have passed the solemn Trial, *the Sentence* will be pronounced, and *Rewards*
or

^m Luke xvi, 2.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 23
 or *Punishments* assigned according to the reigning Character of each. The *Rewards* distributed to the *faithful Ministers* of JESUS will be proportioned to their Sincerity, Diligence, and Holy Zeal: And these, Rewards of *Eternal Duration*; a *Crown of Glory that fadeth not away*ⁿ.—Happy, thrice happy in that important Day, *those Ministers* of JESUS, who shall be able stand forth with a *numerous Spiritual Issue*, and say, *Lord, here are we, and the Children thou hast graciously given us.*—But as for *those* who have been *unfaithful, the Blood of all those Souls*, who were surprized and perished by the Enemy, while they, tho' *Watchmen, blew not the Trumpet*, and did not warn them of their Danger, *shall be required at their Hands*^o. And the Misery of these lost Souls must needs be a dreadful Aggravation of their own.

Now therefore, with the View of this important Day before us, to have *the Souls of many*, in a considerable Degree, *to account for*, as well as our own, what an awakening, awful Reflection is it?

Each of these *Six Particulars* separately considered, may induce us to break out in the Apostle's Exclamation, *Who is sufficient for these Things?* But if we view them as conjoined together, and adding Force to each other, the Reflection of the *Text* appears
 to

▪ 1 Pet. v. 4. • Ezek. xxxiii. 6.

24 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office;*
to be grounded on the most solid Founda-
tion.

Let us now suitably *apply* the Things we have heard. And after what has been suggested,

- (1.) Hence it appears justly surprizing, that so many *weak Men* should imagine their slender Talents equal to the Ministerial Charge, and so many *wicked Ones* dare to intrude themselves into so important and sacred an Office.

If a *Paul*, a Man of uncommon natural Abilities, and extensive acquired Learning, *brought up at the Feet of Gamaliel*, and esteemed by *Longinus* (a very proper Judge,) one of the chief Orators of the Age; and more than this, *an Apostle, not inferior to any* in the sacred College^p; if such an one cries out, *Who is sufficient for these Things?* What shall we say to their Confidence and Rashness, who by their Language and Conduct judge *any one equal to it!* The Admittance of such into the Ministry brings it into Contempt, and greatly hazards the Souls of Men by their Ignorance and Errors. Did these Persons seriously read over the *Epistles* of *St. Paul* to *Timothy* and *Titus*, and consider the various Furniture requisite in a *Gospel-Mini-*

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 25
 Minister, and that Christ in these latter Ages of the Church doth not supply the Defects of acquired Abilities by *miraculous Gifts*, it would abate their rash Confidence. How many honest and serious Men, who might have been *in private Life* useful Members of the Community and the Church, have by an over-weening of their own Talents, and perhaps pushed on by the misguided Zeal of some of their Friends, *spoiled a good Lay-Man*, to commence *a loud and ignorant Preacher*? And the Injury done is not confined to themselves, and their deluded Followers; if it were, it would be more tolerable: But frequently a large Body of Men, who no Way deserve such Censures, are Sufferers by their Rashness and Folly, in Conjunction with that of others, who will not distinguish, where the Difference is very apparent.

(2.) Hence learn, that a faithful, conscientious Discharge of the *various Duties* comprised in the *Ministerial Office*, will find a Man *Employment enough* to fill up his Time and Thoughts, without engaging in *secular Employments*.

The Instances of the Apostle Paul occasionally *working* at the Employment of a *Tent-maker*^q, and of the Prophet Amos having been an *Herds-Man of Tekoa*^r, are foolishly

D

ishly

^q Acts xviii. 3.

^r Amos i. 1.

26 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*

ishly urged in Opposition to this Remark, since the Case widely differs. *St. Paul* had in his younger Years copiously stocked his Mind with various Parts of *useful Literature*; and the rich Furniture he had by *the Spirit of Inspiration*, in Wisdom and Knowledge, and in Skill in many Languages, *more than supplied* what the Application of a Man's whole Life could do in an ordinary Way. But all those *Extraordinary Gifts* are long since ceased; the Reasons for the Donation of them being no longer in Force. And when Persons can be supplied in the Way of *common Providence*, GOD is not wont to put himself to the Expence of *Miracles*. The Day after *the Israelites eat of the Corn of Canaan's Land*, the *Manna* from Heaven ceased[†].

Those who are called to the Work of the Ministry, are not unnecessarily to *entangle themselves with worldly Affairs*[‡]. They are *Christian Soldiers*, and must attend their proper Business. *Timothy* is charged to *give himself wholly to those Things* which concerned the Office of an *Evangelist*[§], and to confine himself thereto. We should labour to have our Souls impressed with high Thoughts of the Dignity and Importance of the *Ministerial Office*, and with low Thoughts of *worldly Riches* and *Honours*: And then we shall

† Josh. v. 12.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 4.

§ 1 Tim. iv. 15.

2 Tim. iv. 5.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 27

shall be convinced, that *the whole Man*, with all our Time, Strength, and Talents, is *little enough* to devote to the Service of Christ and immortal Souls.

All our Work is not done *in the Pulpit*, nor in our Preparations for it. *Parlour-Predching* should follow after, and inforce *Publick Predching*. When a Minister *visits his Flock*, it should be, not with a bare *How do ye?* but as a *Minister of JESUS*, and a *Friend to their Souls*; watching for an Opportunity to promote their Spiritual Interest, and from every common Occurrence sliding into Holy and Heavenly Discourse. By cultivating a *Religious Correspondence* with our People, we shall best know *what Subjects* most to insist on for their Spiritual Edification; and how to manage each, so as may most tend to promote their Eternal Interest. We shall know *their various Tempers*, and whether Applications to their Fears, or Hopes, are like to prove most successful. We shall be acquainted with *their Religious Doubts, Difficulties, and Discouragements*, to answer the first, assist them under the second, and comfort them under the last. Had we a *List of those Ministers*, whose Labours the Divine Spirit most remarkably owned *in the last Age* for numerous Conversions, or whose Endeavours *in the present Age* he is pleased to crown with the greatest Success, I doubt not, they were, and are *such*, who in a good Measure form

28 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
their Conduct on the *Apostle's* admirable *Plan,*
and not only *teach* their Hearers *publicly,*
but *from House to House*^x. Something of
this Nature I have observed among the *Re-*
formed Churches in *Holland,* where the *Pas-*
tors and *Elders,* the Week before the Cele-
bration of *the Lord's-Supper,* make a *Religi-*
ous Visit to every Family in which there are
Communicants.

I need not hint to my *Reverend Fathers*
and *Brethren* here present, what their own
Prudence I doubt not will suggest to them,
that *in visiting our Audience* we should care-
fully abstain from interfering with *their*
worldly Affairs, or being impertinently inqui-
sitive about *their Family Concerns:* But the
Hint in the general seemed necessary, and I
heartily wish, it may be useful.

(3.) Of all Men, a Minister of JESUS
should be a Man *mighty in Prayer.*

Certainly he has great Occasion to be *often*
on his Knees, and to be every Day very
earnest and fervent in his Addresses at the
Throne of Grace; since all his Supplies must
come from Above. His *Lamp* must be *lighted*
with Fire from the Heavenly Sanctuary: It
must be *kept burning* by fresh Supplies from
the Spirit of JESUS: And *all the Success* that
attends his Ministry, either as to the Hearts,
or

^x Acts xx. 20.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 29
or Lives of his People, must flow from the
Communications of Divine Grace. *A Man
of GOD* therefore should ever be *a Man of
Prayer.*

He who is totally *incapable of praying*,
unless the Compositions of others are before
him, to dictate Thoughts and Words, seems
but *ill furnished* for the Work of the Mini-
stry. There are *various Cases* in the Chri-
stian Life, which no precomposed Form
can fully reach. But when I say this, I
am far from denying *the Lawfulness*, or even
the Expediency of well-composed Evangelick
Forms of Prayer in many Cases. *The Sea-
man's Manual* is a Proof of my Sentiments
on this Head. And as to *Family Devotion*,
rather than that important Part of Religion
should be neglected, or performed in a Man-
ner less acceptable to those who join in it, or
less edifying, I would advise, at least for a
Time, the Use of some *well-composed Form*,
till by frequent Reading the Holy Scriptures,
by the Use of *free Prayer in Secret*, and a
gradual Advance in the Christian Life, *the
Head of the Family* has so far acquired, with
the Blessing of GOD upon his Endeavours,
the Gift of Prayer, as to stand in no further
Need of such Assistance.

But we are now treating of *Ministerial
Qualifications*: And as to ourselves, it would
be *a Shame* to be grossly defective in a Part
of our Office we have daily Occasions for.
The

30 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
The Gift of Prayer, and the Grace of
Prayer, are indeed distinct Things, and ought
 not to be confounded: But every Minister
 of Christ should labour for an Eminency in
 both. Let each of us who are engaged in
 this great Work, carry on every Part of
 it, in an *humble Dependance* on the Assist-
 ance and Blessing of our Lord JESUS. Let
 fervent Prayer for *Divine Assistance* precede
 our Attempt; and when we find it crowned
 with Success, let Praise to GOD be cheer-
 fully tendered. If we *trust in ourselves*, no
 wonder our Labours are blasted: But if *re-*
nouncing Self-Dependance, we rely on our
 GOD, *He will be our Arm every Morning,*
and our Salvation in the Time of Trouble^y. It
 was justly remarked by *Luther*, that “ *Prayer*
 “ is One of the Three Things, that makes a
 “ worthy Minister.”

(4.) They who are *best qualified* for this
 Sacred Office, ought still to press after
further Improvements.

We should never erect a Pillar, with *Ne*
plus ultra inscribed upon it. Indeed, *the bet-*
ter qualified any are, the livelier Apprehen-
 sions they have of their numerous Defects.
Lord Bacon's Remark is a very just one, “ A
 “ Smattering of Learning may puff a Man up,
 “ and turn his Head with Self-Conceit; but
 “ if

^y Isai. xxxiii. 2.

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 31

“ if ever he attains a considerable Degree,
“ it will bring him to himself again, and
“ make him judge more soberly of his own
“ Proficiency.”

The Evangelist *Timothy* had the great Advantage of drawing in Scripture-Knowledge *from his Childhood*: And the Names of his excellent *Mother* and *Grand-Mother*, who seasoned his ductile Age with Sacred Wisdom, are by *St. Paul* recorded to their Honour^z. Nor is this mentioned barely to commend them, but to excite young *Timothy* to the utmost Diligence and Care, that his After-Progress in Knowledge, Virtue, and Piety, might be answerable to the fair Blossoms of Hope conceived of him from such an Education; and to excite *other Relatives*, especially *Mothers* and *Grand-Mothers*, faithfully to discharge their Duty, in Hope their dear Offspring may in Time become the *Timothy's* of the Age. When grown to Manhood, this Evangelist enjoyed uncommon Assistance from *St. Paul's* Converse. One of *Austin's* Wishes, “ to hear that Chief of the Apostles “ preach,” he was frequently favoured with. And yet, he was to *give Attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine, and to meditate on these Things*^a.

The *Motto* of one of the *British Nobility* well becomes *every Minister* of JESUS, **FORWARD**. Where is the Man, where is the *Minister*

^z 2 Tim. i. 5.

^a 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15.

32 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
ster of Christ, who hath dived so far in the
Scripture, that he can go no further? Were
our Lives to be stretched out to the Date of an
Antediluvian, we might be still making a
Progress in *Scripture-Knowledge*. We owe
to God, to our own Consciences, and to
the Flock committed to our Charge, our con-
tinued Endeavours to advance both in Wis-
dom and Grace: And we shall find Occa-
sions to use the highest Measures attainable,
if we would maintain the full Dignity of the
Sacred Office, and effectually answer its im-
portant Purposes.

(5.) Lastly, Since *the Work* of a Gospel
Minister is *so difficult*, as well as *import-*
tant, let such *Congregations* as chuse a
well-qualified Pastor, endeavour to make
the Burden fit as easy as possible, by bear-
ing *their proper Part* of it.

When *the People* conscientiously discharge
their Duty, it greatly *lessens* the Hardships
of *the Minister*, or, shall I rather say, *turns*
his very Labours into a Pleasure. To reflect
on the glorious *Success* GOD crowned his En-
deavours with, sweetened all *St. Paul's* Toils
and Sufferings: *For what* (says he,) *is our*
Hope, or Joy, or Crown of Rejoicing? *Are*
not even ye, in the Presence of our Lord Jesus
Christ at his Coming? *For ye are our Glory*
and

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 33

and Joy^b: Words, which a Man of GOD doth not barely read, but feels the Emphasis of. When a Minister's Labours among a People are taken kindly, when he is heard with Attention and Candour, when he sees the happy Fruit of his Preaching in his People's Holy and Close Walk with GOD, this gives him Life and Spirit. When he enters his Closet, and prays for the Success of his Labours, and has Reason to think, that many Prayers are going forward on his Account, how pleasing is the Reflection to a faithful Minister of JESUS! When Hands and Hearts are thus united, and lifted up in Prayer to Almighty GOD, the Father of our Lord JESUS, for a Blessing, there is good Reason to hope, that Israel's Cause will prevail, and Amalek be defeated^c. When a Minister enjoys the Love of his People, the Way is open into their Hearts; and they will put a kind Construction, both on his Words and Actions.

My Friends, be very tender of the Reputation of your Minister. His Usefulness among you greatly depends upon it. Many little consider, how much the Enemy of Souls is gratified, and the Work of Christ obstructed, by aspersing the Character of those who labour in the Word and Doctrine. Every little idle Story, that would lessen their Reputation, the People should, on their Account, as well as

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^b 1 Theff. ii. 19, 20.

^c Exod. xvii. 11.

34 *The Importance of the Ministerial Office,*
that of their Pastor, silence at the first Hear-
ing; and stop the Tale-bearer's Mouth for the
future, by immediately frowning upon him.
Instead of observing with a censorious Eye
the Infirmities of those, who are over you in
the Lord, and watch for your Souls; observe
the Endowments, whether of Gifts or Graces,
the glorious Head of the Church has imparted
to them.

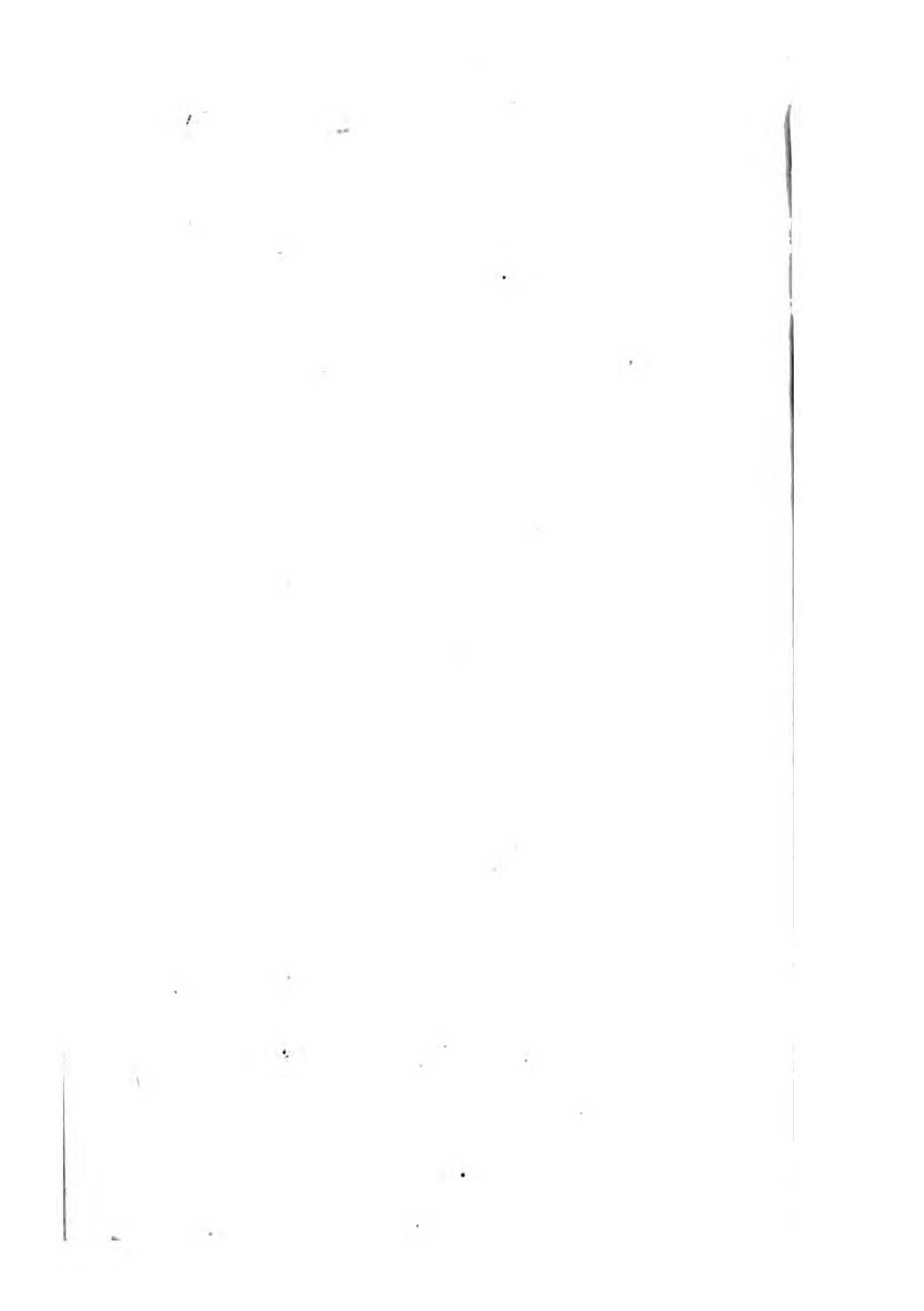
Continue to *reverence* and behave towards
your aged and worthy Pastor, as a Father;
and to *esteem and love Him, who is this Day*
set apart to exercise that Office jointly, as a
Brother: That all the Pastors and Ministers
of various Churches, who are at your Re-
quest come together to assist and join in the
solemn Work of this Day, may hear with
Pleasure, that you stand fast in the Faith
of the Gospel, and are happily united in
Love and brotherly Affection to each other;
and so may have reason to *rejoice* with you,
and for you.

To close the whole, Tho' neither We who
are *Ministers*, are of ourselves *sufficient* for
that arduous Work; nor You that are *Hearers*,
so to attend our Preaching, as to render it
a Savour of Life unto Life to your own
Souls; let this Thought *encourage us all*,
that in the Blessed JESUS, the Head of the
Church, *all Fulness dwells*; there is a glorious
Sufficiency both for us and you. And from
the Plenitude of his Grace, He is ready to
sup-

and the Difficulty of rightly discharging it. 35

upply all those, who act Faith upon Him, and by ardent Prayer implore a Share in his gracious Aids. May the Almighty SPIRIT, *the Spirit of the Father and the Son*, so direct and influence *our Ministry*, and enlighten and renew *your Souls*, that we may *all be built up in the Faith and Hope of the Gospel*, and finally obtain an Inheritance among all those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus! Amen.







T H E
C H A R G E
Delivered at the
O R D I N A T I O N
Of the Reverend
Mr. A B R A H A M T O Z E R.

MY DEAR BROTHER,



WHEN I consider the rational and edifying Manner, in which the Solemnities of *Ordination-Days* amongst us are adjusted and conducted, and recollect what I hope I may justly call the various and delightful *Tokens of the Divine Presence* in our Assemblies on such Occasions, I cannot but esteem it my Happiness to have been an Attendant on so many of them. My Memory goes back with Joy to many former Years, in each of which Providence has given me, in one Part of our Country or another, to see *young Ministers, who have a good Report of all Men, and of the*

38 *The Charge delivered at the Ordination*
the Truth itself^a, after having *approved themselves* to Christian Societies, generally by some considerable Series of Probationary Labours, *unanimously chosen* by the respective Churches, and invited to the *Pastoral Office* over them without one dissenting Voice. With Delight have I heard their faithful and affectionate Testimony to the great Truths of the Gospel, in judicious *Summaries of the Christian Religion*, drawn up by them in such Expressions as they freely chose, without the Imposition of Human Forms; *Summaries*, which, in this Connection, I must acknowledge to have been in the Number of the most affecting and edifying publick Discourses. If I have ever known *the Spirit of Prayer* poured forth, as in a Kind of Celestial Torrent, to add at once Dignity, Sanctity, and Transport to our Assemblies, it has been on such Occasions: And the Exhortations of my Brethren in their *Sermons*, and *Charges*, have often been the Means of humbling, of melting, and of animating my Soul.

The present Pleasure attending these Sacred Hours, the religious Improvement received from what has passed in them, the chearing Prospect which they give relating to the Church in future Years, and even in Generations yet to come, do all concur to demand my Thankfulness, that I have so often on such Seasons been called *to go with the Multitude to the House*
of

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of GOD^b. But I will freely own, the Enjoyment has often been abated, by the Obligation I have been under to officiate, not only in some publick Work, but especially in the Part which is now devolved upon me. Nor should I, after having delivered *so many Charges*, as well as opened my Heart so fully to you, *Dear Sir*, in a more private Manner, on almost every Subject relating to the Ministry, know how to set myself with any Spirit to what must be in a great Measure *a Repetition of former Things*; if I did not recollect, that what is immediately addressed to one's self, in the Midst of such peculiar Solemnities, may have some singular Weight, beyond what the same Thing would have in a more private Address, or if thus publickly offered to another Person. And therefore I persuade myself, you will hear me with all Attention and Regard, while I give a little Vent to the Fulness of my Heart, in such Fraternal *Congratulations, Admonitions, and Encouragements*, as may suit the present Occasion, and may, by the Divine Blessing, be of some Service to you, and my other beloved and honoured *Brethren*, who are sharing in the Honours, the Labours, and the Burthens of this *Evangelical Ministry*, to the full Exercise of which you have now been solemnly called and set apart.

I. LET

^b Psal. xlii. 4.

I. LET me most cordially and affectionately *congratulate you*, my dear Brother, that you have now been thus publicly *called* and *devoted* to the *Ministerial* and *Pastoral Office*.

Paul esteemed it Matter of most joyful Reflection, when he said, *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, that he hath counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry*^c. And I thank him from my Soul, as the great *Head of the Church*, that He is still *raising a Succession* of those who are to bear it, and that you, *Dear Sir*, are numbered among them. I most heartily *congratulate you*, on the *Honour*,—the *Pleasure*,—and the *Usefulness* of that Station of Life on which you now enter.

1. I congratulate you on *the Honour* of your Office.

For with whatever Contempt Ignorant and Profane Men may treat it, it is *highly honourable* in its simplest Forms; and needs none of the external Ornaments which Men can hang about it, to render it so. If it be *honourable*, to be (tho' confessedly in a lower Sense, than the Title was applicable to the Apostles,) *an Ambassador of Christ*, and a
Man

^c 1 Tim. i. 12.

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Man of GOD, you have that Honour. If it be *honourable*, to sustain the *highest Trust*, that can, in the Methods of common Providence, be reposed in mortal Man, even to have *the glorious Gospel of the Blessed GOD committed to our Charge*^d, and to be made *Guardians of Souls* which are to exist for ever: — If it be *honourable*, to bear *an Office* which was sanctified by *Christ*, who himself bore it, and by bearing it has dignified it for ever; *an Office*, which is mentioned in the Sacred Oracles, as *the great Gift of Christ to his Church*; as the immediate, tho' not the ultimate, *End* of the most visible and extraordinary *Effusion of his Spirit*: — For *when he ascended up on high, and led Captivity Captive, he gave Gifts unto Men*; and distributed the Royal Donative, giving first *Apostles, then Prophets, then Evangelists, then Pastors and Teachers*; that by it *Holy Men might be perfectly fitted for the Work of the Ministry, that so the Body of Christ* (that is, his whole Church,) *might be edified*^e, or built up: * — Rejoice, that your Name is now (as it were), inserted in the Catalogue of *these his Servants*, and reflect frequently on *the Honour*; not to be *exalted above Measure*, but to be awakened and animated to a Dignity and Sanctity of Behaviour correspondent to it.

F

2. Let

^d 1 Tim. i. 11.

^e Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12.

* This *Version* I think the *original Words* will bear;
προς τον καλαρισμον των αγιων εις εργον διακονιας, εις οικοδομην του σωματος του Χριστου.

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2. Let me also congratulate you on *the Pleasures* of that Office, on which you are entered.

For *Pleasures* mingle themselves amidst all its Labours and Difficulties, all its Reproaches, and its Persecutions; yea, when duely executed, it is *a Series of Pleasures*. Pleasures will meet you *in your secret Retirements*; they will attend you here *in the House of your GOD*; they will follow you *to the House of your Friends*: They will crown *all your Days*, and above all *your Sabbaths*: And these, *rational, pure, sublime Pleasures*, which *the Man* may approve, *the Christian* relish, and which, did *Angels* dwell in Human Flesh, they surely would pursue.

Must it not necessarily be *pleasant* to a devout Heart, (and God forbid, that any other should here be in Question!) to give itself up *in Secret* to the Contemplation of Divine Things, to search the rich Mines of Scripture, to investigate the glorious Mysteries with which they are pregnant, and *which Angels stoop down that they may look into*^f? to compare one Part of the Sacred Oracles with another, that each may be illustrated by the Comparison? to discover, I will not say *New Doctrines* of Importance, (for I persuade myself, GOD has not left his Christian Church

to

^f 1 Pet. i. 11.

to learn them *in these last Days,*) but *New Illustrations* of the great and acknowledged Truths of his Gospel, *New Beauties* in the Arrangement and Expressions of particular Texts, *New Methods* of touching the *Hearts* of Men, by Truths already familiar to their *Ear*?

What can be more *delightful* also, than to rise up to lead the *Publick Devotions* of a worshipping Assembly? to spread before the Blessed God, in their Name, and our own, *Prayers* and *Supplications*, *Intercessions* and *Thanksgivings*? to remind them of the Divine Mercy? to proclaim among them the everlasting Gospel? animated with a secret Hope, (while meditating in Private, while speaking in the Assembly,) that by the Divine Blessing, the Knowledge and Love of God in a Redeemer may be shed abroad on some ignorant and wretched Soul, hitherto destitute of it; and in many other Instances, that truly Christian Sentiments may be kept alive, in Hearts that have already received them, and be transmitted from the present to the next Generation?

Nor can any *Subjects of Conversation* administer a nobler Delight *in the Houses of your Friends*, than those which will naturally fall before you, as *a Minister*. For if *Religion* add so much Sweetness and Endearment to *Friendship*, when contracted between Persons of the most private Characters, it must much more do it in such Instances; where past Ministerial Ser-

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vices may be recollected, where the Fruits of them may be made apparent, and *the Man of GOD* more abundantly furnished for the future Discharge of his Office, in *the most suitable*, and therefore *the most edifying Manner*. Which naturally leads me,

3. To congratulate you on *that Prospect of Usefulness*, which this happy Day may open upon you.

It is true, that how well so ever we may be furnished for the Ministry, and how agreeably so ever we are placed in it, we must not hope, that *our Success* will be *universal*: Hardly can we flatter ourselves, that it will be *general*. What are we *better than our Fathers*? Or how comparable to *our Master*? That we should never complain *with them*, and even *with Him*, that we *labour in vain*, and *spend our Strength for nought*^h? Yet we can ourselves witness, from what we have seen, and from what we have felt, *the Blessing* that hath attended *the Ministry of others*. And I trust, that even those of us, who are least advanced in Life, least experienced in the Work, have already been favoured with some *Seals of our Ministry*, some who are as *Letters of Recommendation*, written as it were *by the Hand of Christ himself*ⁱ; and that

¶ 1 Kings xix. 4. ^h Isai. xlix. 4. ⁱ 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

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that you, *Sir*, will be thus honoured. Oh that it might be *abundantly*! Yes, I trust, God will give you to *convert many*. And if it were *but one*, who can express the Happiness of *saving one Soul from Death*, of conducting one immortal Creature to Life and Glory everlasting?

You will also, I doubt not, *edify many* by every *publick Prayer* you offer, and by every *Sermon* you preach. Your Words, proceeding from *your own Heart*, will reach *the Hearts of others*, and rekindle the languishing Flame of Devotion. Every Virtue, and every Grace, will, I hope, flourish under your Cultivation; while you strengthen, with renewed Exhortations, every good Resolution already formed: And *the rising Generation*, growing up under your Care, in Concurrence with that of pious Parents whom you animate to the important Charge of their Education, will, by insensible Degrees, be furnished with the Knowledge of Religion, and brought, not only to the Speculation, but to the Sentiments and Practice of it. So that while *others* have, it may be, their Bags, their Houses, their Furniture, and their Fields, to shew as the Effect of *their Labours*; you will have *Captives of Satan*, rescued from his Tyranny, adopted into the Family of God, and honoured with the Privileges of his Children, crowding his Courts, and surrounding his Table, as the infinitely more valuable Fruits of
yours.

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yours. You will see the Character of Christians brightening from Sabbath to Sabbath, under your Evangelical and Practical Instructions ; their Blemishes wearing out, and their Graces contracting (as by Exercise they *will contract*) more Strength and more Beauty continually.

God will also undoubtedly give you, to wipe *the weeping Eye*, to cheer *the mourning Heart* ; to be His Instrument in taking off the Burthen from *tender depressed Spirits* ; in which Number you will sometimes find those, who may (if any in the World may,) be justly called *the Excellent of the Earth*^k. CHRIST, the great Lord of the Church, will in many Instances make you (as it were) the Almoner of his Bounty, and Messenger of his Love ; while He is *giving to them that mourn in Zion, Beauty for Ashes*, and sending them *the Garments of Praise* in Exchange for *the Spirit of Heaviness*^l. Your kind Offices, and the happy Effects of them, will attend your Friends, not only in all the darkest Hours of preceding Affliction, but even on their *dying Beds*. There will you animate their Faith ; there will you be *a Helper of their Joy*^m ; and furnish the Hand of the departing Pilgrim, with the *Promises* of God as *a sure Staff*, to support him in his Way thro' all the gloomy Horrors of the last

^k Pſal. xvi. 3. ^l Iſai. lxi. 3. ^m 2 Cor. i. 24.

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last Valley, by which he must pass to the
New Jerusalem,

By such *Traces of Usefulness* will you *mark* (as it were) the several Years, and Months, and Days of Life; while the Passage of so many others thro' it is *like that of an Arrow thro' the trackless Air*: Till at length you die with a pleasing Consciousness, that you have not lived in vain, and rise to *Rewards* never to be described by mortal Voice, never to be conceived by the Human Heart, and of which I must not say any Thing more now, as I am briefly to touch upon them in the concluding Part of my Discourse.

Now while you have these Things in View, do you not, my Brother, *congratulate yourself* upon this happy Occasion? I am persuaded, you do. I am persuaded, that your Heart is even now bowing itself *in secret Thankfulness* before GOD, that He hath honoured you with *Capacities* for this Work; that He hath furnished you with the Means of a *proper Education* for it; and that His Providence has at length called you out to it. Nor can your Gratitude forget His distinguished Goodness in *settling you* with so generous, so affectionate, and so pious a *People*, and now in the Bonds of *Joint-Pastorship* with that faithful and venerable *Servant of Christ*, with whom you share the Office.*

You

* The Reverend *Mr. Thomas Scott, Senior.*

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You will, I doubt not, *serve with him, as a Son with a Father, in the Gospel of Christ.*ⁿ Nor can the warmest Friendship form a greater Wish for you, than that you may learn by the daily Opportunities of *conversing with him*, to improve more and more in that rich Variety of Christian and Ministerial Graces, which have for a long Series of Years rendered *his Name* so honourable in our Churches, and *his Flock* so peculiarly happy. Oh that I could also *congratulate you, and them*, on returning and continued Opportunities of learning, as formerly, by *his publick Labours!* In the mean Time, permit me with these cordial *Congratulations* to intermingle,

II. Some faithful *Admonitions*, relating to the *Labours*,—the *Difficulties*,—the *Oppositions*, attending the Station of Life on which you are entered,—and the *solemn Account* in which it is to terminate.

Of these indeed you have just now been reminded by my dear and honoured *Brother*, in so judicious, and in so pathetic a Manner, that it is the less necessary for me to enlarge upon them. Yet were they to be wholly omitted by me in this Discourse, it could hardly be called a *Charge*; and I fear, it is a Subject, on which we all need *Line upon Line, and Precept upon*

ⁿ Phil. ii. 22.

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upon Precept. Let me therefore solemnly,
tho' briefly, remind you,

I. Of the *Labours*, that attend this Situation in Life.

These indeed are such, as will demand an almost uninterrupted Attention of Mind, and Vigour of Diligence. *Labours* await you *at Home*, and *Abroad*:—*Labours on your own Days*, and *on the Sabbath*; a Day of *Rest* to others, but to you of the most strenuous, tho' most delightful *Service*:—*Labours in the Study*; that Knowledge may be increased; that Provision may be made for publick Ministrations, with Solidity, with Perspicuity, with Propriety, with Energy, with Tenderness:—*Labours in the Pulpit*; that *publick Devotions* may be suitably and fervently poured out before GOD; and *Sermons* so delivered, as, if possible, to command the Attention of the Auditory, and to communicate, in a natural and effectual Manner, those good Affections to others, which you feel in your own Breast.—Not to mention the *Labours* to be gone thro' *in visiting your Friends*, and in the Exercise of that prudent *personal and domestick Inspection*, which you must necessarily attend to, if you would approve yourself *a skilful*, yea I will add, if you would approve yourself *a faithful* Shepherd.—What a Combination on

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the whole! Labours of the *Head*, Labours of the *Voice*; but oh, above all, Labours of the *Heart*! For this is indeed *the Labour*: To fix on our own inconstant Spirits *a becoming habitual Sense of GOD*; to feel always in our own Breast *those pious Affections*, which it is our Business to endeavour to raise in others; in a Word, to keep *the Sacred Flame* of Love to GOD, to CHRIST, and to the Souls of Men, *ever burning, yea ever glowing*, with an Intensity of Heat proportionable to the Number and Nature of *those Sacrifices*, which are *daily*, which are *hourly* to be presented!—*Help, Lord*, or it will soon be extinguished! Feed it continually by Thy celestial Stream; or *who is sufficient for these Things*°!—You will surely say so, when you consider,

2. The *Difficulties* attending your Work, of which I am next to admonish you.

But here, as indeed under the former Head, your own Experience must already have done it in the most convincing Manner. You find the *Ministry*, a Work that requires not only *patient Industry*, but wise Conduct and happy Address. *Difficulties* meet us *in the Closet*, even when our own Minds are competently furnished with Divine Knowledge, so to adjust *the Composition* of our *Discourses*, as
that

° 2 Cor. ii. 16.

that the Understanding of our Hearers may be enlightened, their Conscience convinced, and their Affections impressed; that the Ignorant may be instructed, that the Careless may be awakened, that the Hypocrite may be detected, that the Mourner may be comforted, the Dejected revived, the Backslider restored, the confirmed Christian yet more established; in a Word, that every one may have *his Portion of Meat in due Season*^p, and every one, so far as may be, according to his own Taste too; at least, that what we say, while it is intelligible to the meanest, may not be justly contemptible to the more refined, but that *Things and Words* may be *sought out*, so far as Faithfulness will permit, *acceptable* to both^q. And *how hard* is it, to unite all these Views, especially amidst such a Diversity of Sentiments, as well as Circumstances! And this, not only where those are in Question, who have apparently *made Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience*^r, and whom in some Respects it might be Infamy to please; but even where, among the best of Men, *different Apprehensions of Things*, conscientiously received and retained, will lead one to *disrelish* what another *most wishes to bear*, and possibly in some Instances, one to *censure* even because another *applauds*.

It may on all these Accounts, and many others, be *difficult to instruct*, and it will be

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still

^p Luke xii. 42. ^q Eccl. xii. 10. ^r 1 Tim. i. 19.

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still more difficult to reprove. General Hints given in Publick will by guilty Consciences be interpreted as *personal Reflections*, and perhaps aggravated into *open Abuse*, and Occasions of declared Enmity: And *private Applications* will be evaded, discouraged, and very probably *resented*. The Corruptions of the Heart will rise against the most friendly Efforts of Cure; and *those Wounds* which most absolutely require a *deep Search*, will be least patient even under the *gentlest Touch*. Your Solicitude to *please GOD* will, in many Instances, *displease Men*. Your Heart will be *grieved* by many *unsuccessful Labours*. And to close the melancholy Scene, you will probably *see some*, of whom you had very agreeable Hopes, *falling away* from all Regard to serious Religion; and perhaps may find yourself obliged, tho' with a reluctant Heart, to bear your Part *in separating some from your Communion*, whom you gathered into it with the greatest Joy, and in whom you blessed yourself as *the Seals of your Ministry*.

These are *Difficulties*, which may arise *from within*; and besides these, the Prejudices of the World will lie strongly against you *from without*. Many Eyes will be upon you, to observe *your Conduct*. By some *your Slips* will be magnified into *Crimes*; and if you walk so cautiously, (tho' who can promise himself that he shall,) as to escape any *just Blame*, Malice will create Occasions
of

of Censure, perhaps in some Instances even *from your Solicitude to avoid it*. Your Zeal will be called *Bigotry*, and your Candor *Hypocrisy*; your Humility *Affectation*; and your Activity will be imputed, either to a high Opinion of *your own Abilities*, or to a vain Desire of *outshining others*, or to a low Pursuit of *Popularity* from arrogant or interested Principles. Such Treatment have *the best of Men* found; and such must *you* expect, unless *Satan* lose his Influence over the World by much swifter Degrees, than we have any Warrant to hope that he will. But this naturally leads me to warn you,

3. Of the *Oppositions*, which you may meet with in your Ministry.

These may indeed, in different Circumstances, be more or less extream: But something of this Kind is at all Events to be expected; and it will be our Wisdom to provide against the worst. *Gird up* therefore *the Loins of your Mind*[†]. Remember, that you are *putting on your Harness*[‡]; and God only knows, to what *Combats* you may be called.

We have long enjoyed *Halcyon Days*, thro' the Favour of *Providence*, and the Equity of *our Civil Governours*; to whom, I hope, we are grateful for it, as we ought. But *He*
that

† 1 Pet. i. 13.

‡ 1 Kings xx. 11.

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that rules in the Heavens can only say, how soon *Clouds* may gather, and how soon *Tempests* of Thunder and Lightning may burst upon us. Sometimes, you know, a *Storm* arises on a *Sudden*, and the *Deadness* of the *preceding Calm* increases both its Terror and its Strength. So sinful a People, as we must confess ourselves to be, can never have Reason to wonder, at any *publick* and *national Calamity*, with may break in upon us in a Moment. But should Circumstances more gradually change, you, *Sir*, and our younger Brethren, may live to see *an Enemy in the Sanctuary of the Lord*^u; may live to see our *Religious Liberties* trampled under Foot, and with them undoubtedly *our Civil*, for they are *Twins* that will live and die together. You may perhaps be called to *resist unto Blood*^x, to glorify GOD in the Flames, and to teach your Flock *Christian Courage* and *Fidelity*, not by *Words*, but by *Martyrdom*. Such Things you may suffer, as a *Protestant*, as a *Christian*.

And *more peaceful Times* have their Trials too, tho' perhaps not equally severe. I do indeed hope, that *mutual Love* is growing, among the various Denominations of *Christians*, and particularly between *us*, and *our Brethren of the Establishment*. And may the Blessings of *the GOD of Peace* rest on the Men who cultivate it, on both Sides!—
But

^u Psal. lxxiv. 3.

^x Heb. xii. 4.

of the Reverend Mr. ABRAHAM TOZER. 5

But we cannot hope to see the Time, when *all* shall be *so moderate* and *so equitable*, as not to think and judge *with some Severity* of those, whose Conscience obliges them, tho' in the modestest Manner, to maintain *different Forms* of *Worship* and *Discipline*, even where the great Articles of Faith are the same.—And *a different Judgment* relating to the *Articles of Faith* may draw down *yet severer Censures* and Opposition, from those whose Judgment in *Worship* and *Discipline* agrees ever so well.—And I must faithfully warn you, *Sir*, that if you *go on to assert* (as I hope you always will,) *those great Doctrines of the Gospel* to which you have now borne a Publick Testimony, (I particularly mean *the Deity* and *Atonement* of CHRIST, the Ruin of our Nature by *the original Apostacy*, and our Restoration by *the Agency of the Blessed Spirit*;) you are not to imagine, that any Moderation of Temper, or any other personal Virtue, or all your Zeal for the Service of *the Common Cause of Christians, Protestants, or Dissenters*, will atone for what some will imagine so great a Crime; or shelter you from the affected Contempt, and severe Reproaches of *some angry People*, who amidst all their Professions of *the most unbounded Charity* will think yours an excepted Case, or will rather chuse to be injurious to you than consistent with themselves.—But *it is* after all *a very small Matter, to be judged of Man's Judgment:*
He

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He that judgeth us is the Lord^y: And that is the most solemn Thought of all, concerning which I am *lastly* to admonish you, even

4. The *awful Account*, which you are shortly to give up to Him, from whom you have received your Ministry.

We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ^z: And if He account with the meanest of his Servants, we may assure ourselves, He will do it with *his Stewards*. And let us remember, that *when the Books are opened*, it will not only be found upon Record there, “that *such a Congregation* was at such a “*Time committed* to this, or that Minister;” but a particular Register will in effect be produced of *every Soul* consigned to our Care: “So many *Heads of Families*, together with “*such Children*, and *such Servants*.” And then our Conduct will be reviewed, and Examination made, “how far we have *answered our Trust*.” Should it be found, that we have *neglected* and *abused it*, the Displeasure of our great Lord and Master will rise in Proportion to its Importance, and to the Opportunities we have had of doing good in it: *Opportunities*, which tho’ We may not perhaps so thoroughly examine, as to conceive of their full Extent, He most circumstantially knows. And surely, if it be then
found,

^y 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

^z 2 Cor. v. 10.

found, as it undoubtedly will, *a fatal Thing* to have *betrayed the Bodies, or the Estates* of Men, when committed to our Care; *much more* will it be so, to have *betrayed*, and by betraying to have *destroyed*, so far as in us lay, *immortal Souls*. This is a Matter of such Weight, that when we seriously think of it, and compare it with those criminal Neglects, which Conscience will charge even on the best of us, there is just Reason for us with one Voice to cry out, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servants, O Lord; for in thy Sight can none of us be justified^a*. And when you, my Brother, think of it, in such a Moment as this you may find *your Heart ready to fail*; and even may be tempted to draw back, and say, *Who shall stand to minister before this Holy Lord GOD^b? lest he break forth upon us, and we die^c*. But I would not leave you under the Distress of such a View, and therefore conclude,

III. With a few Hints addressed to you by Way of *Encouragement*, to animate you to go forth with Courage and Chearfulness, notwithstanding these awful Views which I have been giving you of your Office.

H

And,

^a Psal. cxliiii. 2. ^b 1 Sam. vi. 20. ^c Exod. xix. 22.

And, thro' the Goodness of our Divine Master, I have many Considerations of great Importance to urge here. As,

1. That you have *an unerring Rule* in the *Word of GOD*, from whence your Instructions, Admonitions, and Directions, are to be drawn.

You well know, that *Scripture* was given for this End, *that the Man of GOD*, that is, the Christian Minister, *might be perfected, thoroughly furnished to every good Work^d*, various as the good Works of his Office are. The best of *Human Writings* have their Defects, and their Blemishes: But in this Respect, as well as others, it is true, that *as for GOD, his Way is perfect, and the Word of the Lord is tried^e*. When we read the most excellent *Moral and Religious Writings* of the *Heathens*, we find a great Deal of Error and Superstition, which mingles Compassion with our Admiration. When we read the merely *Human Writings* of the most celebrated *antient and modern Divines*, there is much to exercise our Caution, and our Candor. As for any *New Theological Hypothesis*, we generally find, on a more accurate Examination, the Proofs of its Falseness, proportionable to the Confidence with which it

^d 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. ^e Psal. xviii. 30.

it is advanced, and the Importance to which it pretends. And where Men write with the greatest Caution and Modesty, tho' such generally *err the least*, yet there is something defective, or something redundant; something unguarded, or something overstrained: So that, tho' they may be *useful Companions* in our Journey, we dare not commit ourselves to any one of them as *our Guide*; and they often differ so much among themselves, as to increase our Perplexity, and indeed to give us painful Apprehensions as to *our Safety*, or *theirs*; did we not recollect, that *various Paths*, after having divided a while, may so run into each other, as to *lead to the same Place*, tho' some may be more direct than others. But of *Scripture* it may be said, as of its *great Original*, that in it *there is perfect Light, and no Darknes at all*^f. Oh how happy are you, that have in so small a Bulk, *the Oracles of Eternal Truth*, and particularly the Volume of *the New Testament*, which may so easily be carried about with you, to entertain you *Abroad*, as well as *at Home*; to talk with you, *when you lie down, and when you rise up*^g; to be *the Man of your Counsel*^h, when you are preparing to instruct your Flock in Publick, or more privately to guide and advise them in the most intricate Circumstances! This is like *the Pillar of Fire*, to direct your Way amidst the darkest

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Night;

^f 1 John i. 5. ^g Deut. vi. 7. ^h Psal. cxix. 24.

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Night; and like *the Pillar of Cloud*, to refresh your Soul amidst the most painful Labours, and most scorching Heats. Let it be followed faithfully; and *you*, and that Part of *the Israel of GOD* over which you preside, will be *happily conducted*, thro' all the Windings, thro' all the Fatigues of *the Wilderness*, till *your Feet* and *theirs* stand upon *Mount Zion*. Consult it, *my dear Brother*, and reverence it as you ought; and you will be *safe*, not only under the Shelter and Guard of *Aged Wisdom*, but in every Change that can be apprehended or imagined.

2. You have also for your Encouragement *the daily Prayers* of many, whom you have Reason to think not destitute of an Interest at the Throne they address.

You have your Share, I trust, in *all the Prayers*, which are daily put up by *the Church*, under its various Forms, for *all the Faithful Ministers* of CHRIST: But you may assure yourself, that you are more particularly and distinctly remembered, by *your Christian Friends* to whom you are related in Ministerial Bonds. You *need that Remembrance*; and they consider that you need it. In their *Families*, in their *Closets*, they see not a Day, in which they do not supplicate earnestly for *the Blessing of GOD* on your Person, your Studies, and your Labours. When you come
to

to them in the House of GOD, you may consider yourself, (if you will pardon the Expression,) as *raised on the Wing of their Prayers*; and may hope to experience, in Answer to them, some *New Unction from above*. How great an Encouragement, amidst the daily Consciousness of our own Unworthiness! whether we consider it, as testifying *their Love*, and so securing in a great Measure their Candor to us; or as effectual to obtain *those fresh Supplies of Divine Assistance*, which they have sought. Nor can I conclude this Head without saying, that it is happy, when *the Minister*, amidst all his various Cares, is as constant, as earnest, and as affectionate, in *praying for the whole People* committed to his Care, as many a *pious*, and it may be *obscure Christian* in each of our Assemblies is, in striving with GOD for a *Blessing on his Minister*.

3. You may also expect *the Countenance, Esteem, and Friendship, of all Good Men* that thoroughly know you.

I put in this Limitation, because *the Misrepresentations of Character* which Ignorance and Malice may draw, often *alienate the Minds* of very deserving People from each other; so that they turn away with some Dislike from *they know not whom, or what*. But where a *valuable Character is known*, (and that

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that of a *faithful Minister* will always be such,) it must command *Esteem* and *Affection*; and Prejudices which had been conceived against it, will melt away before the Radiancy of it, like Snow before the Sun. Be diligent and resolute in the Execution of your Office, and you will *find Favour*, and good Acceptance, *in the Eyes* of GOD, and of *worthy Men*; and perhaps, should your *Reputation* be *aspersed* by the Ignorant and the Malicious, you may find that *Providence* will exert itself to *bring forth your Righteousness as the Light*, and your Honour, as well as your *Salvation, as a Lamp that burneth*ⁱ. You will be sure of a *peculiar Share* in the Affection and Veneration of *the Flock* over which you preside. They will look upon you, as *the Gift of GOD* to the Society: They will consider you, as, in some Measure, *the Representative of our Lord Jesus Christ* himself; of whom every faithful Minister is indeed a living Image. They will therefore *esteem you very highly in Love for your Work's Sake*^k. The *Maintenance* they give you, will be *cheerfully offered*, in Proportion to their respective Abilities, as the Tribute of Gratitude, and the Pledge of Endearment. *Your Afflictions* will be the Common Grief, and *your Prosperity* their Joy; and each of them will look upon himself as obliged in Duty to approve himself, *the Guardian* of your Character, and of your Peace.

ⁱ Isai. lxii. 1. ^k 1 Thess. v. 13.

Peace. *Their Hearts*, as well as *their Houses*, will be open to you ; *their Countenances* will tell you, better than any Words can do it, how *welcome* you are to them ; and every proper Token of *Respect* will be *cordial*, in Proportion to the Degree in which it is *unconstrained*. And where this is the Case, you will have no Cause to *envy any Dignities* or *Revenues*, which mere Power may command, but which no superior Splendor and Abundance can render equally sweet. Above all must it *encourage you*, to reflect,

4. That you have the Promise of *your Master's Presence*, and may trust in him for *the Communication of his Spirit*.

He hath told his Ministers, *He will be with them always, even unto the End of the World*¹ : And you may rest on the Veracity of a *Word*, that *shall continue, tho' Heaven and Earth shall pass away*^m. CHRIST will meet you ; CHRIST will strengthen you. He will feed and cheer *your Soul* ; that you may be enabled to feed and to cheer *those* that he has committed to your Care. It is not a mere empty Sound : *Your Brethren*, and *your Fathers*, among whom you stand this Day, can *from their own Experience* attest *the Truth of the Promise*. He has softened our Fatigues ; He has sweetened our Afflictions ;

¹ Mat. xxviii. 20.

^m Luke xvi. 17.

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tions ; and carried us *with Songs in our Mouths* through Scenes, at the very distant Prospect of which we should have trembled. *Having obtained Help from Him, we continue even to this Dayⁿ*, the living, the chearful *Witnesses* of his Power, his Goodness, and his Faithfulness. *Thou therefore, my Son, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus^o*. And remember,

5. That in Consequence of this, you may expect such considerable *Improvements in Personal Religion*, as shall be a rich Equivalent for all your Labours, and for all you can resign for the Ministry, or suffer in it.

It must be *nourishing to the Soul*, if it be spiritually alive, to be *so continually conversant* with Spiritual and Divine Things. Your *Meditations*, your *Prayers*, your *Publick Discourses*, your *Private Converses* on Religious Subjects and Occasions, together with *the Administration of both the Sacraments*, will all have a *great Tendency*, under a Divine Blessing, *to make good Impressions* on your own Heart, and to advance you in a holy and devout Temper. While you are thus daily *watering others*, you *will be watered yourself^p* ; as I doubt not but you will remember, that
while

▪ Acts xxvi. 22. ° 2 Tim. ii. 1. P Pfov. xi. 25.

while you *teach others*, you *teach yourself also*[¶]. While the daily *Cares of others* in their Secular Callings, have an apparent Tendency to *divert their Minds* from GOD, *yours* will tend *directly to him*, and give you *Advantages*, beyond what can easily be imagined, for being *continually with him*[†]: Such Advantages indeed, that, were the Nature, and the Value of them sufficiently known, Men would be ready to *contend for the Ministry*, as for a Sacred Prize. They would esteem it among the greatest Privileges of a *plentiful Estate*, that it might give them Opportunities of being *educated for it*; and of being *independent in it*; while that Independency was considered as some additional Security for their Fidelity. And the Zeal, with which *Persons of the highest Rank* among us would then *press forward to this Work*, would bring us into a Necessity of directing into some other Channel *that Provision*, which the wise *Charity* of some publick Benefactors, the Living and the Dead, has made for the Support of *poor Students for the Ministry*: A Charity, which in the low Ebb to which Religion is fallen amongst us, may almost, under GOD, be called *the Hope of our Churches*, even for the very next Generation. Especially would the Richest and Greatest esteem it *their Honour* and *their Happiness*, did they consider,

I what

¶ Rom. ii. 21.

† Pſal. lxxiii. 25.

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what I am in the last Place to mention to you, *my dear Brother*, viz.

6. The *glorious Expectation* and *Hope*, which closes the whole Prospect.

What if every *other Hope*, but that of *Religious Improvement*, were in a Moment to vanish? What if nothing should remain, between this and the Grave, but the View of *Labours*, of *Reproaches*, of *Tribulations*, of *Persecutions*? What if you were to conflict, thro' the whole of your Course, with the Malice of *Enemies*, the Coldness and Ingratitude of *Friends*, the incorrigible Obstinacy of *Sinners*, the Perverseness and Imperfections of *those*, whom, if any are such, we must hope to be *Christians*? Here is enough to balance all. *Death* is approaching: *Death*, that stripped *Aaron* of his Garments and of his Burthens together, and ended all his painful Pilgrimage. *Be faithful unto Death*, says our Divine Master, *and I will give thee a Crown of Life*[†]. Oh think every Day, of *the Extasy* with which you shall receive *that Crown*, and of the high everlasting *Exultation* with which you shall wear it. Think of *the Joy*, with which, after a Life of persevering Fidelity to him, *your separate Spirit* shall ascend into his Presence, 'ere yet *this Body*, the Instrument of his Service, shall be laid in the Grave. Think
of

[†] Rev. ii. 10.

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of the Congratulations, with which your venerable *Predecessors*, your eminently pious *Parents*, and those of *your Flock* who have fled upwards before you, will then *meet you*, and hail your Arrival. And think, how *JESUS* will, by one Smile and Embrace, *overpay* all the *Labours* and *Sufferings* of a long protracted Life. Think of the *Complacency* and *Delight*, with which you will look down on the *Field* which you have cultivated, and on the *growing Harvest* you have left behind; while perhaps some of the blessed *Fruits of your Labours* may be running on from Age to Age, so as to be the Means of *propagating Christianity* to the last Rounds of Time. And Oh think, above all, of the *great Day of the Lord*, when the *chief Shepherd shall appear*, that he may confer on you, and on *all those* who have faithfully discharged their Ministry, a *Crown of Glory that fadeth not away*[†]. Then, when *every Christian* of the lowest Station and Character shall receive his proper Share of *Honour* and *Reward*, what may you expect, if you faithfully *improve your Ten Talents*; when those of *your People* whom you have *converted* or *edified*, appear with you as *your Joy* and *your Crown* in the Presence of the *Lord*[‡], and are honoured with the *publick Applause* and *Remunerations* of the *Eternal* and *Universal Judge* in the Face of the whole assembled World? All the Pageantry

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of

† 2 Pet. v. 4.

‡ 1 Theff. ii. 19.

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of *Human Greatness* passes away like a *Dream*; the *Sun* shall be turned into *Darkness*, and the *Moon* into *Blood* ^x: But *Human Souls* are durable and *immortal*; and *they that have turned many* of them to *Righteousness*, shall have, in each, an *Everlasting Ornament*, and decked with a *New Lustre* from each, shall shine as the *Stars* for ever and ever ^y.

May that *GOD* whom we serve, thro' the *Riches* of his *Grace*, give us all a *Portion* in the *Triumph* of that *Day*! And may He add to all the *Joy*, which the most unworthy of his *Servants* is humbly bold to expect in it, that of seeing you, my dear *Brother*, giving up an *Account* of a faithful and happily successful *Ministry*! To encourage and assist you in the *Discharge* of which, may these plain *Hints* conduce, through the *Blessing* of Him, who knows how, from the least and most *inconsiderable Seeds*, to call up a rich and a plentiful *Harvest*! Amen.

^x Acts ii. 20.

^y Dan. xii. 3.





A N

APPENDIX,

Relating to the

Usual Methods of ORDINATION
among the *Protestant Dissenters*.

AS in the Beginning of the CHARGE I have touched upon the *decent Solemnities* attending the *Methods of ORDINATION* generally used among the *Protestant Dissenters*, it may not be improper to give a Brief Account of them; especially as I have been earnestly desired to do it, by a pious and learned *Clergyman* of the Established Church; who apprehends, it may obviate some Mistakes, and promote that mutual Candor among *Christians of different Denominations*, which both of us concur to wish, and labour to promote. There is indeed *a little Variety* in the Usages of different Places;
but

but that which I have generally seen, does, I believe, prevail in most of our Churches, with the Exception, and sometimes no more than the Transposition, of a few Circumstances.

It very rarely happens, that a Minister among us is admitted to the Pastoral Office, till he has spent *some Years* as a Kind of *Candidate* for it; and, so far as I can recollect, more undertake it *after*, than *before* their *Twenty-sixth Year* is compleated. But as our *Theological Students* generally employ either *Four* or *Five Years* in Preparatory Studies after they have quitted the Grammar-Schools, so they are *examined* by three or four Elder Ministers before they begin to preach.* A strict Enquiry is made into *their Character*, and into *their Furniture*; both with respect to *the Learned Languages*, especially *the Sacred*, and also as to the various Parts of *Natural* and *Moral Philosophy*; but above all, into their Acquaintance with *Divinity*; and some Specimen of *their Abilities*, for Prayer and Preaching, is generally expected.

An unordained Minister is seldom *chosen* to the Pastoral Office in any of our Churches, (for in the *Members* of each of these Societies the whole *Right of Election* lies,) till he has resided among them *some Months*, or perhaps

* See the *Dedication* to my Sermon on *the Evil and Danger of neglecting Men's Souls*, &c. pag. vi. §. 10.

haps *some Years*; preaching stately to them, and performing most other Ministerial Offices, excepting the Administration of the Sacraments.

When *the Society*, which generally proceeds with entire Unanimity in this great Affair, has received what it judges *competent Satisfaction*, the several *Members of it* join in giving him a solemn and express *Call* to take upon him the Pastoral Inspection over them: And if he be disposed to *accept it*, he generally signifies that Intention to *neighbouring Pastors*; whose Concurrence he desires in solemnly *setting him apart* to that Office.

Previous to the Assembly for this Sacred Purpose, *his Credentials* and *Testimonials* are produced, if it be required by any who are to be concerned; and Satisfaction as to *his Principles* is also given to those who are to carry on the Publick Work, generally by his communicating to them *the Confession of his Faith* which he has drawn up; in which it is expected, that *the great Doctrines of Christianity* should be touched upon in a proper Order, and *his Persuasion of them* plainly and seriously expressed, *in such Words* as he judges most convenient. And we generally think this a proper and happy *Medium*, between the Indolence of acquiescing in a general Declaration of *believing the Christian Religion*,
without

without declaring what it is apprehended to be, and the Severity of demanding *a Subscription to any Set of Articles*; where if an honest Man, who believes all the rest, scruples any one Article, Phrase, or Word; he is as effectually excluded, as if he rejected the whole.

The *Pastors*, who are to bear their Part in the Publick Work, having been thus in their Consciences *satisfied*, that the Person offering himself to Ordination is *duly qualified* for the Christian Ministry, and *regularly called* to the full Exercise of it; they proceed, at the appointed Time and Place, to *consecrate him to it*, and to recommend him to the Grace and Blessing of *GOD*, and of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the great Head of the Church, by *Fasting* and *Prayer*, generally accompanied with the *Imposition of Hands*; and the Publick Work of the Day is usually, so far as I have been Witness, carried on *in the following Order*, or something very near it.

It commonly opens with *a short Prayer*, and the *Reading some select Portions of Scripture* which seem most proper to the Occasion: Then *a Prayer* is offered of *greater Length and Compass* than the former, in which most of our common Concerns as *Christians* are included; which is sometimes, tho' less frequently, succeeded by *another* of the

the

the same Kind. Then follows *a Sermon*, on some suitable Subject, such as the Institution, Importance, Difficulty, and Excellency of the Ministerial Work, the Character and Conduct of the first Ministers of the Gospel, or the like.

After this Introduction of a more general Nature, *another Minister* (usually one of *the Eldest* present, who is a Kind of *Moderator for the Day*;) gives the Assembly a more particular Account of *the Occasion* of its being convened. *The Call of the Church* to the Candidate is then *recognized*, either in Word, or Writing, or by lifting up the Hand; and *his Acceptance* is also *declared*. He is then desired, for the Satisfaction and Edification of the Assembly, to pronounce *the Confession of Faith*, (which his Brethren have already heard and approved;) and pertinent *Questions* are put to him, relating to the *Views* and *Purposes* with which he undertakes the solemn Charge, that he may be brought under the most awful Engagements to a suitable Behaviour in it; and an express *Renunciation* of the Errors and Superstitions of the *Romish Church* generally makes a Part of *these Answers*, as well as a Declaration of *his Resolution*, by Divine Grace, *never to forsake the Ministry*, whatever Inconveniences and Sufferings it may draw after it.

This being dispatched, *the presiding Minister* comes down from the Pulpit, and *prays over the Person* to be set apart. There is no particular *Form of Prayer* on this Occasion, or on any other among us; but I have observed, that the Person who officiates is generally led in such a Circumstance, to adore the Divine Wisdom and Grace, in the Constitution and Revelation of *the Gospel*, in the Appointment of an *Evangelical Ministry*, and in supporting *the Succession of it* throughout all Ages of the Christian Church, as well as in vindicating it from *Popish Corruption and Bondage*. Some Notice is often taken of what may have seemed most remarkable in Providence, with Regard to the particular Circumstances of *the Society* then to be settled, and *the Person to be set apart* to the Ministerial Office in it; who is then solemnly *offered up* to the Service of GOD, and *recommended* to his Blessing, in all the several *Parts of his Work*, which are distinctly enumerated. And this Prayer seldom concludes without *fervent Intercession* with GOD, for the *Christian Church* in general, and *all its faithful Ministers* of every Denomination: And as those *rising up to succeed in the Work* are often mentioned here, so I have had the Pleasure frequently to hear *the Universities of our Island*, as well as *more private Seminaries* of learned and pious Education, affectionately

tionately recommended to the Divine Protection and Favour on such Occasions, with all the genuine Appearances of a truly Christian and Catholick Spirit. When *that Part of this Prayer* begins, which immediately relates to *the Person then to be consecrated to the Service of the Sanctuary*, it is usual for *the Speaker* to lay his Hand on his Head; and the *other Pastors* conveniently within Reach, (frequently to the Number of Six, Eight, or Ten,) lay on their Hands also, at the same Time: By which we do not pretend to convey any Spiritual Gifts, but only use it as a solemn, and expedient, tho' not absolutely necessary, *Designation of the Person* then to be set apart.

When this Prayer is over, (which often engages a very profound Attention, and seems to make a very deep Impression both on Ministers and People,) *the Charge* is given to *the newly ordained Pastor*, who generally receives it *standing* (as much as may be) in the Sight of the whole Assembly: And *an Exhortation to the People* is sometimes joined with *the Charge*, or sometimes follows it as a distinct Service, unless (which is frequently the Case,) it is superseded by *the Sermon*, or some other previous Address. *Another Prayer* follows; and *Singing* having been *intermingled*, so as properly to diversify a Service necessarily so long, the whole is concluded with a *Solemn Benediction*.

I know no Method of proceeding on such Occasions, more rational, edifying, and scriptural, than this: And I hope, few, who believe any Thing of *Christianity*, can be so ignorant or abandoned, as to *make light of such Solemnities*. But however any of *our Fellow-Servants* may judge, I have a calm, steady, and joyful Assurance, that *Transactions like these* are registered in Heaven with Approbation, and receive the Sanction and Blessing of *the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*.

Northampton,
Sept. 10. 1745.



P O S T



P O S T S C R I P T.

AS the Want of *Psalms* or *Hymns*, peculiarly suitable to these Occasions, has often been regretted on our *Ordination-Days*, when we have generally been confined to the *132d* or *133d Psalms*, I was desired by several of my Brethren to publish *that which followed this Charge*; and I accordingly do it without any farther Apology. The Reader will easily perceive, it is a Kind of *Devout Paraphrase* on *Eph. iv. 8, & seq.* And it is One of some Hundreds lying by me, on a Variety of *Scripture-Subjects*.





A N

H Y M N.

I.

FATHER of Mercies, in thine House,
Shine on our Homage and our Vows!
While with a grateful Heart we share
These Pledges of our Saviour's Care.

II.

Blest Saviour! when to Heaven he rose
In splendid Triumph o'er his Foes,
What Royal Gifts he scatter'd down!
How large, how permanent the Boon!

III.

Hence sprung th' *Apostles* honour'd Name,
Sacred, beyond Heroick Fame:
Hence dictates the *Prophetick* Sage;
And hence the *Evangelick* Page.

IV.

In lowlier Forms, to bless our Eyes,
Pastors from hence and *Teachers* rise;
Who, tho' with feebler Rays they shine,
Still gild a long extended Line.

V. From

An H Y M N.

V.

From CHRIST their varied Gifts derive,
And fed by CHRIST their Graces live:
While guarded by his potent Hand,
Midst all the Rage of Hell they stand.

VI.

So shall the bright Succession run
Thro' the last Courses of the Sun;
While unborn Churches by their Care
Shall rise and flourish, fresh and fair.

VII.

JESUS our Lord their Hearts shall know,
The Spring whence all these Blessings flow:
Pastors and *People* shout his Praise
Thro' the long Round of endless Days!

F I N I S.





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