The Reformed Pastor

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

by Daniel Wilson, D.D.

The name of BAXTER is too well known, to require anything to be said by way of introduction to such a work as the following. It is one of the best of his invaluable practical treatises. In the whole compass of divinity there is scarcely anything superior to it in close, pathetic appeals to the conscience of the minister of Christ, upon the primary duties of his office. The main object is to press the necessity of his bringing home the truths of the Gospel to every individual of his flock, by affectionate, catechetical instruction. Some account of the work will be found in the Preface to the present edition, from the pen of the excellent writer, who has, with extraordinary success, prepared it for the public eye. The Treatise is now adapted for the clergy of every confession. The passing controversies, the digressions, the long Latin quotations, the local matters, are omitted; but all that is native and vigorous, all that is spiritual and holy, all that is of general use, and belongs to every age, is retained, and placed in a better light. A few phrases and sentiments, indeed, will still be found, which partake of Baxter's particular character, or arise from his habits of thinking on controverted matters. These are inseparable from human infirmity; and he is unworthy the name of a Christian, who can allow such trifling considerations to lessen the full effect of the general truths of the Work on his own heart and conscience. The writer of these lines rejoices, for his own part, to bear his testimony to the high value of this powerful book. It is particularly gratifying to him, as an Episcopal clergyman, to introduce the manly and eloquent pages of this great Non-conformist divine. The ministers of every church should desire to have their errors boldly exposed, and the standard of the apostolic and primitive ages placed full before their eyes. Till we can bear this, we are not likely to see any considerable revival of religion among us. To be firm in our own conviction of duty, and act consistently with our vows to our several divisions of Christ's church is, indeed, a paramount obligation. But to rise above the mere details of a particular discipline, and enter into the high and spiritual designs of the ministry generally, as founded on the authority, and governed by the Spirit, and dedicated to the glory of Christ, is the only method of really promoting our several interests. We best advance the prosperity of our various bodies when we seek the honour of our great Master, and the salvation of souls; and make our ecclesiastical platforms entirely subservient to these high ends.

The writer now ventures to appeal to the ministers, then, of all churches, and especially the Protestant churches of Europe and America. Wherever, indeed, the name of Christ is preached in every part of the world by the clergy of every confession, there he would direct his voice. Being called on to recommend "THE REFORMED PASTOR" by some introductory observations, he would endeavour to make it the occasion to excite the most pungent grief, and the most entire reformation; and would thus urge his brother ministers to follow up in the present day, what Baxter began among his contemporaries nearly two centuries since. What is done in one period must be repeated in another — every age needs to be stirred up afresh. Baxter was preceded, and has been followed, by writers on the same argument. Gildas and Salvian,1 the names on his original title-page, were two distinguished writers who, in the fifth and sixth centuries, alarmed a careless church by the thunders of their denunciations. Immediately before our Author's own time, the divine Herbert, as he is called, delineated his "Country Parson," with a tenderness and skill unique to himself.2 Sixty years afterwards, the mild and persuasive exhortations of the "Pastoral Care" were addressed, by Bishop Burnet, to the whole body of the English clergy.3 But for much more than a century since that time, no first- rate book on this subject has appeared. The publisher of the present edition has therefore done well, in bringing forward this incomparable Treatise of Baxter, in his series of "Select Christian Authors" — this is to make the energy and pathos of the seventeenth century bear on the feeble Christianity of the nineteenth.

Such is the opportunity which the writer of these introductory pages seizes for addressing his appeal to his honoured brethren of every name, and more especially to the clergy of his own church, with the view of carrying on Baxter's great design, and reviving the power of true religion among them. May he open his heart in all simplicity? May he at least, after thirty or forty years' observation, suggest to his younger brethren something which may tend, under the blessing of God, to promote a return to primitive zeal and love among the clergy? May he be permitted to admonish and rouse his own conscience, while he attempts to excite others? And O, blessed Spirit of Christ! Descend upon the writer and the readers of these pages! Vouchsafe success! Fulfil your gracious office as the COMFORTER of the Church, by touching our hearts, and reviving your work effectually among us! Let your ministers be open to your reproofs and "hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

In the first place, then, your attention, honoured and beloved brethren in Christ, shall be directed to some topics of humiliation; in the next, to some grounds of hope; and, lastly, to several points of duty, as subservient to a revival of pure Christianity among us.

I. In the first place, permit me to ask, do we not have great cause for HUMILIATION BEFORE OUR GOD, when we look back on our ministry? This is the first topic. If Baxter had occasion to lament the worldly-mindedness, the party spirit, the time-serving, the cowardice, the neglect of individual catechizing, the pride, formality, and lukewarmness of the ministers of his own day, and in his own order; then we have cause to lament these and similar evils among ourselves! Look, brethren, into the apostolic epistles, and

read the remonstrances and reproofs which were required in the first age; and say if they are not even more necessary now. ‘ Call to mind the state of the seven churches of Asia, at the close of the Inspired Canon; weigh every sentence of our Lord’s rebukes; and say whether we are not now in the condition of those churches — whether the Laodicean lukewarmness, especially, has not crept over us. Reflect only on the corruption of our nature; the artifices of Satan as illustrated by the whole stream of ecclesiastical history; and the uniform operation of long external peace upon the purity of the faith; and say whether, from the necessary course of things, we are not in danger of a declining state in a day like the present.

But let us come to facts. Let us look back to our first entrance, each of us, upon the sacred ministry, and examine what were our motives. Were we duly sensible of the importance of the office? Had we any competent understanding of the doctrine of Christ? Did we feel as we ought to, the value of souls? Alas! How many of us rushed into the vineyard, without any of the views and feelings most essentially required! And those of us who hope we were moved, in some measure, by the Holy Spirit, how faint was our love to Christ! How narrow the limits of our knowledge, and faith, and zeal! How imperfect our devotedness of heart to the one object, the salvation of souls!
And since we have been in the sacred office, what have we been about? How have our hearts been towards our Saviour? How have we studied our Bibles? How have we persevered in the spirit of prayer? How have we watched against the world? How have we sought to overcome the wicked one? How have we honoured the Holy Ghost? How have we glorified Christ our Lord? What have we done with our time, our talents, our opportunities, our influence, our various means of doing good to ourselves and others? I do not speak of infirmities and smaller errors merely, from which none are exempt, nor of the effects of momentary temptations; but I speak of the strain and course of our ministry, of our character and spirit. O what cause we have for the deepest humiliation before our God!

But let us enter still further into details, that our hearts may be filled with godly compunction.

1. What has been the STATE OF OUR HEARTS during the course of our ministry? Have there been no declines there? Have we been advancing in love to Christ, in humiliation, in prayer, in communion with God, in devotional study of the Bible, in self-examination? Have we been “growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?” Have we been “in the love of God?” -Have we felt as the ministers of Christ? Alas! Brethren, if one may speak for another, we have too much departed in heart from the Lord! There has often been a mortal coldness, a decay in the springs of life. The source of all our failures has been in a spiritual torpor and indifference as to Christ, and salvation, and the divine life, within ourselves. We have sunk too much into the creature, into selfishness, into human wisdom, into the world. God has not had our hearts. . We have not loved our Lord Jesus Christ in fervour and sincerity. Hence our other evils.

2. What have been THE STYLE AND CHARACTER OF OUR PUBLIC PREACHING? Has it been, in the full sense of the terms, evangelical, close, affectionate, appropriate, searching? Have we preached “Jesus Christ, and him crucified?” Have we pleaded with souls? Have we aimed simply, intensely at their salvation? Have we followed the model of the holy Apostles? Have we been “instant in season, out of season?” Have we been earnest, affectionate, importunate, with our hearers? On all these points, God knows what sins we have been committing! God knows how we have “preached ourselves, instead of Christ Jesus the Lord.” God knows what tame subordinate topics, what human inventions, what commandments and opinions of men, have sometimes weakened and deformed our public ministry!

3. OUR PRIVATE DILIGENCE among the families and individual members of our flocks, what has it been? This is the question which Baxter thought he had the greatest occasion to press in the year 1655; and is it not much more applicable in 1829? Have we been as shepherds among their flocks? Have we looked after each individual sheep with an eager solicitude? Have we denied ourselves, our own ease, and pleasure, and indulgence, in order to “go after Christ’s sheep, scattered in this naughty world, that they might be saved in Christ forever?” What do the streets and lanes of our cities testify concerning us? What do the highways and hedges of our country parishes say as to our fidelity and love to souls? What do the houses, and cottages, and sick-chambers of our congregations and neighbourhoods speak? Where have we been? What have we been doing? Has Christ, our Master, seen us following his footsteps, and “going about doing good?” Brethren, we are truly faulty concerning this. We have been content with public discourses, and have not urged each soul to the concerns of salvation. We have not brought Christ and his offers, and placed them full before the view of each perishing sinner. We have not pressed these offers upon their acceptance, with the frequency, the affection, the importunity, which the case demanded.

4. But let us enter our studies, and remember all our sins in OUR PRIVATE DUTIES; in our preparation for our public work, in our prayers, in the devotional and close application of truth to our own consciences. O, what do our libraries, and closets, and places of study and preparation say! What has become of all those hours which we professed to spend in prayer before God, with the Bible in our hands, and our ministry in our hearts! How much time have we frittered away in vain reading; in the gratification of curiosity; in pursuing “oppositions of science falsely so- called;” in reading the last new book on divinity; in examining the last new criticism; in amusing our minds with the last review, the last piece of history, the last philosophical dissertation! I do not speak against any department of sound and manly knowledge; in its place and to certain ministers at certain times, each is indispensable. But have we kept these things in their places? Have they not superseded other more immediate duties? Has our reading not been too governed by inclination rather than conscience and a sense of duty? And in preparing our sermons, alas! How cold, how formal, we have often been! Prayer has been the last thing we have thought of, instead of being the first. We have made

dissertations, not sermons; we have consulted commentators, not our Bibles; we have been led by science, not by the heart: and therefore our discourses in public, and our instructions in private, have been so tame, so lifeless, so uninteresting to the mass of our hearers, so little savouring of Christ, so little like the inspired example of St. Paul.

5. Suffer yet further the word of exhortation, brethren; and let us review OUR WALK BEFORE MEN, our general carriage, our conduct in our families, our behaviour in the sight of others, our arrangement of our days and hours, our diligence and perseverance in the several branches of our calling. Can we answer before God the questions arising from topics like these? Have we been "wholesome examples of Christ" to our people? Have we been separate from the spirit, fashions, maxims of the world? Have we shown our people "the more excellent way?" Have we lived, as well as preached, the Gospel of Christ? Have we given an assurance to everyone of sincerity in our doctrine by our habitual walk? Has our "conversation been in heaven?" Have we led the way for others in heavenly-mindedness, humility, self-denial, spiritual affections, superiority to the frowns and allurements of the world? Have we been willing to bear reproach for Christ? Have we followed our crucified Saviour to his glory, with our cross upon our shoulders? Blessed Jesus! You know the guilt of your ministers in this respect above all others! We have been divines, we have been scholars, we have been disputants, we have been students — we have been everything but the holy, self-denying, laborious, consistent ministers of your despised Gospel! We have been courting the world; we have been trying to serve God and mammon; we have loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. The state of our hearts has been cold; our public preaching has been defective; our duties among our flock, our studies, have been full of evil; but our walk before men, when compared with the spirituality of your holy example, and the standard of our profession, has been worst of all. It is into this sewer and receptacle that all our secret corruptions have been flowing; it is here they have been poured out. And now, in the review of these instances of our departure from you — O our God!— we would humble ourselves in an unaffected abasement of soul! But we would not stop here: we would go on to confess before You the sad effects of these evils in the general condition of your church.

6. For our humiliation, beloved brethren, will be far from complete unless we look our whole state full in the face. Let us consider what have been the consequences of the above more private and personal evils. Let us look back, each of us, on our past history. Let us remember those times of PARTICULAR GUILT AND BACKSLIDING which have dishonoured our God; when Satan has come in like a flood; when we have shamefully yielded to temptation — disgraced our sacred profession — grieved, and almost caused the Holy Spirit to forsake us — laid waste our consciences and weakened the whole simplicity and energy of our subsequent ministry. Why is it that things are at the low ebb with many of us which we have pointed out in the preceding pages? Is it not because of some great sins which, though known to few of our fellow-creatures, have been well-known to our God and Saviour? The dregs of an outraged piety can never suffice for the right discharge of the sacred office. If the writer may freely speak, he would put it to every minister's conscience to say whether, in some cases, temptation and secret iniquity, particular departures in heart from the Lord, and scenes in former years which memory too faithfully records, have not left the traces and associations of evil so strongly imprinted on the habits — have not corrupted so deeply the first principles of faith and love in the heart — as to mar and injure the simplicity of the soul, and produce that weak, vacillating, inefficient ministry of which our flocks have so long had reason to complain? O that these wounds may be effectually healed by the application of the blood and Spirit of Christ! O that a deep humiliation may bring us back to our God! O that the rest of our ministry may be honoured by the full measure of the divine grace and communications! Backsliding, and apostacy of heart, too often leading to open sin, are the offence of the present day.

7. Again, how much should we be abased before our God, for the FEARFUL ERRORS AND HERESIES which have risen up in the spiritual church! This is another consequence of general lukewarmness. We do not speak of occasional mistakes, of a greater or lesser degree of accuracy and clearness; but of open error, and departure from the faith of Christ. On the one hand, how much has been written and preached to weaken the doctrine of the fall; of the grace of Christ; of the merciful will of our heavenly Father as the first source of our salvation; of the "righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ, upon all and unto all them that believe;" of the operations of the Holy Spirit; of the promises of persevering grace; of the spirituality and extent of Christian obedience; of the joy and delight of communion with God, and the anticipations of heaven! God knows how many of us have erred in these respects! For example, on the one doctrine of regeneration and the new creation by the Holy Spirit, how much error has infected the Protestant churches! Can we wonder that the Holy Spirit has withdrawn from us when his gracious work has been explained away, denied, opposed by unscriptural statements on the nature and efficacy of the sacraments? And have not many fatal misapprehensions and mis-statements appeared verging, on the other hand, towards Antinomian licentiousness, and the abuse of the grace of Christ? Have not frightful over-statements respecting the decrees of God been made? Have not omissions, almost as fatal, of practical exhortations, and direct appeals to the consciences of sinners, enervated the whole force of the Gospel? Have not writings been published on prophecy and the doctrine of assurance, which directly lead to spiritual presumption? Have not errors appeared on the doctrine of pardon and on the immediate blessedness of the believer after death? O brethren! Humiliation before God indeed becomes us in such a time as this.

8. From these and similar evils, and from the state of mind from which they spring, have not BITTER CONTROVERSIES, uncharitable disputes, heat, accusation, alienation of heart, a spirit of party, arisen in the church? Does not even the world notice the animosity of our controversies? Do we not cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme? Do we not harden the consciences of the ungodly? Do we not prevent and defeat much of the success of the Gospel? O what a scene our great religious societies have presented in recent years! O how much of the spirit of party still lurks in our minds — that spirit within us "which lusts to envy," as the Scripture speaks!

Let each one, brethren, examine his own heart, his own circle, his own congregation and church; and see the various evils and corruptions which reign there, in these and similar respects. Let him yield to the deep conviction of conscience; let him humble his soul in the dust before God, for his own share in these provocations, and for the share which others have borne in them. We can never expect a return of divine grace till our deep penitence gives glory to God in confession and supplication. While we keep silent and justify ourselves, all stands still. When the floodgates of grief are thrown open, then and not before, may we hope for the Lord to pour in the full tide of his Holy Spirit.

9. And remember, brethren, that OUR LACK OF SUCCESS in our ministrations is to be traced back to the same causes, and is a further call to contrition and humiliation in the sight of our God. We all complain of the little fruit which attends our labours. A dew of the divine grace falls indeed here and there; but there is scarcely any place where an abundant shower of blessing falls. A few are converted in our several parishes and neighbourhoods, and we collect a little circle around us; and we should bless God for the least measure of success: but we seldom see any great signals of divine power — a general awakening of souls — a holy and overwhelming influence on ministers and people, which bears them above the world, and leads them to live and walk closely with God. The evangelical fisherman does not cast out a wide net and enclose a great multitude of fishes; and our converts do not, in general, go on consistently and steadily; they often turn aside — often decline — often "fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts," — often divide into sects and parties.

And why is all this? Because we have forsaken our God, grieved the Holy Spirit, and corrupted the Gospel of Christ; because our own hearts, and lives, and prayers, prepare so little for great success; because we expect so little, exercise so little faith in the divine power, and seldom, if ever, feel an eager and insatiable desire for the conversion of souls.

Now, the first step to a better state of things, is real and unaffected shame and confusion before God for our past negligence: "He that confesses and forsakes his sins, shall find mercy." The remarkable confessions of Moses, Ezra, and Daniel; the striking humiliations of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; the penitential psalms of the holy David; the whole strain of the Bible, both in the Old and the New Testament; direct us to this great duty. One day spent in fasting and prayer to God, is worth a thousand days of complaint and lamentation before men. Believe me, brethren: it is not in a spirit of censoriousness, or self-exaltation, that the most unworthy of the Lord's servants thus addresses you. He must, alas! take his full share of guilt and sorrow in the general humiliation. But he speaks from love to souls; from zeal for the glory of Christ; from a deep conviction of duty, on being called to write on this subject. He cannot — dare not — will not keep silent. He will call himself and others to that unreserved and penetrating sense of sin and demerit which, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, may lead to penitence, to confession, to real and abiding amendment and reformation.

Do not let our lay brethren misinterpret the strong language of humiliation used here. It is not about what are called open sins, notorious inconsistencies, gross vices, that for the most part we speak; but about those secret and hidden evils which, under a virtuous and pious carriage, may yet be eating, as does a cancer, into the life of spiritual religion and ministerial energy. Nor is it of all ministers that we speak, nor of any ministers at all times and in all respects; but it is of some at some times, and of all only as to some or more particulars. Do not, therefore, misapprehend these pages. Do not pervert the intent of them to corrupt purposes. Do not despise your ministers. Do not apply to individuals what belongs only to some of a general class. Remember that it is partly in chastisement for your own sins, as private Christians, that these evils have been permitted to spread.

The corruption is general: you must join in the general humiliation. You have not prayed for your ministers as you ought. You have not assisted them in their labours. You have not been docile and fruitful under their instructions. You have frowned on them and put them in fear, when they were disposed to be most faithful. You have enticed and allured them into sin by your worldliness, your vanity, your lax example and spirit. The priests, indeed, are called to the deepest humiliation; they are the first in the procession of penitence; but the people must follow after them. They need to confess and lament their own sins and those of their families. They must join with their pastors in seeking the Lord, and imploring his grace upon the whole church.

But to return. It is not to topics of humiliation that this address must be confined: we pass on to a more cheering part of our subject.

II. There are MANY GROUNDS OF HOPE IN THE PRESENT DAY, WHICH MAY ENCOURAGE US IN OUR REFORMATION AND REPENTANCE.

1. FOR GOD IS AT WORK. There is a movement in men's minds towards salvation. There are numerous events in providence concurring to aid the spiritual church. Satan, indeed, is raging; infidelity belches forth her blasphemies; opposition to truth increases in many quarters; men's hearts are failing them for fear; the public press is an instrument of incalculable mischief in various ways, especially that part of it which is known by a name — itself a reproach to a Christian people — The Sunday Press. Still, God is at work. Mighty things seem to be preparing. Bishops, and pastors, and ministers, and missionaries, and catechists, and schoolmasters, and authors, and translators, are rising up in the churches. The power committed to our own Protestant country stretches over the greater divisions of the globe. The spirit of commerce, and enterprise, and discovery, carries our vessels to every shore. Our foreign bishops and governors, for the most part, favour spiritual religion. The Heathen and Mahommedan

nations are moving, inquiring, rousing themselves from the slumber of ages. Popery is shaken to its base by the spirit of inquiry, and the diffusion of the Scriptures and of education. Such a time encourages the church to examine herself, and lie low before her God in dust and ashes; to separate from what provokes the Lord, and prepare for his further blessings.

2. Then the MACHINERY OF RELIGIOUS DISSEMINATION is erected and in operation; and it is ready to receive from the Lord, and extend to the utmost corners of the earth the richest blessings, whenever he may be pleased to "cause his face to shine upon us, that we may be saved." Consider, beloved brethren, what preparation has been made during the last thirty years for the ultimate diffusion of the Gospel. Whether it may seem fit to Almighty God to use the present societies chiefly in this work, we do not know. The purifying process, however, through which many of them have passed, is far from being unfavourable to the hope of their final most enlarged success. When the members and leading conductors of all our institutions are duly humbled, and led more feelingly and unreservedly to ascribe every measure of success to God alone; when the din of applause and flattery is silenced, and there is room for God to be glorified, then may we hope that the present machinery will be filled and animated with the Holy Spirit, and carried on to the most blessed results. At all events, we may rejoice at the various plans which they are adopting for the diffusion of the Gospel. What is the spread of education and knowledge among the lower orders of every part of the world, but the materials of divine knowledge and love – when God shall descend, as it were, and impregnate it with his grace? What is the public press, with its immense rapidity of production, but a servant waiting for the divine Master's orders? What are the churches and other places for the worship of Almighty God, recently erected in our own country and in other lands, but temples ready to be filled with the divine glory? In our own national English establishment, recollect only the two hundred new churches, and the equal number of enlarged old ones, with their five or six hundred thousand new sittings — half of them for the poor — all subserving the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Remember, also, the equal amount of accommodation in other classes of the Christian communities. Conceive of eleven or twelve hundred thousand additional hearers, as all prepared for the faith and love of Christ; and then tell me how immense and rapid may be the result of the blessing. We know, indeed, that at present much positive evil exists, in the way in which education is conducted, the press is employed, and new as well as old churches administered. But HOPE looks upward to the God of all grace; and PENITENCE abhors herself and lies abased in the dust; and humble and fervent PRAYER addresses itself to the throne of mercy for the necessary gift of the Holy Spirit.

With regard to our missions, what a machinery has been put together; what preparations have been made; what a conflict has begun against the prince of darkness in his own dominions; what a footing has been obtained in the centre of the Heathen and Mahommedan lands for planting the camp, and preparing the way, and bringing in the hosts of Messiah's armies! And does not the measure of success already obtained — the schools established in Heathen countries — the churches founded — the converts made — the holy communion of saints established — the happy and triumphant deaths witnessed — the moralizing and humanizing effects of Christianity on uncivilized man, acknowledged by governors and statesmen — and the native teachers and missionaries, raised up and sent forth among the heathen — do not these dawnings of grace foretell the bursting forth of the meridian day? Is this twilight not the herald and harbinger of the full rising of the Sun of Righteousness?

What, especially, does the movement among the ancient people of God, the success of the societies for the conversion of the Jews — the spirit of inquiry awakened among that remarkable people — the serious discussions going on — the converts made — the diffusion of the New Testament in Hebrew and various other languages among them — the education of their children — what is all this but machinery standing ready for a divine hand to give it the full impulse? And is not the conversion of the Jews connected inseparably with that of the Gentiles? What will the fulness of the Jews be, but as life to a dead and unregenerate Gentile world?

3. But to pass from the hopes beaming upon the framework and instrumentality of religious exertions, what encouragement to a penitent return to God does THE WIDE DISSEMINATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES WITHOUT HUMAN ADDITIONS furnish! This is more than machinery — this is truth itself, and in the purest form, actually diffused. The honour thus put upon the revelation of Almighty God — the solemn and impressive reverence excited for the authoritative standard of truth — the separation of all the infirm and mingled productions of men from the pure and unmixed Inspirations of the Holy Ghost — the direct means and source of divine instruction made accessible to the whole human race — the best refutation given of all material errors and corruptions of the faith of Christ — the spring of consolation and joy opened widely to a sorrowful world — the peaceful Interpreter of salvation speaking in its gentle tones to the miserable child of man in all nations — the foundation of civilization, and morals, and humanity, laid in every country — the court of equity and appeal, as to religion, erected and thrown open to mankind — these are the things which God has done by the four or five thousand Bible institutions scattered over the world. What a preparation is thus made imperceptibly in every part of the visible church for a return to the simple and commanding doctrines of a crucified Saviour! Just as all corruption, controversy, and separation, spring from a departure from the Bible, may we not hope that purity, peace, and unity of heart will arise in due time from a return to it? And what an inestimable and most abundant storehouse these Bible institutions open for all other societies and agents for religious improvement— for schools, for missionaries, for infant churches, for converts, for travellers in every part of the world? Join to this noble and magnificent society, the deep personal humiliation which our sins and provocations demand — unite with it supplications and prayers for the supply of the Holy Ghost — and what is there, brethren, which we may not hope to receive from our gracious God and Saviour? Let us, as the ministers of the sanctuary, begin with ourselves in a hearty and spiritual subjection of soul before the Lord, and there is nothing which we may not hope for in such a period as the present.

4. Nor is it a slight ground of further encouragement, that we live in a day when so many of the TEMPTATIONS OF THE GREAT

ADVERSARY HAVE ALREADY BEEN DETECTED AND LAID BARE, by the growing experience of the church. Nothing can be more important than knowledge of his stratagems, as likely to be directed against a revival of religion. "We are not ignorant of his devices," said the blessed Apostle in the first age. For eighteen centuries since, the spiritual church has been learning to discover the arts of the subtle foe. Each age has varied as to the features of the combat. But the church has laid up the lessons which her Saviour has taught her, and pondered them in her heart. We are still, indeed, but babes in this warfare. We still have need to watch daily, to pray without ceasing. The seed of the woman has not yet crushed the poisonous head of the serpent. The deepest humility, and self-distrust, are essential to our safety. But each class of Satan's temptations which has spent itself and revealed its true character in former times, is of invaluable experience, laid up for those who now lead the Christian armies under the great Captain of Salvation. They are so many stratagems detected; they are so many exhausted mines. These self-same artifices are not likely to be successful again, if we only profit by past experience.

Persecution does not extinguish, but feed and enlarge the church. — We have been learning this lesson for eighteen hundred years; and the Christian martyr and confessor is bold for the cause of God. Satan will work in vain on this ground if we are firm in faith.

Departures from the Scripture, superstitions, following the commandments of men, sap the faith of Christ. — The lesson has been taught by twelve centuries of incredible apostacy:4 the church is on its guard.

Love, union, and enlightened benevolence, strengthen the foundations of each particular church; bigotry, dissension, exclusion, and a proud, ambitious, domineering temper, divide and weaken it— every page of ecclesiastical history attests the truth. Satan cannot triumph again in this way as he has done before.

Uniformity in opinion and external discipline, even in a single nation, is hopeless considering the infirmity of man: but unity of heart on all essential points, with liberality and charity as to non- essential points, produces all the good consequences of such uniformity, besides many others specific to itself. The voice of universal experience has made this the persuasion of every considerate mind. Satan will surely be baffled here, in the present day, after having gained his point by it for a thousand years.

It is the same way as to great and fatal heresies. Can our spiritual adversary ever rouse again the combat of Arianism, and throw the whole church into confusion concerning it, while we bear in mind the controversies of the fourth, and two following centuries, and the scourge of Mahommedanism in the seventh? Could Apollinarius, or Valentinus, or Nestorius, or Donatus, or Abelard, make any way now in the teeth of the records which have exhibited, for our warning, the tares which the enemy sowed by their means? Can the Pelagian heresy be reinstated by any artifices, after the writings of St. Augustine?

And may we not add, dearest brethren, that errors of less moment than these (what we may call over-statements) — either on the side of the divine decrees, or the free agency of man — will not again be permitted to distract and alienate the hearts of Christians, if we only call to mind the endless feuds and excesses which they occasioned for more than two centuries after the Reformation? Has the synod of Dort been described and delineated in vain? Can Satan again drive us off from the plain, solid, scriptural ground of the grace and power of Christ, into the thorny labyrinth of metaphysical subtilties?

And as to the too-general spirit of the present age, scepticism, infidelity, and Socinianism which follows so close upon their heels, can the great adversary make any way by these daring impieties, after the experience of the French philosophy, and the German Neologism,6 for nearly half a century now?

Is it not, then, a source of hope for the future, that Satan has been so frequently defeated in his various schemes?

Has the Lord not treasured up for us the remembrance of our former causes of failure in order to put us on guard against the appearances of similar snares? Shall we not, do we not, profit by past observation? And is this not an encouragement to us to return to God with earnest supplication, that he would "bruise Satan under our feet shortly?" Yes beloved, upon us "the ends of the world have come." The gradual experience and admonitions of each preceding age will guide us if we seek divine grace amidst the snares of the great adversary, whether he presents himself as a roaring lion, or instills his poison as a serpent, or attempts to dazzle us with the robes of an angel of light.

5. Once more, may we not consider it as a most favourable circumstance in the present day, that PRAYER FOR THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS BEEN MOST EARNESTLY AND SOLEMNLY IMPLORED in almost every part of the universal church? During the last seven years, thousands and tens of thousands of prayers have been offered to the Father of mercies, for the outpouring of grace. Courses of sermons have been delivered, friendly conferences have taken place, books and tracts have been published, the attention of individual Christians has been fixed on this one great blessing. Believers everywhere have met to plead, in the exercise of simple and steadfast faith, the explicit promise that "God will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him." This has been done from the conviction which long experience has forced upon the minds of leading ministers. The wisdom gained by a knowledge of Satan's devices, has turned men's solicitude from controversies and dispute, to prayer for the descent of the heavenly Dove to brood upon the spiritual chaos, just as he moved upon the face of the waters in the first creation. This duty of prayer has not, indeed, been carried to anything like the fervour and perseverance which the immense urgency of the case

demands; but still, so far as it has gone, it is the most hopeful of all indications — it speaks of the revisiting of the churches by the blessed Saviour — it augurs7 times of greater grace — it prepares the heart to use all the means which may be proposed, of diffusing Christianity with more simplicity and vigour —it teaches us to honour and magnify God in every instance of success — it enables us to direct aright the young affections of our converts. It is impossible to reflect upon the growing attention to the doctrine of the Holy Ghost in every part of our own country, in the various churches of the Continent, and in the rising and important nations of the new world, without blessing God from the bottom of our hearts for his goodness, and without anticipating a large and abundant shower of grace. This, then, is the very moment to approach our God with prostrate hearts. This is the very moment not to be confident, not to trust in present appearances, not to rely on man, or machinery, or the letter of the Bible, or past experience; but to humble ourselves deeply before our God, and seek him with fasting, and weeping, and mourning.

6. And to this duty we are yet further encouraged by considering THE REVIVALS OF RELIGION WHICH ARE ACTUALLY COMMENCING. For, are there not sufficient indications of a powerful operation, already begun by the Spirit of God in the church, to inspire the warmest hopes as to the future? Are not the authentic accounts from our American brethren, enough to warm the most fearful heart? Is not our God awakening multitudes there to a concern for their salvation, by the instrumentality of truth? Is not a cry raised for pardon and grace by numbers pricked to the heart for sin? Do not their holy consistent walk, their sincere love to Christ, their activity in every good word and work, testify to the reality as well as the Author of the change? And have not these revivals been granted in the path of duty and by the use of means; especially by what is the subject of these pages: arousing ministers to humiliation, diligence, and zeal? Has not this awakened state of the minds of ministers led to a new strain of preaching, a new fervour in proposing Christ in all his glory to a sinful world, a new boldness in applying truth with penetrating discrimination to the consciences of each class of hearers? And is it not in this way that God has granted his special grace?

And in our own country, what does it mean, this new anxiety about the holy ministry, this new attention to the state of our flocks, this new spirit of confession and humiliation, this new inquiry as to the best means of reviving primitive Christianity and promoting a union of hearts among us, which has been gaining ground now for some time? What does it mean, above all, that a particular season for fasting and prayer has been fixed by large numbers for the ensuing day of the commemoration of our Saviour's passion? Can any signs be more full of hope than these?

Yes, dear friends, it is no uninteresting duty, to which I would invite you and myself — it is to a duty called for by the mercies of God as much as by our own sins. Humiliation for the past, consideration of the best means of increasing our ministerial usefulness for the future, are demanded of us as by a voice from heaven. What had RICHARD BAXTER at the time when he lived, to encourage him in his address to the clergy, compared with what invites and impels us? What was there in the close of the seventeenth century, to animate the attempt to convert the world, compared with what we see in the nineteenth century?

7. And this is the last topic of hope to which we may refer; for the position of everything in the church and the world, when compared with the word of prophecy, INDICATES EXPECTATION: THE PROMISE OF NEW BLESSINGS, THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ALL THE GLORIOUS PREDICTIONS of the divine mercy and grace. The times are assuredly drawing on. The fated apostacies have hung over the eastern and western nations for twelve centuries, with all that energy of spiritual delusion which the Scriptures describe. Divine prophecy, shining as a lamp in a dark place, concurs with the indications which we have already noticed in the church and in the world, to excite expectation, to animate to effort, to humble in confession of sin, and to lead to determined reformation of life and conduct in the ministers of religion. The times in which we are cast speak for themselves. All is movement. All is big with expectation. All portends divine judgments upon the wicked, and uncommon blessings upon the church.

We live in no ordinary period. Unusual circumstances of encouragement demand unusual duties. If God is at work, if the machinery of religious dissemination is prepared, if the Holy Scriptures are diffused, if the artifices of the great enemy are known, if the grace of the Holy Spirit has already begun to be implored, and revivals of religion are being granted; and if the whole aspect of the world is like "fields already white for the harvest;" then, surely, this is a time when "the priests, the ministers of God should weep between the porch and the altar;" and should afterwards address themselves to the specific duties of the new and important period at which they have arrived. For things are in suspense. Hope is not possession. The present appearances may die away and expire after a transient excitement. God may roll everything back if we do not heartily repent as a people.

III. Let us consider as the last general topic SOME POINTS OF DUTY TENDING IMMEDIATELY TO PROMOTE A REVIVAL OF RELIGION AMONG THE MINISTERS OF THE SANCTUARY.

For we must begin with ourselves. A revival of Christianity must take its rise with the ministers of Christianity. The work must be first entered upon at home, in our own bosoms, before it can animate our sermons, and shine forth in our example, and make us a pattern to our flocks.

1. And, therefore, the first duty we would urge upon you, dear brethren, is A DEEPER AND MORE FERVENT PERSONAL PIETY BEFORE GOD. Our ministry is as our heart is. No man rises much above the level of his own habitual godliness.

Let us then each determine, by the grace of God, on a new course. Let us not be contented with our present low standard. Let us

imbibe more of the grace of Christ as the source of life and salvation. O let the few main elements of truth be forcible, energetic, vivid, and operative within us. The infinite evil and defilement of sin, the holiness of God, the value of the soul, the near approach of death, judgment, and eternity; the free mercy and love of God in redemption; the inestimable riches of Christ in his Deity, offices, and grace; the personality and work of the Holy Ghost; the emptiness of the world, the fulness and blessedness of heaven — these are primary, essential truths. All the parts of Revelation are important, all its precepts are important; but the vivifying, nourishing, elevating points are these first simple ones — Heaven and hell, Christ and salvation, the soul and eternity, absorb everything else. Let these points really fill our minds, possess our affections, sway our judgment, awaken our conscience, and govern our conduct. Let these things be sought of first importance, be renewed upon the heart by much meditation and daily prayer, and be ever before our eyes and attention as the great and most interesting of all concerns. Let the other parts of Christianity be made to bear upon these. Let us constantly return, as it were, from all other religious studies and discoveries, to these first elements. Everything is speculation unless it is made to nourish the mighty matters between God and the soul. Let, then, prayer for the Holy Spirit, the devout reading of the Bible, and the diligent examination of the heart, all be directed to elevating our personal piety, our personal contrition for sin, our personal faith and affiance8 upon Christ, our personal love to God our merciful Father, our personal watchfulness, humility, meekness, diligence, and joy. Let spirituality and entire devotedness to God be at the foundation of our religious character. To be "spiritually minded," to be "constrained by the love of Christ," this is religion. A life of dependence on the Holy Ghost — a walk with God — a crucifixion with Christ — a death to all creature-good, all creature-reliance, all creature-love — a life hidden and secreted with Christ in God, this is religion. O brethren, the writer of these lines speaks here with shame and sorrow. The source of all evil with himself, is a low state of personal religion. We may allege other things— and no doubt other things are not without their influence; but the main cause of our ministerial defects and unfaithfulness is our own hearts. A revival must begin with ourselves, with our own souls, or our people will never rise up generally, even to our standard. If, therefore, our own piety is weak, our own love cold, our own faith uncertain, our own devotedness to Christ partial, our own self-denial slight, our own impression of eternity languid, our own care for our souls faint, then what can we expect our people's to be? How can we preach and pray for a revival of religion generally throughout the church, unless it first appears in ourselves?

2. SOLEMN SEASONS FOR FASTING AND PRAYER should be set in our several neighbourhoods, parishes, and congregations so that God may be honoured by ingenuous9 confession; that the Divine Spirit may be publicly implored; that the arm of man and the help of creatures may be renounced, and the power and grace of God invoked; that pride, and self, and vanity, and display, and human gifts, and agency, may be laid in the dust, and God alone exalted. The anniversary of his ordination is a time which each one should seize for these holy purposes. The return of Good Friday in every year is another period when special humiliation may well be mingled with our penitent meditations on the sorrows of our Lord. If this latter solemn season could indeed be employed by the church universal in the present and following years for this important purpose, then unspeakable blessings might follow. The whole body of the faithful would then be prostrate in the dust at the same time before the God of mercy
— pouring out their prayers for the grace of the Holy Spirit, and confessing their sins, and the sins of their fathers. Never have any great revivals taken place without special fasting and prayer. Humiliation is the very soul of religion. What a blessing it would be if the bishops and pastors of the churches were led to take the foremost place in directing and encouraging such holy exercises! Our sins have been public; our penitence should likewise be public. Our provocations have been national; so should our sorrow be national. Our evils have flowed from a negligent and worldly state of mind in the ministers of Christ; thus our repentance should begin in the same quarter.

3. HIGHER VIEWS OF THE TRUE DIGNITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY is a further duty which would naturally flow from increasing personal piety and genuine humiliation of heart. Notions of false dignity are indeed as common as they are pernicious. Ambition, secular dominion, "lording it over God's heritage," spiritual pride, are the gangrene of the church. But a right conception of the unparalleled importance of the office of the Christian minister, as appointed by Christ himself, as the instrument of grace, as the ambassador of reconciliation, as representing and standing in the place of the Saviour, as the depositary10 and pillar of the Truth, as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, the steward of the mysteries of God, the watchman and herald and leader of the army, and the shepherd of the flock of Christ — such a conception of the ministerial office is essential to any great revival of religion. There is no surer mark of spiritual decay, than a low esteem of the sacred function. Contempt for God and salvation first appears in contempt for his appointed servants and ministers. In the primitive church, the dignity of a pastor of the flock of God was considered to be so high, so responsible, so sacred, as to deter men from coveting its more difficult and responsible appointments. Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine were almost compelled to assume the episcopal office. At the Reformation, again, the importance of the office of the priesthood rose in the estimation of the awakened church. Its dignity of truth and grace put to flight the spurious glory of external pomp and appearances. Men acknowledged in the unassuming, meek, and devout leaders of the Reformation, the revival of the primitive church, and the true character and elevation of the pastoral employment. Yes, brethren, we must abase our selves indeed; but we must MAGNIFY OUR OFFICE. We must rise to the high and elevated character which it impresses upon the spiritual pastor. We must no longer think it is an ordinary matter, a thing of course, an affair which may be done at any time, a concern secondary to our ease, our indulgence, our scientific and literary pursuits — no; it must take the lead of everything. It must occupy all our care, all our time, all our diligence, all the best and most persevering efforts of our minds and affections — all our exertion, self-denial, and study. The Gospel is an unspeakable gift. It touches on eternity. It concerns both worlds. It involves the glory of God, the honour of Christ, the welfare of souls. It is founded in the unutterable agonies of the cross, and it does not cease till it has brought the penitent sinner and landed him safely in heaven. The blessings we have to offer are the greatest; the woe we have to denounce is the most fearful. Everything connected with our office partakes of the incomprehensible importance of the gifts of the Saviour and the Holy Spirit. Till our whole souls are filled with our

sacred calling, animated, elevated, absorbed — till we see nothing to be as important as compared with our work — till nothing satisfies, or can satisfy us, but success in it — till we look at the affairs of human pursuit, and human wisdom, and human power, and human glory, as the toys of children in comparison — till we draw all our studies, all our affections, every faculty of our minds, and every member of our bodies to this one point — till the salvation of souls is the one thing we aim at, the one object of desire, the ruling passion of our souls, we can never expect a general revival of that religion which can only spring under the blessing of God, from such principles and impressions.

4. Allied to this part of our duty is a deeper consideration of the particular design of the Christian ministry — which is to furnish A SUCCESSION OF MEN TO EXPOUND AND APPLY TRUTH. This follows upon a high and exalted view of the importance of the office generally. The special design must be far better understood and acted upon than it is at present, if grace is to revisit first the pastors, and then the flock. Dear brethren, is not the great end of the ministry to exhibit and enforce truth upon the hearts and consciences of men with all those means of living, feeling, powerful appeal, heart-felt seriousness, sympathy, alarm, invitation, promise, threatening, which are calculated to move a creature like man, and which God has appointed as the ordinary channel for conveying the blessings of his grace? The success is from God alone. Whoever plants, whoever waters, it is God that gives the increase. But as our all-wise and gracious God has condescended to use the instrumentality of man in dealing with man, in awakening man, in converting man; it is of the last importance for us to rise up to the special design of this dispensation. If God uses man, he uses the understanding, the affections, the conscience of man, to work upon the understanding, the affections, and the conscience of his fellow-men. The minister is a living organ, and instrument, and herald of truth. The minister is to give life, as it were, to the Book, to the written Revelation, to the forgotten or perverted record. The ministry, in its addresses and appeals to men, is the prophetic voice continued, the apostolic doctrine continued, the life of Christ continued, the discourses of our Lord continued, the miracles continued, the warnings, invitations, promises, the whole doctrine continued, inspired with new life, and exhibited in their first vigour.

The Gospel, indeed, is left us in the Scriptures; but its success is dependent on the Holy Spirit and the holy ministry— the divine Spirit within; the sacred Word without. The Holy Spirit effectually to secure the heart, to apply and render operative the truth of Christ, to glorify him before men, justify his office, fulfil his promises, accomplish his designs — and the ministry of the Word, instrumentally, to address the understanding and heart, to divide truth to each class of persons, to vindicate it from perversions, to raise it from neglect and indifference, to present it as the means by which the Spirit is pleased to work. Therefore, all this living and oral teaching is subordinate — in itself it is utterly feeble and inefficient; but in its place, it is of incalculable moment. It is the link between the written Word and man's salvation. To preach aright is not to discuss a topic coldly; it is not to indulge in metaphysical statements; it is not to court human applause; it is not to move the passions by earthly eloquence — it is a much higher thing — it is to give a tongue to Prophets and Apostles; it is to speak as the blessed Saviour and St. Paul spoke; it is to make truth intelligible, forcible, triumphant; it is to clear away from the Bible false glosses, and present it in its native purity, and clothe it with all the attributes of a living Instructor; it is to give to the written doctrine the tenderness and pathos, the authority and force, with which it was first clothed by the Inspired Authors. Silence the ministry, and the Bible is misunderstood, perverted, and closed — legends of saints, commandments of men, and superstition will usurp its place, or else vapid reasonings of philosophers and abortions of human "wisdom", falsely so-called. Silence the ministry… — but what am I saying? I appeal, brethren, to your own experience and observation — what has brought on the lukewarmness from which none of us are sufficiently aroused? What has made the garden of the Lord a desert? What has, in many places, nearly extinguished Christianity? Is it not the unscriptural, heartless preaching, which has mocked the miseries of man, and betrayed the cause of God? And where, then, is a revival to show itself if not in a new strain of pulpit instruction? Who are first to reform, if not the ministers of the sanctuary? And in what are they to amend their ways, if not in the preaching of the Word? O beloved brethren, if our God revisits us, we shall have other sermons than those too often heard in these latter ages. We shall have our Chrysostoms, our Austins, our Luthers, our Latimers, our Baxters, revived among us. A fashionable Essay will pass for nothing; a reputable discourse will no longer be the standard; the Bible will no longer be deserted for the ethics of heathenism, or the refinements and fastidiousness of an enervated11 Gospel — but the ministry will represent and urge truth in its pristine simplicity upon the hearts of men — the Saviour will again be known in all his glory; the Bible will be studied in the light of the Spirit, its true meaning seized, its great designs understood; the state of man acknowledged and felt; the errors of human corruption refuted; the subterfuges of the human heart exposed; and truth brought home irresistibly to the conscience. Things will no longer be left in the mere letter of Scripture, but taken out from the record, clothed with living feelings, cleared from essential error, and applied boldly and affectionately to the cases of men. The state of our national Protestant churches has been a portent — our sermons are an evasion — our doctrine a mere form — our views of the whole essential design of a living instrumentality in the church, low and inefficient. May God awaken our consciences, brethren, to a due consideration of these things, and to an immediate return to this part of our duty!

5. But this topic naturally leads on to what Baxter, in the following work, most insists on, THE NECESSITY OF INDIVIDUAL, CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION: bringing home truth to the cases of each member of our congregation and flock in private — the discharge, in a word, of the pastoral duties. For what have we been doing as ministers? Lamentably, just as we have failed in a general estimate of the vast importance of our office, and in a view of its special design, so we have failed as lamentably in all those parts of it which regard personal inspection and vigilance over our flocks. We have confined ourselves to preaching, to ecclesiastical duties, to occasional visits to the sick, to the administration of the sacraments, to the external and secular relation in which we stand to our parishes. But what have we done in personal care and direction, in affectionate catechetical conferences, in going from house to house, in visiting every family and individual in our districts, in becoming acquainted with the character, the

wants, the state of heart, the habits, the attendance on public worship, the observation of the Sabbath, the instruction of children and servants, the family devotions of each house. And yet, all this ought to have been done, and must be done, if a general revival of religion is to be expected. Nothing short of this can come up to the ends of our calling, or fulfil the commands of God, or accomplish the will of the Holy Ghost, or satisfy that system of means which the Saviour has established in his church. For the public ministry is not sufficient, not adequate to the urgency of the case. In a crowded congregation, numbers do not understand, do not give attention, and do not apply. It is when we come to them in private and individually — with all the influence which affection, character, and official station give, that we touch the conscience. And consider, brethren, how many there are in every neighbourhood, who never come to the public church — consider the masses of people in our larger towns who must be sought out by the minister of grace — consider the numbers who are detained at home by illness and infirmity, or by the bad arrangement of family concerns — consider that almost every victim of gross vice or scepticism is withdrawn from your sermons — consider, in short, that in your churches you collect only the better sort of people, those in whom some good habits, some parental care, some force of conscience operates; but that those who most need your instruction, lie hidden in the retirement and insensibility which can only be reached by direct and personal inquiry. National schools, Sunday schools, local schools, infant schools do much; but these only prepare the young for the very catechetical instruction and care which we are now emphasizing. Every family who will receive you — and almost all will — should be visited, and that every year if possible. On the details of these duties, the following work will be an admirable guide. BAXTER was himself a pattern in these respects.

The immediate good effects of such labour will be incalculable. You will be able to apply and drive home your public sermons to the conscience of each person. You will induce them to attend church with more constancy and more interest, as expecting to be catechised afterwards. A congregation assembled to hear the minister who sees them all in private, is a family under the eye of a father — there is a quickness, a mutual sympathy, an interest, which nothing else can awaken. Then the minister thus rapidly acquires knowledge of the human heart— collects materials — the best materials — for his sermons — learns simplicity in his style — is enabled to divide and apportion out the Word of Truth with more discrimination — and nourishes his own heart and his personal religion — his private studies and meditations are made more fruitful, more devotional. While he is engaged in composing and preaching, he is giving out to others; but while he is occupied with familiar conferences, he is taking in for himself — the first is the pump, exhausting the reservoir — the second is the native spring, drinking in supplies from its parent earth. One half hour's practical study of the human heart in personal visits gives an impulse to ten hours' speculative meditation from books and authors. It is in this way, also, that agents and teachers from among our people will be found out, and animated and directed in labour. If we are at work ourselves, others will rise up to work with us. Lay-agency is of incalculable moment. A minister cannot undertake everything himself; he must not fritter away his time, he must not widen too much his field of personal effort — he must concentrate, he must influence, he must be the centre to a hundred hands and minds moving around him. This is more especially the case in populous places, where the actual efforts of any one or two ministers would be lost in detail, and his public instructions would be hasty and undigested effusions if he attempted individual instruction. Wisdom, therefore, must be exercised. Others must be set to work, and a machinery be erected, of which he takes only the general guidance. Cases also occur, in which the department of a minister's duty may be writing books, directing public societies, travelling in order to animate others – each must judge for himself before God — there must be secretaries, and speakers, and visitors of our great religious societies, as well as pastors of particular flocks. But these considerations only increase the importance of the great body of ministers giving their whole souls to the particular inspection of their people, partly by themselves, and partly by the agency of others. Nothing will so immediately tend to a revival of grace, and the real power of Christianity. Nothing will promote personal religion so much in our own hearts. Nothing will promote more the spirit of prayer. Nothing will more quicken and aid in the practical understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Nothing will more rouse us to the redemption of time. Nothing will more separate and sever the heart from the vanities of the world, the calls of human folly, the impertinence of visiting, and the corruptions of pleasure. Nothing will tend more to sound and solid success in our ministry. Our estimate of what constitutes a real blessing will rise. Our excessive reliance on mere preaching will be moderated. Our hasty conclusions that good is being done because people will crowd to a popular sermon, will listen to an intellectual and manly discussion, will be moved by fervid appeals, will yield to the affection of a preacher's manner, will assume an orthodox profession, entertain ministers at their table, admire and defend them in private, follow many parts of their advice, subscribe to societies at their suggestion, and range themselves on their side — hasty conclusions, from such equivocal marks, will be corrected. We shall estimate success by solid conversion, by a change of heart and character, by the love of Christ, by a regard to eternal things, by the crucifixion of the old man, and a consistent obedience to the will of God. These effects have the stamp of heaven. And when the Holy Spirit begins to extensively grant these to us, a revival of religion is begun, and all the highest ends of the ministry are accomplished. And this can only be expected as our views of the importance of our office, our apprehension of its special design, and our following it out into catechetical and affectionate application, lead us to the full use of that system of means to which our Divine Lord has promised a blessing.

6. But in the next place, a CONSCIENTIOUS ADHERENCE to the DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY GHOST, as contained in the WHOLE BODY OF THE SCRIPTURES, must accompany the above directions, or all will fail. Nothing sanctifies and saves but Truth. The Holy Bible is the only storehouse of religious doctrine. An implicit and silent submission of the whole soul of a minister to the Revealed Will of the eternal and incomprehensible God, is indispensable to any enlarged success. Inspired men, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost — handing down to a lost world all the Revelation which Infinite Wisdom saw needful and best, and in the manner and form which was most suitable to the designs of God and the state of man — delivering to the church unmixed and absolutely pure truth, without any defect, any omission, any superfluity, any exaggeration, any mistake — leaving us the standard of all doctrine, the rule of all practice, the example of all holiness — such is the BIBLE — the interpretation of which,

and the application to the cases of men, is left as a solemn trust with the stewards of Christ's mysteries. Brethren, a revival of religion must spring from a revival of the authority of the Bible, a revival of the unlimited sovereignty of the INSPIRED BOOK in over ruling all the errors of men, in swaying every heart, in governing and curbing every imagination, in deciding every controversy, in being itself the element and matter of all our instructions in public and private. The Divine medicine must not be adulterated and weakened by the admixtures of man; or our maladies will never be cured. The cup of salvation must not be corrupted with "the wine of Sodom, and the grapes of Gomorrah;" or the wounds of men will remain unhealed. We must return to our Bibles. When the language and terms of this blessed Book are perverted by heresies, we must indeed draw up forms of belief; when truth is calumniated, we must publish our confessions of faith; and when schism and division abound, we must have public models of doctrine and discipline for the guidance of pastors and people; but these are not the Bible — by these we express our solemn opinion in brief upon particular points of truth, and protect the flock from the incursion of hirelings and false teachers — but what fills up these outlines is to be taken from the Bible — we are to preach and expound, not the fallible summaries of man, but the infallible Word of God.
And in doing this, three things are of the last importance. We must, first, SEIZE THE MAIN COMMANDING TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE, as the Apostles have summed them up in the concluding and finishing part of Revelation. In every work, consisting of so many parts, this would be necessary; but in the Bible, the inspired penmen have not left it in doubt, but have told us that CHRIST, THE POWER OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD, is the centre and cornerstone of Revelation. The glory of Christ, then, and the work of that Holy Spirit whom he has left with us as his representative, and the great teacher of the church — these are the governing points around which all other truths are arranged, and to which they are subordinate. If the minister does not seize this commanding discovery, he will languish about other matters in vain. Once he is brought by personal contrition and faith, to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and to rejoice in him, he will soon find that he is possessed of the key to all the Bible, that he has discovered the pearl of unknown price, that he is enriched with unsearchable treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This doctrine of Christ, however, is not the mere repetition of the term, Christ; it embraces, of course, all those truths, which prepare the hearts of men for receiving him, and which teach them how to walk in him, and adorn his Gospel. This doctrine lays hold upon the fall and corruption of man, and the infinite evil of sin; it immediately holds by the person and operations of the Holy Ghost; and it leads the experienced Christian to refer every blessing to the choice and merciful will of God his heavenly Father. But still the prominent figure in our representations of Christianity must be Christ himself, in all his attributes and grace. A revived Christianity is a revived exhibition of the glorious person of Christ.

But, in connection with this main discovery, it is most important, secondly, to GIVE THEIR DUE PLACE TO ALL THE OTHER TRUTHS, EVEN TO THE MOST SLIGHT AND APPARENTLY INCONSIDERABLE ONES which the same inspired records contain. There is not a verse in the Bible that does not have its weight. All the history, all the devotional parts, all the prophecies, all the biographies, all the examples, all the moral maxims, all the precepts, will demand and amply repay our attention. Things are not stated abstractedly, but in life and action, as they are to be applied to practice. The Bible is not a theoretical, speculative system; it is a system embodied, personified, exhibited, softened down, and moulded to actual life and experience. We shall make the greatest mistakes if we take out the main doctrines of Revelation, and then presume to fashion, expound, and apply them after our own notions. No; we must gather our manner of teaching Christ, the subordinate doctrines dependent upon him, the way of avoiding errors, the spirit and purpose for which he is to be preached, the different dispensations and various degrees of light which have attended his doctrine as the appointed Messiah and Saviour, the method of addressing the consciences of men which Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles adopted — in short, we must gather all our knowledge from the Bible. Our ministry must, in all its parts, be the Bible expounded, amplified, and applied. The greatest success of the pastor is uniformly found where there is most of God and least of man. Even the simplest principles of natural religion, the plainest moral maxims, the mere institutes of judicial legislation, the slightest ceremony, the very enumeration of genealogies, have some beneficial effect.

Add a third observation, brethren. Let us beware of HUMAN PASSION MINGLING WITH OUR EXPOSITIONS OF THE MAIN DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE, AND WITH THE SUBORDINATE TOPICS WHICH ARISE FROM THEM. Human passion will mingle; but let us beware. Let us over-state nothing; let us not exaggerate, magnify, or strain matters; let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom. It is heat and controversy which inflame and divide the church. Wide differences of judgment must exist on a multitude of points gathered by the feeble reason of man from the Holy Scriptures. But these are of little moment if the commanding doctrines and the true spirit of Christianity are chiefly enforced, and if non-essential matters are not dogmatically and fiercely urged.

Dear brethren, let the Bible be our religion, our rule, and our standard — the Bible in all its parts— the Bible in its unutterable mysteries — the Bible in every subordinate statement — the Bible, softly and graciously yielded to and imprinted on a spirit of wisdom and meekness. When this is done, surely our God will descend upon us; the Spirit of grace will glorify his own truth; and the elements of the conversion of the world, accumulated in the diffusion of Bibles, and Missionaries, and Teachers, will be ready to burst into life and efficacy at the Divine command. Let the Holy Saviour, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Scriptures, be our motto and rallying-word in all we undertake or hope for.

7. A DECIDED SUPERIORITY TO THE WORLD AND ALL SECULAR CONSIDERATIONS, is another point of duty essential to any hopes of a revival of religion. We live in a day of external peace. We live in a time of much evangelical profession. The Gospel is, in a certain way, fashionable. Our danger, therefore, lies specifically on the side of the world: of ease, indulgence, pride, conformity to the opinion of others; display in dress, in furniture, in houses; a life of external propriety without much self-denial or

spirituality. We must, then, maintain a decided superiority to all secular considerations if we would fulfil the duties already suggested, and glorify Christ. We must despise the frowns, and shun the smiles, and avoid the maxims, and dread the benumbing influence of the world. We must be well-aware of the surprising tendency there is in every human heart to lukewarmness, to the love of praise, to secular importance, and the gratification of the flesh. We are walking as if upon enchanted ground. There is a stream and course of this present world, flowing forwards in every age, and swollen with human concupiscence and the arts of Satan, which is ever ready to carry us away. No man can keep his standing without constant prayer and watchfulness. And all these dangers are augmented in a time of toleration and peace, and when many faithful and enlightened bishops and pastors give a currency to truth. In such a day, Satan's whole force is directed to seduce and to flatter. In such a day, ambition, love of power, sordid covetousness, lording it over God's heritage, the complacency of a public situation, the secret delight in considering our works, our congregations, our parishes, and our influence, steal upon the heart unperceived. The world, in all its forms, is in direct hostility with the spiritual church. "Filthy lucre" is again and again condemned by St. Paul, as the special snare of the clergy. Pride, and dominion over the faith of the people, is again and again held forth by him for our warning.
In two ways, all the mischief of the world is increased tenfold. IT SEDUCES UNDER THE GUISE OF LAWFUL THINGS. It assumes the garb of prudence and foresight. It hides itself under the mask of benevolence. It appears, as the management of our concerns, living on terms of friendly intercourse, the relaxation and cheerful society which our severer studies demand, the attention to our friends and patrons, the care of our health, seizing opportunities for doing good and removing prejudice. Thus, under the semblance of what is lawful, ministers step over the boundary, verge towards doubtful indulgences, and compromise their character, their influence, and their usefulness. Thus they abridge their time and weaken their inclination for solid study, the visits to the poor, and the duties of devotion; and thus still further declines from God are brought on. For another specific danger of the world arises from its DEBAUCHING THE UNDERSTANDING, AND BIASING THE DECISIONS OF THE JUDGMENT. The maxims which appeared to us the most clear, become doubtful. The practices which we loudly condemned are tolerated, excused, or defended. The marks of a lukewarm spirit, which we had laid up in our hearts, are no longer conclusive. The interpretation which we put on the scriptural definition of the world, and the scriptural danger arising from it, slips out of our memory. The resolutions we made in early life, appear harsh and impracticable. We are now of the opinion that this and that thing is lawful; we now judge such and such practices expedient; we now conclude and resolve that there is no harm in this and the other indulgence. Thus Satan gains a footing in the heart; earthly things obtain possession, Christ and his doctrine are enfeebled, the pity we once felt for souls has lost its tone, our self-denial is gone, and we are like salt which has lost its savour. Brethren, let us awake to our danger before it is too late. Let us shake ourselves from the slumbers of a worldly state. Let us dread the magical enchantment of earthly objects. Let us take heed, and beware of covetousness, and surfeiting,12 and the pleasures of this life. If a revival of religion is our object and our desire, then we must begin at home; we must cultivate a spiritual, a retired, and a heavenly religion. Never can we call our people to leave that world to which we are looking back ourselves.

But we must not further extend these suggestions. If, dear brethren, these things are as we have been describing them; if the causes of humiliation are such as we have stated; if the grounds of hope and encouragement are so cheering; if the duties which should be earnestly attended to are so numerous and important: then may the writer be permitted to address, in conclusion, several classes of his brethren in the sacred ministry?

1. Are any readers of these pages ASTONISHED AT THE GENERAL TOPICS WHICH HAVE BEEN EMPHASIZED? Does the whole thing appear to you new, extravagant, or unnecessary? Do you look at the whole complexion and colour of the statement as unnatural? Then examine, we entreat you, whether this does not arise from your own wrong state of heart. Perhaps you have never felt your sins as an individual penitent, personally accountable to God. Perhaps you have never once wept over them in deep contrition. Perhaps you have never seen the spiritual glory of Christ as the incarnate Saviour, sacrificing himself on the cross for your redemption. Perhaps you have never known what prayer, and meditation, and communion with God, and love to Christ, and hatred of sin, and the denial of self, and the joy of pardon, mean. The consequence is that you have had no care of the souls committed to your charge — you have never taught them their need of salvation — you have never shown them a Redeemer — you have never held out to them the Holy Spirit, as the Author of life and grace: how then can topics such as these we have been discussing, be intelligible to you? It would be strange if you did not startle at them. You are not merely in need of being aroused to greater diligence; you want to be quickened from a death in trespasses and sins. Awake, then, dear friend to your awful state. An unconverted minister is dragging all the souls of his people with him to perdition. He is a blind leader of the blind. He is building up the sinner in his rebellion, his self-righteousness, his negligence. O repent then, and turn to God, and do works fit for repentance. We do not speak to you of a revival of religion among others; we deal with you for your own salvation. We plead with you for the sheep, scattered and wandering and having no shepherd. We adjure you by the vows of your ordination, by the blood of Christ, by the grace of the good Spirit of God, by the value of souls, by the unutterable importance of eternity, to awake and return to God!

2. You say you are MORAL, DILIGENT, and anxious for the good of your parish. But is this all? So may a magistrate be — so a statesman — so a landlord. But you are called to be the minister of Christ. You are called to spiritual duties. You are called to bring men to salvation, to expound the doctrine of grace, to prepare a lost world for heaven. And does a little common morality, such as Seneca or Epictetus might have taught; or some general benevolence gathered from the unavoidable improvements introduced into society by the Christian spirit, serve to discharge these high and unique obligations? It is not of morality, but of Christianity, that you are the minister.

It is not of benevolence, but of salvation, that you are the herald. Mere decency, mere kindness of heart, mere common uprightness

in a minister of the Gospel, is treachery to the unique trust reposed in him. Nothing which he does can be indifferent. He is the instrument and cause of the condemnation of his people, unless he is positively employing all his powers for their salvation. A pilot that allows his vessel to dash upon the rocks is guilty of the consequences of the shipwreck.

3. But you are not merely an ordinary decent minister, living a quiet and benevolent life; you tell me you are ACTIVE, STUDIOUS, FOND OF LITERATURE, diligent in reading works of science, the patron of the arts, the author of criticisms, and poems, and dissertations — but is all this the appropriate work of a minister of religion? Consider, dear reader, can anything be more opposed to the simple character of a herald of Christ, than a mere taste for elegant literature, the mere labour of a scientific student, the mere ardour of the philosopher or the historian? Was it for this you undertook the care of souls? Is it for this that you desert your [prayer] closet, your sick chambers, your private devotional duties? Believe it: the pride of human knowledge indisposes more to the humbling truths and precepts of the Christian ministry than almost any other passion. The soul is barren, the heart is filled with vanity, the habits are worldly. A literary spirit in a minister of Christ, is direct rebellion against the first claims of his high office. The spirit of the servant of God is not literature, but piety; not vanity and conceit, but lowliness of heart; not idle curiosity, but sound and solid knowledge; not philosophy, but the Bible; not the pursuit of natural discoveries, but the care of souls, the glory of Christ, the progress of the Gospel; not science, but salvation.

4. But objections may be advanced to the statements of this Essay by THE THEOLOGICAL INQUIRER, WHO HAS MADE DIVINITY HIS STUDY, who has examined Fathers and Commentators, who has weighed opposite arguments and systems of religion, and has imbibed the strongest prejudices against the principal statements which have been advanced. He does not understand what revival of piety can be necessary in such circumstances as ours in this country. He objects to this ardour, this over-statement as he terms it, on the subject of spiritual religion. He condemns it as feverish; he imputes it to a spirit of party; he charges it with "enthusiasm;" he complains of it as impracticable and intolerant; he dismisses it with a name of reproach.

To such general insinuations, the plain answer is that the Holy Scriptures speak most decidedly, and in every part, the language we have been holding. Every page of the Bible demands the whole heart of man. Every epistle of St. Paul is far more exalted in doctrine and spirituality, than any statement we can make. The very last accusation brought by the Saviour against a falling church, was that of lukewarmness — being "neither cold nor hot." Let the objector read his Bible over again; let him pray for the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit; let him enter upon religion as a practical matter between God and his own soul, and he will soon form a totally different judgment from that which he now entertains. Lay aside only, beloved reader, all prejudices of every kind; lay aside the opinions of divines and disputants; lay aside the censure and applause of a mistaken world, and enter upon the question of religion as if before the divine Saviour, and you will soon find that the very doctrines you reject are the centre-point of Revelation — the element of salvation — the means of pardon and grace to man. Oh the power which our wicked hearts give to the idlest excuses and prejudices on the subject of the Gospel! The very language and objections you bring forward, are a proof of the need of that revival of Christianity for which we plead. The cold external orthodoxy of the present day evaporates all the life of the divine doctrine, leaves man to his natural powers, fills him with pride and self-conceit, is content with a dead faith and a worldly life, neglects the care of souls, and builds up a proud self-righteousness on the foundation of human merit. This lukewarm temper is an enemy to spiritual religion and to the revival of it, because such topics condemn the lukewarmness of the age, as the greatest provocation that can be offered to God. Oh if it should please the Almighty Saviour to revive his work among the clergy, the very first effect would be the detection of the evils of this disputatious, self-confident, worldly spirit. We appeal to this Saviour to defend the cause of his own truth. We appeal to this Saviour to testify to his real Gospel by making it the means of conversion in men. We appeal to this Saviour to support us in our earnest endeavours to maintain his cause in a gainsaying13 age, to grant us his Spirit, and to make every opponent a happy partaker of the grace which he has previously condemned!

5. But are there not many YOUNG AND WELL-DISPOSED MINISTERS who may take up these pages, and may sincerely desire to act upon the advice given, who may yet need some further encouragement? They are pressed with difficulties. They are discountenanced.14 They are impeded. They are, in their own minds, far from being strongly built up in the faith of Christ. To such interesting persons we would say, Go on, young friends, in simplicity and prayer. Keep your hearts with all diligence. If you are sincere, and persevere in the use of means, God will assuredly guide you into all truth. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doc trine."

The weakest Christian shall overcome through the might of his glorious Captain. Study your Bible. Act on what you know. Be much in prayer. Ask advice in great difficulties from pious and judicious friends. Read the lives of eminently holy ministers and missionaries.15 Despair of nothing in a good cause. Go much among the sick and dying. Compare what you see and feel with the Holy Scriptures. Do not fear the face of man. Your difficulties and discouragements will lessen. "The path of the just is like the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day."16

6. Remember, finally, dear brethren, for I would conclude with this admonition, that SATAN OUR GREAT ADVERSARY WILL PARTICULARLY RESIST ALL ATTEMPTS AT A REVIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY. It is death to his kingdom. He can bear with a cold orthodoxy. He can turn a literary spirit to his own purposes. He retains a merely decent, benevolent person with the name of a clergyman, safely in his power. But to arouse an indiffereent age, to sound the trumpet among the teachers of religion, to call on them to awake from spiritual torpor, and then arouse their people, this kindles all the wrath of the wicked one.

Yes, beloved brethren, we must calculate on the bitterest hostility, and the most subtle artifices of Satan, as we proceed in our holy

course. But do not be deterred. “Greater is he that is for us, than he that is in the world.” Let us repose in the might of the Captain of our salvation. Let us draw close the bonds of mutual love. Let us be prepared to ascribe all the glory to Him who has done all things for us; and we need not fear discomfiture. The power of Christ will rest upon us — the tie of united affections will bring us near to each other for aid and succour — the high aim of the glory of God will engage all the divine attributes in our behalf. We do not trust in ourselves — we do not seek any selfish object — we do not desire our own praise. We are, indeed, but unprofitable servants, even after we have done all. To Him, therefore, who has loved us, be all the honour and majesty ascribed — in his name let us go forth, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only — and in him let us be united in the bond of charity and love! In this spirit, and with these ends, a revival of Christianity, first among the clergy of all our churches, and then among the laity, may be humbly hoped for. All the topics of humiliation, if duly felt, will inspire confidence of this great result — all the sources of hope, from the circumstances of the times, will fall into the same general feeling — while every duty which we have pointed out, directly tends to the same result. The STRENGTH OF CHRIST for the combat with Satan — the TEMPER OF LOVE for the efforts of the church — the GLORY OF GOD for the ultimate end of all, form a combination which will conduct to the greatest results — for they agree, and are identified, with the very song which angels chanted at the birth of the Saviour, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men.”

ISLINGTON, March, 1829.
D. W.;

PREFACE

BYTHE Editor of this Edition WILLIAM BROWN

The title of this work as published by the Author was "Gildas Salvianus: The Reformed Pastor, showing the nature of the Pastoral work; especially in Private Instruction and Catechizing; with an open CONFESSION of our too open SINS: Prepared for a Day of Humiliation kept at Worcester, December 4, 1655, by the Ministers of that County, who subscribed the Agreement for Catechizing and Personal Instruction at their entrance upon that work, By their unworthy fellow Servant, Richard Baxter, Teacher of the Church at Kederminster."

It is scarcely possible to speak in too high terms of the excellence of this work. It is not a directory relative to the various parts of the ministerial office; and in this respect, it may be considered by some as defective. But, for being a powerful, sympathetic, pungent, heart-piercing address, we know of no work on the pastoral office to compare with it. We suppose that if it were read by an angel, or by some other being possessed of an unfallen nature, the reasonings and expostulations of our author would be felt to be altogether irresistible; and the heart of any minister who can read it without being moved, melted, and overwhelmed, under a sense of his own shortcomings, must be hard; his heart must be hard if he is not mused to greater faithfulness, diligence, and activity in winning souls to Christ. It is a work worthy of being printed in letters of gold: it deserves, at least, to be engraven on the heart of every minister.

But, with all its excellences, the "Reformed Pastor", as originally published by our author, labors under considerable defects, especially as regards its usefulness in the present day. With respect to his works in general, he makes the fol lowing candid, yet just acknowledgment : — "Concerning almost all my writings, I must confess that my own judgment is, that fewer, well studied and polished, had been better; but the reader, who can safely censure the books, is not fit to censure the author, unless he had been upon the place, and acquainted with all the occasions and circumstances. Indeed, for the Saints' Rest, I had four months" vacancy to write it (but in the midst of continual languishing and medicine); but, for the rest, I wrote them in the crowd of all my other employments, which would allow me no great leisure for polishing and exactness, or any ornament; so that I scarce ever wrote one sheet twice over, nor stayed to make any blots or interlinings, but was glad to let it go as it was first conceived. And when my own desire was, rather to stay long upon one thing, than run over many, some sudden occasions or other extorted almost all my writings from me; and the apprehension of present usefulness or necessity prevailed against all other motives."

The Reformed Pastor appears to have been written under the unfavourable circumstances here alluded to— amidst disease and languishment — and to have been hurried to the press, without that revision and correction which were of so much importance to its permanent usefulness. The arrangement is far from logical: the same topics, and even the same heads of discourse are repeated in different parts of the work.

It is interlarded, according to the fashion of the age, with numerous Latin quotations from the Fathers, and other writers ; and the controversies and history of the day are the subject of frequent reference, and sometimes of lengthened discussion. To this it may be added that the language, though powerful and impressive, is often remarkably careless and inaccurate.

With the view of remedying the imperfections of the original work, the Rev Samuel Palmer, of Hackney, published, in 1766, an Abridgement of it; but though it was scarcely possible to present the work in any form, without furnishing powerful and impressive appeals to the consciences of ministers, he essentially failed in presenting it in an improved form. In fact, the work in its original state was, with all its faults, to be greatly preferred to Palmer's abridgement: if the latter was freed from some of its own defects, it would also have lost much of its excellence. We may often, and with advantage, throw out extraneous matter from the writings of Baxter; but there are few men's works which less require abridgement. Thissacrifices their fullness and richness of illustration, enervates their energy, and evaporates their power and pathos.

The work which is now presented to the public, is not, strictly speaking, an abridgement. Though considerably shorter than the original, it has been reduced in size chiefly by omitting extraneous and controversial matter, which, however useful it might have been when the work was originally published, it is for the most part inapplicable to the circumstances of the present age. I have also in some instances changed the order of particular parts. Our author placed "Motives to the Oversight of the Flock" in his Application. I have introduced it in that part of the discourse to which they refer. Likewise, we have placed "Motives to the Oversight of Ourselves" in the preceding part of the treatise. Some of the particulars which he had under the head "Motives", I introduced in other parts of the body of the discourse to which they appeared to belong more naturally. But though I have used some freedom in the way of transposition, I have been anxious not to sacrifice the force and fullness of our author's illustrations to mere logical arrangement. Many of the same topics which occurred in the body of the discourse, and are there touched with a master's hand, for instance, are still retained in the Application. They would have lost much of their appropriateness and energy if I had separated them from that particular connection and instead introduced them in a different part of the work. I also corrected the language of our author; but I have been solicitous not to modernize it. Though to adopt the phraseology and forms of speech

employed by the writers of that age would be a piece of silly affectation in an author of the present day; yet there is something simple, venerable, and impressive in it, as used by the writers themselves.

While I have made these changes from the original, I trust I have not injured the work. On the contrary, I hope I have improved it, so that the spirit of its great author is so much preserved, that those who are most familiar with his writings would scarcely notice the alterations had I not stated them here.

Having long been anxious to present to the public an edition of the 'Reformed Pastor,' I began to prepare it a considerable time ago; and having offered it to the present publisher, he informed me that the Rev. Daniel Wilson of London, had previously agreed to write an Introductory Essay to that work. In this arrangement I feel peculiar pleasure, as I have no doubt his recommendation will introduce it to the notice of many, by whom otherwise it might have remained unknown.

Before I conclude, I cannot help suggesting to the friends of religion, that they could not perhaps do more good at less expense, than by presenting copies of this work to the ministers of Christ throughout the country. There is no class of the community on whom the prosperity of the church of Christ so much depends as on its ministers. If their zeal and activity languish, the interests of religion are likely to languish in proportion. On the other hand, whatever is calculated to stimulate their zeal and activity, is likely to promote, in a proportional degree, the interests of religion. They are the chief instruments through whom good is to be effected in any country. How important it must be, then, to stir them up to holy zeal and activity in the cause of the Redeemer! A tract given to a poor man may be the means of his conversion; but a work such as this, presented to a minister, may, through his increased faithfulness and energy, prove to be the means of conversion of multitudes. Ministers themselves are not perhaps sufficiently disposed to purchase works of this kind: they are more ready to purchase books which will assist them in their work than those which will stimulate them in it. If, therefore, any plan could be devised for presenting a copy of it to every minister of the various denominations throughout the United Kingdom, what incalculable good might be effected! There are many individuals to whom it would be no great burden to purchase twenty, fifty, or a hundred copies of such a work as this, and to send it to ministers in different parts of the country; or several individuals might unite together for this purpose. I can scarcely conceive any way in which they would be likely to be more useful.

To the different Missionary Societies, I trust I may be allowed to make a similar suggestion. To furnish every missionary, or at least every Missionary Station, with a copy of the Reformed Pastor, would, I do not doubt, be a powerful means of promoting the grand object of Christian Missions. I am sure of this: there is no work so much calculated to stimulate a missionary to holy zeal and activity in his evangelistic labors.

EDINBURGH March 12th 1829

WILLIAM BROWN

DEDICATION

To my brethren, and dearly-beloved brothers, the faithful ministers of Christ, in Britain and Ireland, Grace and Peace in Jesus Christ be increased.

REVEREND BROTHERS, the subject of this treatise so nearly concerns yourselves, and the churches committed to your care, that it emboldens me to this address, notwithstanding the imperfections in the manner of handling it, and the consciousness of my great unworthiness to be your monitor.

Before I come to my principal errand, I will give you an account of the reasons for the following work, and of the freedom of speech I have used, which may be displeasing to some. The Lord awakened his ministers in the county of Worcestershire, and some neighboring parts, to a sense of their duty in the work of catechizing, and of the private instruction of everyone in their parishes who would not obstinately refuse their help. When they had subscribed to an agreement containing their resolutions for its future performance, they judged it unfitting to enter upon that work without a solemn humbling of their souls before the Lord, for their long neglect of so great and necessary a duty. And therefore they agreed to meet together at Worcester, December 4, 1655, and there to join in humiliation and in earnest prayer to God to pardon our neglects; and to pray for his special assistance in the work which we had undertaken, and for its success with the people whom we had engaged to instruct. At that time, they desired that I, among others, would preach. In compliance with their wishes, I prepared the following Discourse.

Though it proved longer than could be delivered in one or two sermons, I intended to enter upon it at that time, and to deliver what was most pertinent to the occasion, and to reserve the rest for another season. But, before the meeting, by the increase of my ordinary pain and weakness, I was disabled from going there. To recompense that unwilling omission, I easily yielded to the request of various brothers, to quickly publish the things which I had prepared, so that they might read what they could not hear. It might be objected that I should not have spoken so plainly and sharply against the sins of the ministry; or that I should not have published it to the view of the world; or, at least, I should not have done it in the common tongue but in another language; or, especially, that I should not have done it when Quakers and Papists are endeavoring to bring the ministry into contempt, and the people are too prone to listen to their suggestions – I confess that I thought these objection were considerable; but they did not prevail to alter my resolution. And that is to be ascribed, among other reasons, to the following:

1. We agreed upon and we proposed a solemn humiliation, and this was prepared and intended for that. And how should we be humbled without a plain confession of our sin?

2. It was principally our own sins that the confession concerned; and who can be offended by us for confessing our own sins, and taking the blame and shame to ourselves, which our consciences told us we ought to do?

3. Having necessarily prepared it in English, I had no spare time to translate it into Latin.

4. When the sin is open in the sight of the world, it is vain to attempt to hide it; all such attempts will only aggravate and increase our shame.

5. A free confession is a condition of a full remission; and when the sin is public, the confession should also be public.

If the ministers of England had sinned only in Latin, I would have shifted to admonish them in Latin, or else I would have said nothing to them. But if they sin in English, they must hear of it in English. Unpardoned sin will never let us rest or prosper, though we take ever so much care and cost to cover it: our sin will surely find us out, though we do not find it out. The work of confession is purposely to make known our sin, and freely take the shame to ourselves; and if "he that confesses and forsakes his sins will have mercy," it is no wonder that "he who covers them will not prosper."1 If we are so tender of ourselves, and so loath to confess, God will be the less tender of us, and will dictate our confessions for us. He will either force our consciences to confess, or his judgments will proclaim our iniquities to the world.

6. Too many who have undertaken the work of the ministry have so obstinately proceeded in self-seeking, negligence, pride, and other sins, that it has become our necessary duty to admonish them. If we saw that such men would reform without reproof, we would gladly forbear publishing their faults. But when reproofs themselves prove so ineffectual, so that they are more offended at the reproof than at the sin, and would rather that we cease reproving them than cease sinning themselves, I think it is time to sharpen the remedy. For what else should we do? To give up our brothers as incurable would be cruelty, as long as there are further means to be used.

We must not hate them, but plainly rebuke them, and not permit sin to continue upon them. To bear with the vices of the ministry is to promote the ruin of the Church; for what speedier way is there towards the depravity and undoing of the people of God, than to

permit the depravity of their guides? And how can we more effectually further a reformation of the Church, than by endeavoring to reform the leaders of the Church? For my part, I have done as I would have done to me; and it is for the safety of the Church, and in tender love to the brothers, whom I venture to reprehend – not to make them contemptible and odious, but to heal the evils that would make them so – and to do this so no enemy may find this matter of reproach among us. But, especially, because our faithful endeavors are so greatly necessary to the welfare of the Church, and saving men's souls; to be negligent ourselves, or to silently ignore negligence in others would not be consistent with love toward either.

If thousands of you were in a leaking ship, and those who should pump out the water, and stop the leaks, were at play or asleep, or merely favoring themselves in their labors, to the hazard of you all, would you not awaken them to their work, and call on them to labor so as to save your lives? And if you used some sharpness and importunity with the slothful, would you think someone had his wits who would take offense at you, and accuse you of pride, self-conceit, or bad manners, to presume to talk so saucily to your fellow-workmen, or who would tell you that you wrong the slothful by diminishing their reputation? Would you not say, "The work must be done, or we are all dead men. The ship is ready to sink, and you talk of reputation? Or would you rather place yourself and us in hazard, than hear of your slothfulness?"

This is our case, brothers. The work of God must be done! Souls must not perish while you mind your worldly business or worldly pleasure, and take your ease, or quarrel with your brothers! Nor may we be silent while men are hastened to perdition by you, and while the Church is brought into greater danger and confusion, out of the fear of seeming too uncivil and unmannerly with you, or displeasing your impatient souls! If you would only be as impatient with your sins as you are with our reproofs, you would hear no more from us; we would all be agreed! But, neither God nor good men will let you alone in such sins. Yet if you had undertaken another calling, and sinned only to yourselves, and perished alone, we would not have so much need to molest you as now we have: but you have entered into the office of the ministry, which is for the necessary preservation of us all. By letting you alone in your sin, we must give up the Church to loss and hazard. So do not blame us if we talk to you more freely than you would have us do. If your own body were sick, and you despised the remedy, or if your own house were on fire, and you were singing or quarrelling in the streets, I could possibly bear it and let you alone, (yet, in charity, I could not easily do that). But, if you undertake to be the physician of a hospital, or to a whole town infected with the plague, or you undertake to quench all the fires that are kindled in the town, there is no bearing with your remissness, however much it may displease you. Take it how you will, you must be told of it; and if that does not work, you must be told of it more plainly; and, if that will not work, and you feel rejected as well as reprehended, then you may thank yourselves. I speak all this to none but the guilty.

And, thus, I have given you those reasons which forced me to publish, in plain English, so much of the sins of the ministry as I have in the following Treatise. And I suppose the more penitent and humble someone is, and the more he desires the true reformation of the Church, the more easily and fully he will approve such free confessions and reprehensions. But I find it impossible to avoid offending those who are at once guilty and impenitent; for there is no way to avoid this except by our silence or their patience: and we cannot be silent because of God's commands; and they will not be patient because of their guilt and impenitence. But plain dealers will always be approved in the end; and the time is at hand when you will confess that plain dealers were your best friends.

But my principal business is yet to come. I must now take the boldness, brothers, to become your monitor, concerning some of the necessary duties of which I speak in the ensuing discourse. If any of you would charge me with arrogance or immodesty for this attempt, as if I accused you by this of negligence, or judged myself sufficient to admonish you, I crave your candid interpretation of my boldness. I assure you that I do not obey the counsel of my flesh in this, but I displease myself as much as some of you; and I would rather have the ease and peace of silence, if it were compatible with my duty and the churches' good. But the mere necessity of the souls of men, and my desire for their salvation, and for the prosperity of the Church, force me to this arrogance and immodesty, if it must be called that. For who with a tongue can be silent when it is for the honor of God, the welfare of his Church, and the everlasting happiness of so many souls?

The first and main point which I have to propound to you is this: Is it not the unquestionable duty of most ministers of these three nations, to presently set themselves to the work of catechizing, and instructing individually, all who are committed to their care, those who will be persuaded to submit to it? I do not need to prove it, having sufficiently done this in the following discourse. Can you think that holy wisdom will deny it? Will zeal for God; will delight in his service, or love for the souls of men, deny it?

1. It is past doubt among us that people must be taught the principles of religion, and matters of greatest necessity to salvation.

2. I hope we are agreed that they must be taught it in the most edifying, advantageous way.

3. It is no less beyond dispute that personal conference with them, and examination, and instruction, has many excellent advantages for their good.

4. So far as I can find, it is without contradiction that personal instruction is recommended to us by

Scripture, and by the practice of the servants of Christ, and it is approved by the godly of all ages.

5. It is past doubt, that we should perform this great duty to all the people, or as many as we can; for our love and care of their souls must extend to all. If there are five hundred or a thousand ignorant people in your parish or congregation, it is a poor discharge of your duty to now and then speak to a few of them, and to leave the rest alone in their ignorance, assuming you are able to afford them help.

6. It is no less certain, that so great a work as this is should take up a considerable part of our time.

7. Lastly, it is equally certain that all duties should be done in an orderly way, as far as possible, and therefore they should have their appointed times. And if we are agreed to practice according to these commonly acknowledged truths, then we need not differ about any doubtful circumstances.

Catechizing and Instruction

Now, on behalf of Christ, and for the sake of his Church, and the immortal souls of men, I beg all the faithful ministers of Christ, to presently and effectually fall upon this work. Combine to unanimously perform it, so that it may more easily procure the submission of your people. I must confess that I find, by some experience, that, through the grace of God which works by means, this is the work that must reform in fact; that must expel our common prevailing ignorance; that must bow the stubborn hearts of sinners; that must answer their empty objections and remove their prejudices; that must reconcile their hearts to faithful ministers and help in the success of our public preaching; and that makes true godliness a more common thing than it has been up to now. I find that we never took the best course for demolishing the kingdom of darkness, until now. I wonder at myself, how I was kept from so clear and excellent a duty for so long. But the case was the same with me as I suppose it is with others: I was long convinced of the need, but my apprehensions concerning the difficulties were too great, and my apprehensions concerning my duty were too small; and so I was long hindered from performing it. I imagined the people would scorn it, and only a few, who had the least need of it, would submit to it. And I thought my strength would never go through with it, having had such great burdens on me before; and thus I delayed it for a long time, which I beg the Lord of mercy to forgive. And yet, upon trying it, I find that the difficulties are almost nothing (except for my unusual bodily weakness) compared to what I imagined; and I find the benefits and comforts of the work to be such, that I wish I had not forborne it for all the riches in the world.

We spend Monday and Tuesday, from morning almost to night, in the work, taking about fifteen or sixteen families in a week, so that we may go through the parish in a year, in which there are upwards of eight hundred families. And I cannot say yet that one family has refused to come to me, and only a few persons excused themselves and put it off. And I find more outward signs of success with most of those who do come, than from all my public preaching to them. If you say it is not so in most places, then I hope the blame does not lie so much with ourselves. If, however, some refuse your help, that does not excuse you for not affording it to those who would accept it. If you ask me what course I take for order and expedition, I may here mention that, when I deliver the Catechisms, I take a catalogue of all the persons of understanding in the parish; the clerk goes to every family, a week before, to tell them what day to come, and at what hour, (one family at eight o'clock, the next at nine, and the next at ten, etc.). And I am forced by the number to deal with a whole family at once; but ordinarily I do not allow another family to be present.

Brothers, would I now invite you to this work without the authority of God, without the consent of all antiquity, without the consent of the Reformed Divines, or without the conviction of your own consciences? See what the Westminster Assembly said to this purpose in the Directory3 , about the visitation of the sick:

"It is the duty of the minister not only to teach the people committed to his charge in public, but privately; and particularly to admonish, exhort, reprove, and comfort them upon all seasonable occasions, so far as his time, strength, and personal safety will permit. He is to admonish them in
time of health to prepare for death. And for that purpose, they are often to confer with their minister about the estate of their souls," etc.

Read this over again, and consider it. Listen to4 God, if you would have peace with God. Listen to your conscience, if you would have peace of conscience. I am resolved to deal plainly with you, even though I may displease you. It is unlikely that there would be someone whose heart is sincerely devoted to God, who, after notices and exhortations, would not be resolved on so clear and great a duty. I cannot conceive of someone with one spark of saving grace, and thus has that love toward God and delight to do his will which is found in all those who are sanctified, who could possibly be drawn to oppose or refuse such a work as this. It would require the power of a temptation such as Peter had when he denied Christ, or when he tried to dissuade Christ from suffering, and heard a half excommunication: "Get behind me, Satan; you are an offense to me: for you do not savor the things that are of God, but those that are of men." You have put your hand to the plow ; you are doubly devoted to him, as Christians and as pastors; and do you dare, after this, to draw back and refuse his work? You see the work of reformation at a standstill; and you are engaged by many obligations to promote it: and do you now dare to neglect the means by which it must be done? Will you show your faces in a Christian congregation, as ministers of the gospel, and there pray for a reformation, and for the conversion and salvation of your hearers, and for the prosperity of the Church; and when you have done all this, do you then refuse to use the means by which all this must be effected? I know carnal wit will never lack the words, and appearance of reason, to deny the truth

and duty which it abhors. It is easier now to quibble against duty than to perform it: but wait for the end before you pass your final judgment.

Can you make yourselves believe that you will have a comfortable review of such neglects, or make a comfortable account of them to God? I dare prognosticate, from the knowledge of the nature of grace, that all the godly ministers in England will be conscientious to this duty, and address themselves to it, except those who, by some extraordinary accident, are disabled, or who are under such temptations as I mentioned above. I do not persuade you to this without hope, but I take it for granted that it will be done. And if any lazy, jealous, or malicious hypocrites quibble against it, or hold off from doing it, the rest will not do so; they will take the opportunity and not resist the warnings of the Lord. And God will uncase the hypocrites before long, and make them know to their sorrow what it means to trifle with him. Woe to them when they must account for the blood of souls!8 The reasons which satisfied them here against their duty, will not then satisfy them against that duty; rather, those reasons will be shown to be the effect of their folly, and proceeded radically from their corrupted wills and carnal interest. Nor will their consciences accept those same reasons at their dying hour which they seem to accept now. They will feel to their sorrow that no comfort is to be had for their departing soul, upon reviewing such neglected duty, as there is for those who have wholly devoted themselves to the service of the Lord. I am sure my arguments for this duty will appear strongest at the last, when viewed at the hour of death, at the Day of Judgment, and especially in the light of eternity.

And now, brothers, I earnestly beg you, in the name of God, and for the sake of your people's souls, that you will not do this work lazily, but vigorously, and with all your might; and make it your great and serious business. Much judgment is required to manage it. Therefore, study beforehand how to do it, just as you study for your sermons. I remember how earnest I was with some of the last parliament, that they would place catechists in our assemblies;9 but truly I am not sorry that it had no effect, except for a few of the larger congregations. For I perceive that all the life of the work, under God, lies in its prudent and effectual management, in searching men's hearts, and driving home the truth to their consciences. The ablest minister is still weak for this task, and few inferior officers would be found competent for it at all. I fear nothing more than that many ministers who preach well, will yet be found imperfectly qualified for this work, especially to manage it with old, ignorant, and dead-hearted sinners. Indeed, if the ministers are not revered by the people, they will be slighted by them, and contest with them, rather than humbly learn and submit to them: how much more would they do so if instructed by inferior men? Seeing, then, that the work has been cast upon us, and it is we who must do it or else it will be left undone, let us be up and doing it with all our might. When you are speaking to your people, do it with the greatest prudence and seriousness, and be as earnest with them as you would for life or death; follow it as closely as you do your public exhortations in the pulpit. I profess again that, to me, it is the most agreeable work that I ever set my hand to, apart from public preaching; for there, though I speak to more people, it is less advantageous for each individual. And I do not doubt that you will find it so too, if you will only perform it faithfully.

Church Discipline

My second request to the ministers in these kingdoms is that they would at last, without any more delay, unanimously set themselves to practice those parts of Church discipline which are unquestionably necessary, and part of their work. It is a sad case that good men have settled themselves in the constant neglect of so great a duty for so long a time. The common cry is, "Our people are not ready for it; they will not bear it." But is not rather that you will not bear the trouble and hatred which it will cause? If you proclaim that our churches are incapable of the order and government of Christ, what are you doing if not giving up the cause to those who withdraw from us, and encouraging men to seek out better societies where that discipline may be had? Preaching and sacraments may be omitted, in some cases, until a better season; and accordingly, so may discipline. Yet it is hard to justify the constant neglect we have practiced or so many years together, unless the work is absolutely impossible. And if it is, because of our incapable materials,10 then it would plainly call us to alter our constitution, so that the matter may be possible. I have spoken plainly of this afterwards, which I hope you will conscientiously consider. For now, if you want to give a comfortable account to the chief Shepherd, and you do not want be found unfaithful in the house of God, I only beg that you do not willfully or negligently delay it, as if it were a needless thing; nor shrink from it because of the trouble to the flesh that attends it; for, just as that is a sad sign of hypocrisy, so the costliest duties are usually the most comfortable to give an account of; and you may be sure that Christ will bear the cost.

Unity of the Body

My last request is that all the faithful ministers of Christ would, without any more delay, unite and associate to further each other in the work of the Lord, and to maintain unity and concord in his churches; and that they would not neglect their brotherly meetings to those ends, nor continue to spend them unprofitably, but improve them to their edification, and to the effectual carrying on of the work. Read that excellent letter of Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury to Queen Elizabeth, for ministerial meetings and exercises. You will find it in Fuller's History of the Church of England.

Brothers, I crave your pardon for the infirmities of this address; and earnestly longing for the success of your labors, I will daily beg of God that he would persuade you to those duties which I have here recommended, and would preserve and prosper you in it against all the serpentine subtlety and rage that are now engaged to oppose and hinder you.

15 April 1656

Your unworthy fellow -servant

RICHARD BAXTER

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood. Acts 20.28

Though some think that Paul's exhortation to these elders proves he is their ruler, we who are to speak to you this day from the Lord hope that we may freely do the same, without any jealousies arising from such a conclusion. Though we teach our people as officers set over them in the Lord, yet may we teach one another as brothers, in office as well as in faith. If the people in our charge must "teach and admonish and exhort each other daily,"1 no doubt teachers may do it to one another without asserting any eminence of power or degree. We have the same sins to mortify, and the same graces to be quickened and strengthened, as our people have: we have greater works to do than they have, and greater difficulties to overcome; and therefore we have need to be warned and awakened, if not to be instructed, just as well as they have. And so I confess that I think meeting together should be more frequent, if we had nothing else to do but this. And we should deal as plainly and closely with one another as the most serious among us do with our flocks which, if only they have sharp admonitions and reproofs, will be sound and lively in the faith. I need no other proof that this was Paul's judgment, than this rousing, heart-melting exhortation to the Ephesian elders: a short sermon, but not soon learned! Had the bishops and teachers of the Church thoroughly learned only this short exhortation, though neglecting many a volume which has taken up their time and helped them only to greater applause in the world, how happy had it would have been for the Church and for themselves! In further discussing this text, I propose to pursue the following method:

• First, to consider what it is to take heed to ourselves.

• Secondly, to show why we must take heed to ourselves.

• Thirdly, to inquire what it is to take heed to all the flock.

• Fourthly, to illustrate the manner in which we must take heed to all the flock.

• Fifthly, to state some motives why we should take heed to all the flock.

• Lastly, to make some application of the whole.

CHAPTER 1 - THE OVERSIGHT OF OURSELVES

SECTION 1 – THE NATURE OF THIS OVERSIGHT

Let us consider what it is to take heed to ourselves.

1. See that the work of saving grace is thoroughly wrought in your own souls. Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach; and lest, while you proclaim to the world the necessity of a Savior, your own hearts neglect him, and you miss an interest in him and his saving benefits. Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish, while you call upon others to take heed of perishing; and lest you famish yourselves while you prepare food for them.

Though there is a promise of shining as the stars, to those "who turn many to righteousness," that supposes that they are first turned to it themselves. Considered simply, their own sincerity in the faith is the condition of their glory, though their great ministerial labors may be a condition of the promise of their greater glory. Many have warned others so that they will not come to that place of torment, while they hastened to it themselves: many a preacher is now in hell, who has a hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it. Can any reasonable man imagine that God would save men for offering salvation to others, while they refuse it themselves; and for telling others those truths which they themselves neglect and abuse? Many a tailor goes in rags who makes costly clothes for others; and many a cook scarcely licks his fingers when he has dressed the most costly dishes for others. Believe it, brothers, God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an able preacher; but because he was a justified, sanctified man, and consequently faithful in his Master's work. Therefore, take heed to ourselves first, so that you are what you persuade your hearers to be, and believe what you persuade them to believe, and heartily entertain that Savior whom you offer to them. He that bid you to love your neighbors as yourselves, implied that you should love yourselves, and not hate and destroy yourselves and them.

It is a fearful thing to be an unsanctified professor, but much more to be an unsanctified preacher. Does it not make you tremble when you open the Bible, for fear you read the sentence of your own condemnation there? When you pen your sermons, little do you think that you are drawing up indictments against your own souls! When you are arguing against sin, that you are aggravating your own sin! When you proclaim to your hearers the unsearchable riches of Christ and his grace, that you are publishing your own iniquity in rejecting them, and your unhappiness in being destitute of them! What can you do in persuading men to Christ, in drawing them from the world, in urging them to a life of faith and holiness, that your own conscience, if it were awake, would not tell you that you speak all this to your own confusion? If you speak of hell, you speak of your own inheritance: if you describe the joys of heaven, you describe your own misery, seeing you have no right to "the inheritance of the saints in light." What can you say, for the most part, that will not be said against your own souls? O miserable life! That a man should study and preach against himself, and spend his days in a course of self-condemnation!

A graceless, inexperienced preacher is one of the most unhappy creatures on earth, and yet ordinarily he cannot sense his unhappiness; for he has so many counter-weights that seem like the gold of saving grace, and so many splendid stones that resemble Christian jewels, that he is seldom troubled with the thoughts of his poverty; but he thinks he is "rich, and increased in goods, and stands in need of nothing, when he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." He is acquainted with the Holy Scriptures; he is exercised in holy duties; he does not live in open disgraceful sin; he serves at God's altar; he reproves other men's faults; and he preaches up holiness, both of heart and life. How can this man choose to be anything but holy? Oh what aggravated misery this is, to perish in the midst of plenty! To famish with the bread of life in our hands, while we offer it to others, and urge it on them! That those ordinances of God should be the occasion of our delusion, which are instituted as the means of our conviction and salvation! And while we hold the mirror of the gospel up to others, to show them the face and aspect of their souls, we either look on the back of it ourselves, where we can see nothing, or else we turn it to the side, so that it may misrepresent us to ourselves! If such a wretched man would take my counsel, he would make a stand, and call his heart and life to account, and set to preaching awhile to himself before he preaches any more to others. He would consider whether food in the mouth that does not go into the stomach will nourish; whether he that "names the name of Christ should not depart from iniquity," whether God will hear his prayers, if "he regards iniquity in his heart," whether it will serve in his defense at the day of reckoning to say, "Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in your name," when he will hear these awful words: "Depart from me; I do not know you."8 What comfort will it be to Judas, when he has gone to his own place, to remember that he preached with the other apostles, or that he sat with Christ and was called "Friend" by him?

When such thoughts as these have entered into their souls, and kindly worked awhile upon their consciences, I would advise them to go to their congregation, and preach again Origen's sermon on Psalm 50:16-17. "But to the wicked God says, "What right do you have to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant into your mouth, seeing that you hate instruction, and throw my words away behind you." And when they have read this text, I would advise them to sit down and expound it, and apply it by their tears; and then make a full and free confession of their sin, and lament their case before the whole assembly, and desire the assembly's

earnest prayers to God for pardoning and renewing grace. This is so that hereafter they may preach a Savior whom they know, and may feel what they speak, and may commend the riches of the gospel from their

own experience. Alas! It is the common danger and calamity of the Church, to have unregenerate and inexperienced pastors, and to have so many men become preachers before they are Christians; to have so many who are sanctified by dedication to the altar as the priests of God, before they are sanctified by hearty dedication as the disciples of Christ. And thus to worship an unknown God, and to preach an unknown Christ, to pray through an unknown Spirit, to recommend a state of holiness and communion with God, and a glory and a happiness which are all unknown to them, and likely to be unknown to them forever. One who does not have in his own heart both the Christ and the grace of which he preaches, is likely to be but a heartless preacher.

Our Universities: Teach within the context of Theology O that all our students in our universities would well consider this! What a poor business it is to them, to spend their time acquiring some little knowledge of the works of God, and learning some of those names which the divided tongues of the nations have imposed on them, and yet not know God himself, nor exalt him in their hearts, nor be acquainted with that one renewing work which would make them happy! They only "walk in a vain show," and spend their lives like dreaming men. While they busy their wits and tongue over a plethora of names and notions, they are strangers to God, and to the life of saints. If God ever awakens them by his saving grace, they will have thoughts and chores so much more serious than their unsanctified studies and arguments that they will confess they were only dreaming before. They busy themselves about a world of business that is nothing, while they are willful strangers to the primitive, independent, necessary Being, who is all in all. Nothing can be rightly known if God is not known; nor can any study be well-managed, nor serve any great purpose, if God is not studied. We know little of the creature until we know its relationship to the Creator: uncomposed single letters and syllables are no better than nonsense. Someone who overlooks the one who is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending," and does not see him in all things, who is the All of all, sees nothing at all. All creatures, as such, are broken syllables; they mean nothing when separated from God. Were they actually separated, they would cease to be, and the separation would be annihilation; and when we separate them in our imaginations, we make them nothing to ourselves. It is one thing to know the creatures as Aristotle, and another thing to know them as a Christian. Only a Christian can read one line of his Physics so as to understand it correctly. It is a high and excellent study, and of greater use than many apprehend; but Aristotle can teach us only the smallest part of it.

When man was made perfect, and placed in a perfect world, where all things were in perfect order, the whole creation was then man's book, in which he was to read the nature and will of his great Creator. Every creature had the name of God so legibly engraved on it, that man might run and read it. He could not open his eyes without seeing some image of God; but nowhere could he see that image so fully and lively as in himself. Therefore, it was his work to study the whole volume of nature, but first and foremost to study himself. And if man had stayed on this course, he would have continued and increased in the knowledge of God and of himself. But when he would only know and love the creature and himself in a way that separated them from God, he lost the knowledge of both the creature and the Creator, in so far as it could exalt and be worthy of the name of knowledge; and instead of this, he has obtained the unhappy knowledge which he influenced, including the empty notions and illusionary knowledge of the creature and himself, as separated from God. And thus, the one who lived for the Creator, and depended on him, lives for and depends upon the other creatures, and upon himself; and thus, "Every man at his best estate" (the learned as well as the illiterate) "is altogether vanity. Surely every man walks in a vain show; surely they are making an uproar in vain." It must be well observed that God did not lay aside the relation of a Creator by becoming our Redeemer; but in some respect, the work of redemption is subordinate to that of creation, and the law of the Redeemer is subordinate to the law of the Creator. In the same way, the duties which we owed to God as Creator have not ceased, but the duties we owe to the Redeemer, as such, are subordinate to them. It is the work of Christ to bring us back to God, and to restore us to the perfection of holiness and obedience. And just as he is the way to the Father, so faith in him is the way to our former employment and enjoyment of God. I hope you perceive what I intend in all this: namely, that to see God in his creatures, and to love him, and to converse with him, was the employment of man in his upright estate. This has not ceased to be our duty. In fact, far from it: it is the work of Christ to bring us back to it by faith. And therefore, the most holy men are the most excellent students of God's works; none but the holy can correctly study them or know them. "His works are great, sought out by all those who have pleasure in them," but not for themselves; rather it is for the One who made them. Your study of physics and other sciences is not worth a rush,16 if it is not God that you seek after in them. To see and admire, to reverence and adore, to love and delight in God, as exhibited in his works – this is the true and only philosophy; the contrary is mere foolery, and is so called again and again by God himself. This is the sanctification of your studies: when they are devoted to God, and when he is the end, the object, and the life of them all.

And, therefore, I will presume to tell you, by the way, that it is a grand error, and of dangerous consequence in Christian academies, (pardon the censure from one who is so unfit to pass it on, but the necessity of the case commands it,) that they study the creature before the Redeemer, and they set themselves to physics, and metaphysics, and mathematics, before they set themselves to theology. On the contrary: no man lacking the vitals of theology is capable of being more than a fool in philosophy. Theology must lay the foundation and lead the way in all our studies. If God is to be searched after in our search of the creature, (and we must not separate the knowledge of the two) then tutors must read God to their pupils in all of it. Divinity must be the beginning, the middle, the end, the life, and the all of their studies. Our physics and metaphysics must be reduced to theology; and nature must be read as one of God's books, which is purposely written to reveal himself. The Holy Scripture is the easier book: when you have first learned of God from it, and of his will, as the most necessary things, then you may address yourselves to the study of his works, and read every creature as a Christian, and as a divine. If you do not see yourselves and all things as living, and moving, and

having their being in God, then you see nothing, whatever you may think you see. If you do not perceive in your study of the creatures, that God is all, and in all, and that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things," you may think, perhaps, that you "know something; but you know nothing as you ought to know."

Do not think so basely of your physics and of the works of God, that they are only preparatory studies for boys. It is a most high and noble part of holiness to search after, behold, admire, and love the great Creator in all his works. How much have the saints of God been employed in this high and holy exercise! The book of Job, and the Psalms, may show us that our physics are not so little related to theology as some suppose.

Therefore, in zeal for the good of the Church, and for their own success in their most necessary labors, I submit for the consideration of all pious tutors, whether they should not read to their pupils, or make them read, the foremost parts of practical divinity (and there is no other), as timely and as diligently as they would any of the sciences; and consider whether they should not go together from the very first? It is good that they hear sermons; but that is not enough. Tutors should make it their principal business to acquaint their pupils with the doctrine of salvation, and labor to set it home upon their hearts, so that everything else might be received according to its due weight; read to their hearts as well as to their heads, and carry on the rest of their instructions in the same way. Then it may become apparent that they are making the other studies subservient to theology, and their pupils may feel what they are aiming at in all of them. Thus, they would teach all their philosophy in habitu theologico, – this might be a happy means to make a happy Church and a happy country. But languages and philosophy consume almost all their time and diligence, and yet, instead of reading philosophy like divines, they read divinity like philosophers. It is as if it were a thing of no more importance than a music lesson, or arithmetic, instead of being the doctrine of everlasting life. This is what destroys so many in the bud, and pesters the Church with unsanctified teachers! This is why we have so many worldly men to preach of the invisible bliss, and so many carnal men to declare the mysteries of the Spirit; and I wish I might not say this, but this is why we have so many infidels to preach Christ, or so many atheists to preach the living God. When they are taught philosophy before or without religion, it is no wonder that their philosophy is all or most of their religion!

Our Schools: Preach as well as Teach

Again, therefore, I address myself to all those who have charge of the education of youth, especially to prepare them for the ministry. You who are schoolmasters and tutors: begin and end with the things of God. Speak daily to the hearts of your scholars those things that must be wrought into their hearts, or else they are undone. Let some piercing words fall frequently from your mouths, of God, and the state of their souls, and the life to come. Do not say they are too young to understand and entertain them. You little know what impressions they may make. Not only the soul of the boy, but many souls may have cause to bless God for your zeal and diligence and indeed, for one such seasonable word. You have a great advantage above others to do them good; you have them before they are grown to maturity; they will hear you when they will not hear another. If they are destined to the ministry, you are preparing them for the special service of God; they must first have the knowledge of the One whom they have to serve. Oh think to yourselves what a sad thing it would be to their own souls, and what a wrong it would be to the Church of God, if they came out from you with common and carnal hearts, to take on so great, so holy, and so spiritual a work! Of a hundred students in one of our colleges, how many might there be who are serious, experienced, and godly young men? If you sent half of them on a work for which they were unfit, what painful work they would make in the Church or in the country! But instead, if you are the means of their conversion and sanctification, how many souls may bless you, and what greater good can you do the Church? Once their hearts are savingly affected with the doctrine which they study and preach, they will study it more heartily, and preach it more heartily: their own experience will direct them to the best subjects, and furnish them with material, and enliven them to drive it home to the conscience of their hearers. Therefore, see that you do not make painful work for the groans and lamentation of the Church, nor for the great tormentor of the murderers of souls.

2. Do not content yourselves with being in a state of grace, but also be careful that your graces are kept in vigorous and lively exercise, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, and do so before you preach them to others. If you did this for your own sakes, it would not be lost labor; but I am speaking to you for the public's sake, so that you would do it for the sake of the Church. When your minds are in a holy, heavenly frame, your people are likely to partake of its fruits. Your prayers, and praises, and doctrine will be sweet and heavenly to them. They will likely sense when you have been with God extensively: what is most on your heart, is likely to be most in their ears. I confess, and I must speak by lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the state of my own soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching is confused; and I can often observe the effect of this in the best of my hearers: that when I have grown cold in preaching, they have grown cold too; and the next prayers which I have heard from them have been too much like my preaching.

We are the nurses of Christ's little ones. If we keep from taking food ourselves, we will famish them; it will soon be visible in their leanness, and in the dull discharge of their several duties. If we let our love decline, we are not likely to raise theirs. If we abate our holy care and fear, it will appear in our preaching: if the matter does not show it, the manner will. If we feed on unwholesome food, whether errors or fruitless controversies, our hearers are likely to fare the worse for it. Whereas, if we would abound in faith, and love, and zeal, it would overflow to the refreshment of our congregations, and it would appear in the increase of those same graces in them! Therefore, O brothers, watch over your own hearts: keep out lusts and passions, and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith, and love, and zeal: be much at home, and be much with God. If it is not your daily business to study your own hearts, and

to subdue corruption, and to walk with God – if you do not make this a work to which you constantly attend – then all will go wrong, and you will starve your hearers; or, if you have a perverted fervency, you cannot expect a blessing to attend it from on high. Above all, be much in private prayer and meditation. From there you must fetch the heavenly fire needed to kindle your sacrifices. Remember, you cannot decline and neglect your duty to your own hurt alone: many others will lose by it as well. For your people's sakes, therefore, look to your hearts. If a pang of spiritual pride should overtake you, and you should fall into any dangerous error, and vent your own inventions to
draw disciples after you, what a wound may this prove to the Church of which you have been given the oversight. You may become a plague to them instead of a blessing. They may wish they had never seen your faces. Oh, therefore, take heed to your own judgments and affections. Vanity and error will slyly insinuate themselves, and they seldom come without alluring pretences: great corruptions and apostasies usually have small beginnings. The prince of darkness frequently impersonates an angel of light to draw the children of light again into darkness. How easily will corruptions also creep in upon our affections and our first love; how easily fear and care abate! Watch, therefore, for the sake of yourselves and others.

But, besides this general course of watchfulness, I think a minister should take some special pains with his heart before he goes to the congregation: if it is cold, how is he likely to warm the hearts of his hearers? Therefore, specially go to God for life beforehand: read some rousing, awakening book; or meditate on the weight of the subject of which you are to speak, and on the great need of your people's souls, so that you may go into his house in the zeal of the Lord. In this manner, maintain the life of grace in yourselves, so that it may appear in all your sermons from the pulpit, and so that everyone who comes to the assembly cold may have some warmth imparted to him before he departs.

3. Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine, and lest you lay such stumbling-blocks before the blind, as may be the occasion of their ruin; lest you unsay with your lives, what you say with your tongues; and be the greatest hinderers of the success of your own labors. It greatly hinders our work when other men, all week long, privately contradict what we have been speaking to them publicly from the Word of God about the poor; we cannot be at hand to expose their folly. But it will hinder your work much more if you contradict yourselves, and if your actions make your tongue a lie, and if you build up for an hour or two with your mouths, and then all week long pull it down with your hands! This is the way to make men think that the Word of God is but an idle tale, and to make preaching seem no better than prating. Someone who means what he says, will surely do what he says. One proud, surly, lordly word, one needless contention, one covetous action, may cut the throat of many a sermon, and blast the fruit of all that you have been doing.

Tell me, brothers, in the fear of God, do you value the success of your labors, or do you not? Do you long to see it work upon the souls of your hearers? If you do not, what do you preach for? What do you study for? And what do you call yourselves the ministers of Christ for? But if you do, then surely you cannot find it in your heart to mar your work for nothing. What! Do you value the success of your labors, and yet you will not part with a little to the poor, nor put up with an injury or a foul word, nor stoop to the lowest, nor forbear your passionate or lordly carriage – no, not to win souls, and attain the end of all your labors! You value success little indeed, if you will sell it at so cheap a rate, or will not do so small a matter to attain it. It is a palpable error of some ministers, who make such a disproportion between their preaching and their living, who study hard to preach exactly, and yet study little or not at all to live exactly. All week long is little enough to study how to speak two hours; and yet one hour seems too much to study how to live all week. They are loath to misplace a word in their sermons, or to be guilty of any notable infirmity, (and I do not blame them, for the matter is holy and weighty); but they make nothing of misplacing affections, words, and actions, in the course of their lives. Oh how scrupulously have I heard some men preach; and how carelessly have I seen them live!

They have been so accurate in the preparation of their sermons, that preaching seldom seemed as much a virtue to them as making their language more polite; all the rhetorical writers they could meet with were enlisted to serve them to adorn their style, (and trinkets were often their primary ornaments). They were so fussy in hearing others, that no man would please them if he spoke as he thought, or if he did not drown his emotions, or dull the edge, or keep from disquieting the heart by his predominant use of fantastic wit. And yet, when it came to matters of practice, once out of church, how unscrupulous these men were, and how little they regarded what they said or did, that it was so palpably gross as to dishonor them! Those who preach precisely, would not live precisely! What a difference there was between their pulpit speeches and their informal discourse! Those who were most impatient with barbarisms, solecisms, and paralogisms in a sermon, could easily tolerate them in their life and conversation.
Certainly, brothers, we have great cause to take heed to what we do as well as to what we say: if we intend to be the servants of Christ indeed, we must not be servants in tongue only, but we must serve him with our deeds, and be "doers of the work, that we may be blessed in our deed." As our people must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only," so we must be doers and not speakers only, lest we "deceive ourselves." A practical doctrine must be practically preached. We must study as hard how to live well, as how to preach well. We must think and think again, how to compose our lives, as well as our sermons, so as to most tend toward men's salvation.

When you are studying what to say to your people, if you have any concern for their souls, you will often think to yourself, "How will I get within them? And what will I say that is most likely to convince them, and convert them, and promote their salvation?" And should you not just as diligently think to yourself, "How will I live, and what will I do, and how will I dispose of all that I have, so as to most tend toward saving men's souls?" Brothers, if saving souls is your end, you will certainly intend it out of the pulpit as well as in it! If it is your end, you will live for it, and contribute all your endeavors to attain it. You will ask concerning the money

in your purse, as well as concerning the word of your mouth, "In what way will I lay it out for the greatest good, especially to men's souls?" Oh that this were your daily study: how to use your wealth, your friends, and all you have for God, as well as your tongues! Then we would see that fruit of your labors which is never likely to be seen otherwise. If you intend the end of the ministry to be in the pulpit only, then it would seem that you consider yourselves to be ministers no longer than you are there. And, if so, I think you are unworthy to be esteemed ministers at all.

Let me then entreat you, brothers, to do well, as well as say well. Be "zealous of good works."

Do not spare any cost if it may promote your Master's work.

(1) Maintain your innocence, and walk without offense. Let your lives condemn sin, and persuade men to duty. Would you have your people be more careful of their souls than you are of yours? If you would have them redeem their time, then do not misspend yours. If you would have their speech be edifying and not vain, then see that you speak the things which may edify, and which tend to "minister grace to the hearers." Order your own families well, if you would have them do the same. Do not be proud and lordly, if you would have them be lowly. There are no virtues in which your example will do more, at least to abate men's prejudice, than humility, and meekness, and self-denial. Forgive injuries and "do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Do as our Lord, "who, when he was reviled, did not revile in return."26 If sinners are stubborn and aggressive and contemptuous, flesh and blood will persuade you to take up their weapons, and to master them by their carnal means: but that is not the way (at least, no further than is necessary for self-preservation, or as the public good may require); instead, overcome them with kindness and patience and gentleness. The former may show that you have more worldly power than they have (which ordinarily is still too hard for the faithful); but it is the latter only that will tell them that you excel them in spiritual excellence. If you believe that Christ is more worthy of imitation than Caesar or Alexander, and that it is more glory to be a Christian than to be a conqueror, indeed, to be a man than a beast – which often exceed us in strength – then contend with charity, and not with violence; set meekness and love and patience against force, and not force against force. Remember, you are obliged to be the servants of all. "Condescend to men of low estate." Do not be a stranger to the poor of your flock; they are apt to take your distance for contempt. Familiarity, improved to holy ends, may do an abundance of good. Do not speak aggressively or disrespectfully to anyone; but be courteous to the lowest, as you would be to your equal in Christ. A kind and winning carriage is a cheap way of doing men good.

(2) Let me entreat you to abound in works of charity and benevolence. Go to the poor, and see what they want, and show your compassion at once to their soul and body. Buy them a catechism, and other small books that are likely to do them good, and make them promise to read them with care and attention. Stretch your purse to the utmost, and do all the good you can. Do not think of being rich; do not seek great things for yourselves or your posterity. What if you do impoverish yourselves to do a greater good? Will this be loss or gain? If you believe that God is the safest purse-bearer, and that expending in his service is the greatest usury, then show them that you believe it. I know that flesh and blood will quibble before it will let go of its prey, and will never say anything against this duty that is also against its own interest; but mark what I say (and may the Lord drive it home upon your hearts), that any man who has anything in the world that is so dear to him that he cannot spare it for Christ if he calls for it, is no true Christian. And because a carnal heart will not believe that Christ calls for it when he cannot spare it, he therefore makes that his self-deceiving and empty excuse. I say further, that the man who will not be persuaded that duty is duty, because he cannot spare for Christ what is to be expended in that duty, is no true Christian; for a false heart corrupts the understanding, and that again increases the delusions of the heart. You are not undone if you do not strive to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness in order to lay up treasure in heaven, even though you leave yourselves little on earth. You lose no great advantage for heaven by becoming poor: "In pursuing one's way, the lighter one travels the better."

I know, where the heart is carnal and covetous, words will not wring men's money out of their hands; they can say all this and more to others; but saying is one thing, and believing is another. Yet with true believers, I think such considerations should prevail. O what an abundance of good our ministers might do, if they would only live in contempt of the world, with its riches and glory, and expend all they have in their Master's service; and pinch their flesh, so that they may have something with which to do good! This would unlock more hearts to the reception of their doctrine than all their oratory; and, without this, singularity in religion will seem but hypocrisy; and it is likely that it is so. "He who practices such disinterest prays to the Lord; he who snatches a man from peril offers a rich sacrifice; these are our sacrifices; these are holy to God. Thus, the one who is more devout among us, is the one who is more self-effacing," says Minucius Felix. Though we need not do as the Papists, who take themselves to monasteries, and cast away their property, yet we must have nothing except what we have for God.

4. Take heed to yourselves, lest you live in those sins which you preach against in others, and lest you be guilty of what you condemn daily. Will you make it your work to magnify God, and, when you have done that, dishonor him as much as others do? Will you proclaim Christ's governing power, and yet treat it with contempt, and rebel yourselves? Will you preach his laws, and yet willfully break them? If sin is evil, why do you live in it? If it is not, why do you dissuade men from it? If it is dangerous, how dare you venture on in it? If it is not, why do you tell men that it is? If God's threats are true, why do you not fear them? If they are false, why do you needlessly trouble men with them, and put them into such frights without cause? Do you "know the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death,"28 and yet will you do them? "You who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who say a man should not commit adultery," or be drunk, or covetous, are you such yourself? "You who make your boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonor God." What! Will the same tongue speak evil that speaks against evil? Will

those same lips which censure, and slander, and backbite your neighbor, still decry these and similar things in others? Take heed to yourselves, lest you decry sin, and yet do not overcome it; lest you bow to it, and become its slaves yourselves, while you seek to bring it down in others: "For what overcomes a man is what brings him into bondage." "To whom you present yourselves as servants to obey, you are his servants to obey, whether it is sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness." O brothers! It is easier to chide at sin, than to overcome it.

Lastly, take heed to yourselves, that you do not lack the qualifications necessary for your work. One who would teach men all those mysterious things which must be known for salvation must not be a babe in knowledge himself. O what qualifications are necessary for a man who has such a charge upon him as we have! How many difficulties in divinity there are to be solved! And how many concern the fundamental principles of religion! How many obscure texts of Scripture must be expounded! How many duties we have to perform which, if we are not well informed, we and others may miscarry in the subject, manner, and end of them! How many sins we must avoid, which cannot be done without understanding and foresight! What a number of sly and subtle temptations we must open up to our people's eyes, so that they may escape them! How many weighty and yet intricate cases of conscience we have to resolve almost daily! And can so much work, and work such as this, be done by raw, unqualified men? O what strongholds we have to batter, and how many of them! What subtle and obstinate resistance we must expect from every heart we deal with! Prejudice has so blocked up our way, that we can scarcely procure a patient hearing. We cannot make a breach in their groundless hopes and carnal peace, without them having twenty empty excuses and seeming reasons to close it up again, and having twenty enemies, who are seeming friends, ready to help them. We do not dispute with them on equal terms. We have children to reason with, people who cannot understand us. We have distracted men (spiritually) to argue with, who will bowl us down with raging nonsense. We have willful, unreasonable people to deal with. And when they are silenced, they are still no more convinced; and when they can give you no reason, they will give you their resolution. They are like the man that Salvian had to deal with who, being resolved to devour a poor man's substance, and being entreated by Salvian to forbear, replied that he could not grant his request, for he had already made a vow to take it; so that the preacher, by reason of this most religious yet evil deed, was willing to die. We dispute against men's wills and passions as much as we do against their understanding; and these people have neither reason nor ears. Their best arguments are, "I will not believe you about such things, nor will I believe all the preachers in the world; I will not change my mind, or life; I will not leave my sins; I will never be that strictly confined, come what will." Whenever we go about the conversion of a sinner, we do not have just one, but multitudes of raging passions and contradicting enemies to dispute against at once. It is like a man disputing at a fair, or in a tumult, or in the middle of a violent and abusive crowd. What fairness and what success could he expect? Yet such is our work; and it is a work that must be done.

O brothers! What should we be in skill, resolution, and unwearied diligence, when we have all this to do? Did Paul cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And will we be proud, or careless, or lazy, as if we were indeed sufficient? As Peter says to every Christian, in consideration of our great approaching change, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" So may I say to every minister, "Seeing all these things lie upon our hands, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy endeavors and resolutions for our work!" This is not a burden for the shoulders of a child. What skill every part of our work requires! – and how much importance is in every part! To preach a sermon, I think, is not the hardest part; and yet what skill is necessary to make the truth plain; to convince the hearers, to let irresistible light into their consciences, and to keep it there, and drive it all home; to screw the truth into their minds, and work Christ into their affections; to meet every objection, and clearly to resolve it; to drive sinners to a stand, and make them see that there is no hope, except that they must unavoidably be either converted or condemned – and to do all this, with regard to language and manner, as befits our work, and yet in a way most suited to the capacities of our hearers. This, and a great deal more that should be done in every sermon, surely requires a great deal of holy skill. So great a God, whose message we deliver, should be honored by our delivery of it. It is lamentable in a message from the God of heaven, one of everlasting moment to the souls of men, that we should behave so weakly, so unattractively, so imprudently, or so slightly, that the whole business miscarries in our hands; and that God should instead be dishonored, and his work be disgraced, and sinners be hardened rather than converted; and all this comes through our weakness or neglect! How often have carnal hearers gone home jeering at the palpable and dishonorable failings of the preacher! How many sleep under us, because our hearts and tongues are sleepy, and because we did not bring with us the skill and zeal to awaken them! Moreover, what skill is necessary to defend the truth against those who would deny it, and to deal with those who would dispute and quibble in their various ways and cases! And if we fail through weakness, how they will exult over us! Yet that is the least of the matter: for who knows how many weak ones may be perverted by this weakness, leading to their own undoing, and to the trouble of the Church? What skill is necessary to deal in private with one poor ignorant soul for his conversion! O brothers! Do you not shrink and tremble under the sense of all this work? Will a common measure of holy skill and ability, of prudence and other qualifications, serve for such a task as this? I know necessity may cause the Church to tolerate the weak, but woe to us if we tolerate and indulge our own weakness! Do not reason and conscience tell you, that if you dare to venture on so high a work as this, you should spare no pains to be qualified to perform it? It is not an idle snatch or a taste of studies every now and then that will serve to make an able and sound divine. I know that laziness has learned to allege the vanity of all our studies, and I know how entirely the Spirit must qualify us for our work, and assist us in it. But it is not as if God commanded us to use the means, and then authorized us to neglect them. It is not as if it were his way to cause us to thrive in idleness; or to bring us knowledge by dreams when we are asleep; or to take us up into heaven to show us his counsels; and all the while we are not thinking of any such matter, but instead are idling away our time on earth! O that men should dare, by their laziness, to "quench the Spirit," and then blame the Spirit for doing it! "O outrageous, shameful and unnatural deed!" God has required us, that we be "not slothful in business," but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." We must provoke our hearers to be such, and such we must be ourselves. O, therefore, brothers, lose no

time! Study, and pray, and confer, and practice; for your abilities must be increased in these four ways. Take heed to yourselves, lest you are weak through your own negligence, and lest you mar the work of God by your weakness.

SECTION 2 THE MOTIVES TO THIS OVERSIGHT

Having showed you what it is to take heed to ourselves, I will next lay before you some motives to awaken you to this duty.

1. Take heed to yourselves, for you have a heaven to win or lose, and souls that must be happy or miserable forever; and therefore it concerns you to begin at home, and to take heed to yourselves as well as to others. Preaching well, may succeed in saving others without the holiness of your own hearts and lives; it is at least possible, though unusual; but it is impossible that it will save yourselves. "Many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name?" to whom he will answer, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who work iniquity." O sirs, how many men have preached Christ, and yet have perished for want of a saving interest in him! How many, who are now in hell, have told their people of the torments of hell, and warned them to escape from it! How many have preached of the wrath of God against sinners, who are now enduring it! O what sadder case can there be in the world, than for a man, who made it his very trade and calling to proclaim salvation, and to help others to heaven, yet after all this to be shut out himself! Alas! That we should have so many books in our libraries which tell us the way to heaven, and that we should spend so many years reading these books, and studying the doctrine of eternal life, and after all that to miss it! – that we should study so many sermons of salvation, and yet fall short of it! – that we should preach so many sermons of damnation, and yet fall into it? And all this is because we preached so many sermons of Christ, while we neglected Him; we preached so many of the Spirit, while we resisted him; we preached so many of faith, while we did not ourselves believe; we preached of repentance and conversion, while we continued in an impenitent and unconverted state; and we preached of a heavenly life, while we remained carnal and earthly ourselves. If we will be divines only in tongue and title, and do not have the Divine image upon our souls, nor give ourselves up to the Divine honor and will, then it is no wonder if we are separated from the Divine presence, and denied the fruition of God forever. Believe it, sirs, God is no respecter of persons: he does not save men for their coats or callings; a holy calling will not save an unholy man. If you stand at the door of the kingdom of grace to let others in, and will not go in yourselves, then you will knock in vain at the gates of glory because you would not enter at the door of grace. If you intended to have a part in the glory which you preached then you will find that your lamps should have had the oil of grace as well as the oil of ministerial gifts – holiness, as well as doctrine. Do I need to tell you that preachers of the gospel must be judged by the gospel, and stand at the same bar, and be sentenced on the same terms, and be dealt with as severely as any other men? Can you think you will be saved, then, because you are clergy? Or that you will be released by the plea "He passed for a clergyman," when you lack the evidence that "He believed and lived as a Christian." Alas, it will not be! You know it will not be. Take heed therefore to yourselves, for your own sakes, because you have your own souls to save or lose, as well as those of others.

2. Take heed to yourselves, for you have a depraved nature, and sinful inclinations, as much as others. If innocent Adam had need to take heed, and lost himself and us for want of it, then how much more need do we have! Sin dwells in us, even when we preach ever so much against it; and one degree of sin prepares the heart for another, and one sin inclines the mind to more sin. If one thief is in the house, he will let the rest in, because they have the same disposition and design. A spark is the beginning of a flame, and a small disease may cause a greater one. A man who knows himself to be partially blind should take heed to his feet. Alas! In our hearts, as well as in the hearts of our hearers, there is an averseness to God, a foreignness to him; and there are unreasonable and almost unruly passions! In us there are, at best, the remnants of pride, unbelief, self-seeking, hypocrisy, and all the most hateful, deadly sins. And does it not then concern us to take heed to ourselves? Does not so much of the fire of hell that was at first kindled in us remain unextinguished, that it is necessary for us to take heed? Are there not so many traitors in our very hearts, that it is necessary for us to take heed? You will scarcely let your little children go about by themselves while they are weak, without calling upon them to take heed of falling. And, alas! How weak are those of us that seem the strongest! How apt we are to stumble over a straw! How small a matter will cast us down by enticing us to folly, or by kindling our passions and our inordinate desires, by perverting our judgments, weakening our resolutions, cooling our zeal, and abating our diligence! Ministers are not only sons of Adam, but sinners against the grace of Christ, as well as others; and so they have increased their radical sin. If you take not heed, these treacherous hearts of yours will, one time or another, deceive you. Those sins that seem now to lie dead will revive: your pride, and worldliness, and many a foul vice will spring up that you thought had been weeded out by the roots. It is most necessary, therefore, that men of so much infirmity should take heed to themselves, and be careful in the oversight of their own souls.

3. Take heed to yourselves, because the tempter will ply you with his temptations more than other men. If you will be the leaders against the prince of darkness, then he will spare you no further than God restrains him. He bears the greatest malice toward those who are engaged to do him the greatest mischief. He hates Christ more than any of us, because he is the General of the field, and the Captain of our salvation, and he does more than all the rest of the world against Satan's kingdom. Accordingly, Satan hates the leaders under Christ more than he hates the common soldiers: he knows he can rout the soldiers if the leaders fall before their eyes. He has tried that way of fighting for a long time: not against great or small (comparatively speaking), but striking the shepherds so that he may scatter the flock. So great has been his success this way, that he will continue to follow it as far as he is able. Take heed, therefore, brothers, for the enemy has a special eye on you. You will have his most subtle insinuations38 , and incessant solicitations, and violent assaults. As wise and learned as you are, take heed to yourselves, lest he outwit you. The devil is a greater scholar than you, and a nimbler disputant; he can transform himself into an angel of light to deceive; he will get within you,

and trip you up by the heels before you are aware; he will play the trickster with you, undiscerned; he will cheat you of your faith or innocence, and you will not know that you have lost it; worse, he will make you believe your faith is multiplied or increased, when in fact it is lost. You will see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait. And his bait will be so fitted to your temper and disposition, that he will be sure to find advantages within you, and make your own principles and inclinations betray you; and whenever he ruins you, he will make you the instruments of ruin to others. O what a conquest he will think he has, if he can make a minister lazy and unfaithful, or if he can tempt a minister into covetousness or scandal! He will glory against the Church, and say, "These are your holy preachers? See what their strictness is like, and where it brings them." He will glory against Jesus Christ himself, and say, "These are your champions?! I can make your best servants abuse you; I can make the stewards of your house unfaithful." If he insulted God on a false surmise, and told him he could make Job curse him to his face, then what will he do if he should actually prevail against you? In the end, he will insult God as much over you: that he could draw you to be unfaithful to your great trust, and to blemish your holy profession, and to so greatly serve the one who was your enemy. O, do not gratify Satan to this extent; do not let him make sport of you; do not allow him to use you as the Philistines used Samson, first depriving you of your strength, then putting out your eyes, and finally making you the object of his triumph and derision.

4. Take heed to yourselves, because there are many eyes upon you, and there will be many to observe your falls. You cannot miscarry without the world ringing of it. The eclipses of the sun by day are seldom without witnesses. As you take yourselves for the lights of the churches, you may expect that men's eyes will be upon you. If other men may sin without observation, you cannot. And you should thankfully consider how great a mercy this is, that you have so many eyes to watch over you, and so many ready to tell you of your faults; and thus you have greater helps than others, at least to restrain you from sin. Though they may do it with a malicious mind, yet you have the advantage of it. God forbid that we should prove so impudent as to do evil in the public view of all, and to sin willfully while the world is gazing on us! "Those who sleep, sleep in the night; and those who are drunk, are drunk in the night." Consider yourself to always be in the open light: even the light of your own doctrine will expose your evil doings. You are lights set upon a hill; do not think to lie hidden. Take heed therefore to yourselves, and do your work as those who remember that the world looks at them, and does so with the quick- sighted eye of malice, ready to make the worst of everything, to see where the smallest fault can be found, to aggravate it where they find it, to divulge it and to take advantage of it for their own purposes, and to invent faults where they cannot find them. How cautiously, then, we must walk before so many ill-minded observers!

5. Take heed to yourselves, for your sins have more heinous aggravations than other men's sins. It was a saying of king Alphonsus that "a great man cannot commit a small sin." Much more may we say that a learned man, or a teacher of others, cannot commit a small sin; or, at least, that the same sin is greater when committed by him, than if committed by another.

(1) You are more likely than others to sin against knowledge, because you have more than they have, or at least you sin against more light or greater means of knowledge. What! Do you not know that covetousness and pride are sins? Do you not know what it is to be unfaithful to your trust, and, by negligence or self-seeking, to betray men's souls? You know your "Master's will; and, if you do not do it, you will be beaten with many stripes."41 The greater the knowledge, the more willfulness there must be.

(2) Your sins have more hypocrisy in them than other men's, by how much more you have spoken against them. O what a heinous thing is it in us, to study how to disgrace sin to the greatest degree, and to make it as odious in the eyes of our people as we can, but when we have done so, to then live in it, and secretly cherish what we publicly disgrace! What vile hypocrisy it is to make it our daily work to decry it, and yet to hold onto it; to publicly call it all nothing, and to privately make it our bed-fellow and companion; to bind heavy burdens on others, and not touch them ourselves with a finger! What can you say to this in judgment? Did you think as badly of sin as you said, or did you not? If you did not, why would you disguise that by speaking against it? If you did, why would you hold onto it and commit it? O do not bear that sign of a hypocritical Pharisee: "They say, but do not." Many a minister of the gospel will be shamed and unable to look up because of this heavy charge of hypocrisy.

(3) Your sins have more treachery in them than other men's, by how much more you have engaged yourselves against them. Besides all your common engagements as Christians, you have many more as ministers. How often have you proclaimed the evil and danger of sin, and called sinners away from it? How often have you pronounced the terrors of the Lord against it? All this surely implied that you renounced it yourselves.
Every sermon that you preached against it, every exhortation, every confession of it in the congregation, laid an obligation on you to forsake it. Every child that you baptized, and every administration of the Lord's supper, affirmed your own renouncement of the world and the flesh, and your engagement to Christ. How often, and how openly, have you borne witness to the odiousness and damnable nature of sin? And yet you entertain it, notwithstanding all these professions and testimonies of your own? O what treachery it is to make such a stir against sin in the pulpit, and, after all that, to entertain it in your heart, and give it the place that is due to God, and even prefer it above the glory of the saints!

6. Take heed to yourselves, because such great works as ours require greater grace than other men's works. Weaker gifts and graces may offer a man a more even course of life, one that is not liable to such great trials. Smaller strength may serve for lighter works and burdens. But if you will venture into the great undertakings of the ministry; if you will lead the troops of Christ on against Satan and his followers; if you will engage yourselves against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high

places; if you will undertake to rescue captive sinners out of the devil's paws; do not think that a heedless, careless course will accomplish so great a work as this. If you think to go through such momentous things as these with a careless soul, then you must expect to come off with greater shame and deeper wounds of conscience, than if you had lived a common life. It is not only the work that calls for heed, but the workman also, so that he may be fit for business of such weight. We have seen many men who lived as private Christians, having a good reputation for their roles and piety; but when they took upon themselves either the magistrate or military employment, where the work was above their gifts, and temptations overmatched their strength, they proved to be scandalous and disgraced men. And we have seen some private Christians of good esteem, who, having thought too highly of their roles, and thrust themselves into the ministerial office, have proved to be weak and empty men; they have become greater burdens to the Church than some whom we endeavored to throw out. They might have done God more service in the higher rank of private men than they do among the lowest in the ministry. If you would venture into the midst of enemies, and bear the burden, and the heat of the day, then take heed to yourselves.

7. Take heed to yourselves, for the honor of your Lord and Master, and of his holy truth and ways, lies more heavily on you than on other men. Because you may render him more service, so you may do him more disservice than others. The nearer men stand to God, the greater dishonor he has by their miscarriages, and the more they will be imputed by foolish men to God himself. The heavy judgments executed on Eli and on his house were because such men recoiled at his sacrifice and offering: "Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." It was that great aggravation, of "causing the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," which provoked God to deal more sharply with David than he would otherwise have done. If you are indeed Christians, the glory of God will be more precious to you than your lives. Take heed therefore what you do against it, as you would take heed what you do against your lives. Would it not wound you to the heart to hear the name and truth of God reproached for your sakes; to see men point to you and say, "There goes a covetous priest, a secret drunkard, a scandalous man; these are the ones who preach strictness, while they themselves can live as loose as others; they condemn us with their sermons, and condemn themselves with their lives; notwithstanding all their talk, they are as bad as we are." O brothers, could your hearts endure to hear men cast the dung of your iniquities in the face of the holy God, and in the face of the gospel, and of all who desire to fear the Lord? Would it not break your hearts to think that all the godly Christians about you should suffer reproach for your misdoings? If one of you who is a leader of the flock were to be ensnared only once into some scandalous crime, there is scarcely a man or woman who seeks diligently after their salvation, who upon hearing it, would not have it thrown in their face by the ungodly around them; besides this, there is the grief of their own hearts for your sin, however much they may detest and lament it. The ungodly husband will tell his wife, and the ungodly parents will tell their children, and ungodly neighbors and fellow-servants will tell one another of it, saying, "These are your godly preachers? See what comes of all your fussing! What better are you than others? You are all alike." Such words as these all the godly in the country must hear for your sakes. "It must be that such offenses come; but woe to that man by whom they come!"46 O take heed, brothers, of every word you speak, and of every step you tread, for you bear the ark of the Lord – you are entrusted with his honor! If you who "know his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourselves are guides of the blind, and lights to those who are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes," – if you, I say, should live contrary to your doctrine, and "by breaking the law should dishonor God, the name of God will be blasphemed" among the ignorant and ungodly "through you." 48 And you are not unacquainted with that standing decree of heaven: "Those who honor me I will honor; and those who despise me will be lightly esteemed."49 No man ever dishonored God without it proving to be the greatest dishonor to himself. God will find out ways enough to wipe off any stain that is cast upon him; but you will not so easily remove the shame and sorrow from yourselves.

8. Lastly, take heed to yourselves, for the success of all your labors depends very much upon this. God uses men to fit them for great works, before he employs them as his instruments in accomplishing them. Now, if the work of the Lord is not soundly done upon your own hearts, how can you expect him to bless your labors to effect it in others? He may do it, if he pleases, but you have much cause to doubt whether he will. I will mention here some reasons which may satisfy you, that one who would be a means of saving others, must take heed to himself; and that God seldom prospers the labors of unsanctified men.

(1) Can it be expected that God will bless someone's labors (in comparison to other ministers) who does not work for God, but for himself? Now, this is the case with every unsanctified man. Only converted men will make God their chief end, and do all or any thing heartily for his honor; others make the ministry a trade to live by. They choose it rather than another calling, because their parents destined them to it, or because it affords them a reasonable income; because it is a life in which they have more opportunity to furnish their intellects with all kinds of science; or because it is not as toilsome to the body for those who are inclined to favor their flesh; because it is accompanied with some reverence and respect from men; and because they think it a fine thing to be leaders and teachers, and to have others "receive the law from their mouth."50 They are ministers for ends such as these, and for these ends they preach; and if it were not for these ends, or for similar objects, they would soon give up. And can it be expected that God would greatly bless the labors of men such as these? It is not for him that they preach, but themselves, and their own reputation or gain. It is not him, but themselves, that they seek and serve; and, therefore, it is no wonder that he leaves them to themselves for the success, and that their labor has no greater blessing than they themselves can give it, and that the word reaches no further than their own strength can make it reach.

(2) Can you think that someone is likely to be as successful as others if he does not deal heartily and faithfully in his work, and does not believe what he says, and is not truly serious when he seems to be most diligent? And can you think that any

unsanctified man can be hearty and serious in the ministerial work? He may indeed have a kind of seriousness, that proceeds from a common faith, or an opinion that the Word is true; or he may be actuated by a natural fervor, or by selfish ends: but he does not have the seriousness and fidelity of a sound believer who ultimately intends God's glory and men's salvation. O sirs, all your preaching and persuading of others will only be a dream and vile hypocrisy until the work is thoroughly done upon your own hearts. How can you set yourselves, day and night, to a work that your carnal hearts are averse to? How can you call with serious fervor upon poor sinners to repent and return to God, if you never repented or returned to God yourselves? How can you heartily follow poor sinners with importunate solicitations to take heed of sin, and to lead a holy life, if you never felt the evil of sin, or the worth of holiness yourselves?

These things are never well known until they are felt, nor are they well-felt until they are possessed; and someone who does not feel them himself, is not likely to speak feelingly of them to others, nor to help others feel them. How can you follow sinners, with compassion in your hearts and tears in your eyes, and beg them, in the name of the Lord, to stop their course, and return and live, and yet you have never had as much compassion on your own soul as to do this for yourselves? What! Can you love other men better than yourselves? Can you have pity on them, when you have no pity upon yourselves? Sirs, do you think someone will be heartily diligent to save men from hell, if he is not heartily persuaded that there is a hell? Or can he bring men to heaven, if he does not truly believe that there is a heaven? As Calvin says on my text ; "The man who neglects his own salvation will never take diligent care for the salvation of others." Someone who does not have a strong a belief in the Word of God and the life to come, so as to withdraw his own heart from the vanities of this world, and excite him to holy diligence for salvation, cannot be expected to be faithful in seeking the salvation of other men. Surely someone who would dare to damn himself, would dare to leave others alone who are on the way to damnation; Someone like Judas, who will sell his Master for silver, will not hesitate to make merchandise of the flock; someone who will let go of his hopes of heaven, rather than leave behind his worldly and fleshly delights, will hardly leave them behind to save others. We may naturally conceive that someone who is willfully cruel to himself will have no pity on others; someone who is unfaithful to his own soul is not to be trusted
with other men's souls; he will sell it to the devil for the short pleasures of sin. I confess that a man who takes no heed to himself, but is careless of his own soul, will never have my consent to have charge of other men's souls, and to oversee them for their salvation, unless it were a case of absolute necessity, and no better could be had.

(3) Do you think it is likely that someone will fight against Satan with all his might if he is himself a servant to Satan? Will he do any great harm to the kingdom of the devil, if he is himself a member and a subject of that kingdom? Will he be true to Christ if he is in covenant with his enemy? Now, this is the case of all unsanctified men, of whatever rank or profession they are: they are the servants of Satan, and the subjects of his kingdom; he is the one who rules in their hearts. And are they likely to be true to Christ if they are ruled by the devil? What prince will choose the friends and servants of his enemy to lead his armies in war against him? This is what has made so many preachers of the gospel enemies to the work of the gospel which they preach. No wonder such men deride the holy obedience of the faithful; while they take upon themselves to preach a holy life, they cast reproaches on those who practice it! O how many such traitors have been in the Church of Christ in all ages, which have done more against him, under his colors, than they could have done in the open field! They speak well of Christ and of godliness in general, and yet they slyly do what they can to bring them into disgrace, and make men believe that those who strive to seek God with all their hearts are a company of
enthusiasts or hypocrites. And when they cannot for shame speak that way in the pulpit, they will do it in private among their acquaintances. Alas! How many such wolves have been set over the sheep! If there was a traitor among the twelve in Christ's family, no wonder if there are many now. It cannot be expected that a slave of Satan, "whose god is his belly, and who minds earthly things," should be any better than "an enemy to the cross of Christ." What if he lives civilly, and preaches plausibly, and outwardly maintains a profession of religion? He may be held as fast in the devil's snares by worldliness, pride, a secret distaste of diligent godliness, or by an unsound heart that is not rooted in the faith, nor unreservedly devoted to Christ, as others are held fast by their drunkenness, uncleanness, and similar disgraceful sins. Publicans and harlots sooner enter heaven than Pharisees, because they are sooner convinced of their sin and misery.

And, though many of these men may seem excellent preachers, and may decry sin as loudly as others, yet it is all an affected fervency, and too commonly it is no more than useless bawling; for someone who cherishes sin in his own heart never falls upon it in earnest in others. I know, indeed, that a wicked man may be more willing to see the reformation of others than of himself, and hence he may show a kind of earnestness in dissuading them from their evil ways; that is because he can preach against sin at an easier rate than he can forsake it; and another man's reformation may coexist with his own enjoyment of his lusts. And, therefore, many a wicked minister or parent may be earnest with their people or children to amend, because they do not lose their own sinful profits or pleasures by another's reformation; nor does it call them to that self-denial which their own reformation does. Yet, for all of this, there is none of that zeal, resolution, and diligence, which are found in all who are true to Christ. They do not set themselves against sin as the enemy of Christ, and as what endangers their people's souls. A traitorous commander, who shoots only powder against the enemy, may make as great a sound or report with his guns as those which are loaded with bullets; but he does no harm to the enemy. So one of these men may speak as loudly, and mouth his pleas with an affected fervency, but he seldom does any great punishment against sin and Satan. No man can fight well unless he hates, or is very angry; much less can he fight against those whom he loves, and loves above all. Every unrenewed man is so far from hating sin, as to set it as his dearest treasure. So you can see that an unsanctified man, who loves the enemy, is unfit to be a leader in Christ's army, or to draw others to renounce the world and the flesh, because he clings to them himself as his finest good.

(4) It is not likely that the people will highly regard the doctrine of such men, when they see that they do not live as they preach. They will think that he does not mean what he says, if he does not live as he says. They will hardly believe a man that does not seem to believe himself. If someone tells you to run for your lives because a bear or an enemy is at your back, and yet he does not increase his own pace, then you will be tempted to think he is only talking in jest, and that there really is no such danger as he alleges. When preachers tell people of the necessity of holiness, and that without it no one will see the Lord, and yet they remain unholy themselves, people will think that they are only talking to pass away the hour, and that they must say something for their money, and that all these are only a course of words. You may you lift up your voice against sin only so long, before men will not believe there is any such evil or danger as you speak of, for all the while they see the same man who reproaches it, cherishing it in his heart, and making it his delight. Rather, you tempt them to think there is some special good in it, and that you disparage it like gluttons disparage a dish that they love, so that they may have it all to themselves. As long as men have eyes as well as ears, they wish to see your meaning as well as hear it; and they are more apt to believe their sight than their hearing, it being the more perfect sense of the two.

All that a minister does is a kind of preaching; and if you live a covetous or careless life, you preach these sins to your people by your practice. If you drink, or game, or trifle away your time in pointless conversations, they take it as if you said to them, "Neighbors, this is the life you should all live; you may venture on this course without any danger." If you are ungodly, and do not teach your families the fear of God, nor contradict the sins of the company you are in, nor turn the stream of their pointless talking, nor deal with them plainly about their salvation, then they will take it as if you preached to them that such things are needless, and that they may boldly do the same as you. No, you do worse than all this, for you teach them to think evil of others who are better than yourselves. How many a faithful minister, and private Christian, is hated and reproached for the sake of such as you! What do the people say to them? "You are so strict, and tell us so much of sin, and duty, and make such a fuss about these matters, while such and such a minister, who is as great a scholar as you (and as good a preacher), will be funny and joke with us, and leave us alone, and never trouble himself (or us) with such things. You, however, can never be quiet, and you make more fuss than is needed. You love to frighten men with your talk of damnation, while other sober, learned, and peaceable divines are quiet, and live with us like other men."

Such are the thoughts and talk of people, which your negligence gives rise to. They will let you preach against their sins, and talk as much as you want about godliness in the pulpit, if you will only let them alone afterwards, and be friendly and fun-loving with them when you have finished, and return to talking as they do, and living as they do, and become indifferent with them in your conversation. For they look at the pulpit like a stage: a place where preachers must show themselves, and play their parts, where you have liberty for an hour to say what you're inclined to say; but they will not value what you say if you do not show them, by saying it personally to their faces, that you were earnest, and did indeed mean it all. Is that man then likely to do much good, or is he fit to be a minister of Christ, if he will only speak for Christ an hour on the Sabbath, and by his
life, preaches against him all week, and indeed makes his own public words a lie? Even if any of the people are wiser than to follow the examples of such men, the loathsomeness of their lives will still make their doctrine less effectual. Though you know the meat to be good and wholesome, it may make a weak stomach turn if the cook or the servant who carries it has leprous or even dirty hands. Take heed therefore to yourselves, if you ever intend to do good to others.
Lastly, consider that the success of your labors depends on the assistance and blessing of the Lord. Where has he made any promise of his assistance and blessing to ungodly men? If he does promise his Church a blessing, even by such ungodly men, he still does not promise these men any blessing. To his faithful servants he has promised that he will be with them, that he will put his Spirit upon them, and put his word into their mouths, and that Satan will fall before them as lightning from heaven. But where is there any such promise to ungodly ministers? No, by your hypocrisy and your abuse of God, you provoke him to forsake you, and to destroy all your endeavors, at least as to yourselves, even though he may bless your endeavors for his chosen ones. For I do not deny that God may do good to his Church through wicked men; yet he does not ordinarily do it, nor does he do it so eminently, as he does by his own servants. And what I have said of the wicked themselves, applies in part to the godly; it applies while they are scandalous and backsliding, and in proportion to the measure of their sin.

CHAPTER 2 – THE OVERSIGHT OF THE FLOCK

SECTION 1 – THE NATURE OF THIS OVERSIGHT

Having showed you what it is to take heed to ourselves, I am to show you, next, what it means to "take heed to all the flock."

It was first necessary to take into consideration what we must be, and what we must do for our own souls, before we come to what must be done for others: "One cannot succeed in healing the wounds of others if he is unhealed himself by reason of neglecting himself. He benefits neither his neighbors nor himself. He does not raise up others, but falls himself." Indeed, all his labors come to nothing, unless his heart and life are what performs them. For there are some people who, though expert in spiritual ministry, are headstrong in their ways; while acting intelligently, they tread underfoot any good they do. They teach too hurriedly what can only be rendered holy by meditation; and what they proclaim in public they impugn by their conduct. This is where, as pastors, they walk in paths that are too rugged for the flock to follow. When we have led them to the living waters, if we muddy it by our filthy lives, we may lose our labor, and they may never be the better for it. Before we speak of the work itself, we will note what is pre-supposed in the words before us.

It is implied here that every flock should have its own pastor, and every pastor his own flock. As every troop or company in a regiment of soldiers must have its own captain and other officers, and every soldier knows his own commander and colors, so it is the will of God that every church should have its own pastor, and that all Christ's disciples "should know their teachers that are over them in the Lord." Though a minister is an officer in the universal Church, yet is he in a special manner the overseer of that particular church which is committed to his charge. When we are ordained ministers without a special charge, we are licensed and commanded to do our best for all, as we have opportunity to exercise of our gifts. But when we have undertaken a particular charge, we restrain the exercise of our gifts to that congregation in particular, so that we must allow others no more than can spared of our time and help, except where the public good requires it (which, no doubt, must be regarded first). From this relation of pastor and flock, arise all the duties which they mutually owe to each other.

When we are commanded to take heed to all the flock, it is plainly implied that flocks must ordinarily be no greater than we are capable of overseeing or "taking heed to." God will not lay upon us natural impossibilities: he will not bind men to leap up to the moon, touch the stars, or number the sands of the sea. If the pastoral office consists in overseeing all the flock, then surely the number of souls under the care of each pastor must not be greater than he is able to take heed to as required here. Will God require one bishop to take the charge of a whole county, or of so many parishes or thousands of souls, that he is not able to know or oversee them? Or indeed to take sole government of them, while their particular teachers are free from that undertaking?

Would God require the blood of so many parishes at one man's hands, if he does not do what ten, or twenty, or a hundred, or three hundred men could no more do than him? If so, I can move a mountain. Then woe to poor prelates! Is it not, then, a most doleful case, that learned, sober men would plead for this as a desirable privilege; that they would willfully draw onto themselves such a burden; and that they do not instead tremble at the thought of so great an undertaking? How happy it would have been for the Church, and happy for the bishops themselves, if this measure, intimated by the apostle here, had still been observed: that the diocese be no greater than the elders or bishops could oversee and rule, so that they might have taken heed to all the flock; or that pastors had been multiplied as churches increased, and the number of overseers been proportioned to the number of souls. Then they might not have left the work undone while they assumed empty titles, and undertook impossibilities! And rather that they had prayed the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers, proportioned to the work, and not undertaken it all themselves. I would scarcely commend the prudence or humility of a laborer, however great his rank, who would not only undertake to gather in all the harvest in this county by himself, and do so upon pain of death, even damnation, but who would also earnestly contend for this power.

But, it may be said, there are others to teach, though only one has the rule.

To this I answer: Blessed be God, it is so; and no thanks to some of them. But is government not of great concern to the good of our souls, as well as preaching? If it is not, then what use is there for church governors? If it is, then those who nullify it by undertaking impossibilities, set about to ruin the churches and themselves. If only preaching is necessary, let us have only preachers: what need is there then for making such a stir about government? But if discipline, in its place, is necessary too, then what is it but enmity to men's salvation to exclude it? And it is unavoidably excluded when it is made someone's work that is naturally incapable of performing it. The general who would command an army alone, may as well say, "Let it be destroyed for want of command;" and the schoolmaster who will oversee or govern all the schools in the county alone, may as well say, "Let them all be ungoverned;" and the physician who will undertake the care of all the sick people in a whole nation, or a county, when he is not able to visit a hundredth of them, may as well say, "Let them perish." Yet it must still be acknowledged, that in case of necessity, where no more are to be had, one man may undertake the charge of more souls than he is well able to oversee individually. But then he must undertake only to do what he can for them, and not to do all that a pastor ordinarily ought to do.

This is the case of some of us who have greater parishes than we are able to take that special heed which their state requires. I profess for my own part, I am so far from the boldness of those who dare to venture on the sole government of a county, that I would not, for all England, have undertaken to be one of the two that should do all the pastoral work that God requires in the parish where I live. I did it because I had this to satisfy my conscience: that because of the Church's necessities, more cannot be had; and therefore I must do what I can, rather than leave all undone, simply because I cannot do it all. But cases of unavoidable necessity are not the ordinary condition of the Church; or at least, it is not desirable that it would be. O happy Church of Christ, if only the laborers were able and faithful, and proportioned in number to the number of souls; so that the pastors were so many, or the particular churches so small, that we might be able to "take heed to all the flock." Having noticed these things which are presupposed, we will now proceed to consider the duty which is recommended in the text: take heed to all the flock.

It is, you see, all the flock, that is, every individual member of our charge. To this end, it is necessary to know every person that belongs to our charge; for how can we take heed to them if we do not know them? We must labor to be acquainted, not only with the persons, but with the state of all our people, with their inclinations and conversations. What sins are they are most in danger of? What duties are they most apt to neglect? What temptations are they most liable to? For if we do not know their temperament or disease, then we are not likely to prove successful physicians.

Being thus acquainted with all the flock, we must afterward take heed to them. One would imagine that every reasonable man would be satisfied of this, and that it would need no further proof. Does a careful shepherd not look after every individual sheep; and a good schoolmaster after every individual scholar; and a good physician after every particular patient; and a good commander after every individual soldier? Why then should the shepherds, teachers, physicians, and guides of the churches of Christ, not take heed to every individual member of their charge? Christ himself, the great and good Shepherd, who has the whole flock to look after, yet takes care of every individual. He is like the one whom he describes in the parable, who left "the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, to seek after one that was lost."4 The prophets were often sent to single men. Ezekiel was made a watchman over individuals, and was commanded to say to the wicked, "You will surely die."5 Paul taught his hearers not only "publicly but from house to house."6 And in another place he tells us that he "warned every man, and taught every man, in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."7 Many other passages of Scripture make it evident that it is our duty to take heed to every individual of our flock; and many passages in the ancient Councils plainly show that this was the practice in primitive times. But I will only quote one from Ignatius: "Let assemblies," he says, "be gathered often; inquire after all by name: do not ignore servant-men or maids."

You see it was then considered a duty to look after every member of the flock by name, not excepting the lowest servant-man or maid. But, someone may object, "The congregation that I am set over is so great that it is impossible for me to know them all, much less take heed to all individually." To this I answer, "Is it, or is it not, necessity that has thrown you upon such a charge? If it is not, then you excuse one sin by another. How dare you undertake what you knew you were unable to perform, and when you were not forced to do it? It would seem you had some other ends in undertaking it, and never intended to be faithful to your trust. But if you think that necessity forced you to undertake it, then I would ask you, might you not have procured assistance for so great a charge? Have you done all that you could with your friends and neighbors, to pay for another to help you? Do you not have enough income for yourself, that it might serve both yourself and another, even though it will not serve to keep you in wealth? Is it not more reasonable that you should pinch your flesh and family, than undertake a work that you cannot perform, and neglect the souls of so many of your flock? I know that what I say will seem hard to some, but to me it is an unquestionable thing: if you have but a hundred pounds a year, it is your duty to live on part of it, and put the rest toward a competent assistant, rather than neglect the flock which you are over. If you say, that is a hard measure, and that your wife and children cannot live this way, I answer, "Do not many families in your parish live on less?"8 Have not many able ministers in the prelates' days been glad of less, with the liberty to preach the gospel? There are some yet living, I have heard, who have offered to have the bishops enter into bond to preach for nothing, if they might only have liberty to preach the gospel. If you still say that you cannot live so meagerly as poor people do, I further ask, "Can your parishioners better endure damnation, than you can endure want and poverty?" What! Do you call yourselves ministers of the gospel, and yet the souls of men are so base in your eyes, that you would rather they eternally perish, than you and your family live in a lowly and poor condition? No, wouldn't you rather beg for your bread than put so great a matter as men's salvation at risk or disadvantage? Indeed, to risk the damnation of only one soul? O sirs, it is a miserable thing when men study and talk of heaven and hell, and how few are saved, and the difficulty of salvation, and all the while not be in earnest about it. If you were, surely you could never hesitate at such matters as these, and let your people go down to hell so that you might live in higher style in this world. Remember this, the next time you are preaching to them, that they cannot be saved without knowledge; and listen whether your conscience doesn't tell you, "It is likely they might be brought to knowledge if they only had diligent instruction and exhortation, privately, man to man; and if there were another minister to assist me, this might be done: and if I would live sparingly and deny my flesh, I might have an assistant. Dare I, then, let my people live in that ignorance which I myself have told them is damning, rather than put myself and my family to a little want?"

Must I turn to my Bible to show a preacher where it is written that a man's soul is worth more than a world, much more therefore than a hundred pounds a year; and are not many souls worth much more? Both we and all that we have are God's, and we should be employed to the utmost for his service. It is inhuman cruelty to let souls go to hell for fear my wife and children should fare somewhat worse, or live at lower income; when, according to God's ordinary way of working by means, I might do much to prevent

their misery, if I would only displease my flesh a little, which all who are Christ's have crucified along with its lusts. Every man must render to God the things that are God's, and let each remember that this includes all he is and all he possesses. How are all things sanctified to us, except by separating and dedicating them to God? Are they not all his talents, and must they not be employed in his service? Must not every Christian first ask, "In what way may I most honor God with my substance?" Do we not preach these things to our people? Are they true for them, and not for us? Moreover, is not the church- maintenance devoted, in a special way, to the service of God for the church? And should we not then use it for the utmost furtherance of that end? If any minister who has two hundred pounds a year, can prove that a hundred pounds of it may do God more service if it is laid out on himself, his wife, and children, than if it maintains one or two suitable assistants to help forward the salvation of the flock, then I will not presume to reprove his expenses. But where this cannot be proved, do not let the practice be justified. And I must further say that this poverty is not so intolerable and dangerous a thing as it is pretended to be. If you have but food and clothing, must you not be content with them? And what would you have more than what may fit you for the work of God? It is not "being clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day," that is necessary for this end. "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses." If your clothing is warm, and your food is wholesome, you may be as well-supported by it to do God service as if you had the fullest satisfaction of your flesh. A patched coat may be warm, and bread and water are wholesome food. Someone who does not want these, has a poor excuse to risk men's souls so that he may live on dainties.

But, while it is our duty to take heed to all the flock, we must pay special attention to some classes of people in particular. This is imperfectly understood by many, and therefore I will dwell upon it a little.

1. We must labor, in a special way, for the conversion of the unconverted. The work of conversion is the first and great thing that we must drive at; we must labor at it with all our might. Alas! The misery of the unconverted is so great, that it calls loudest to us for compassion. If a truly converted sinner falls, it will only be into sin, which will be pardoned, and it does not put him at that same risk of damnation as others. It not that God does not hate their sins as much as the sins of others, or that he will bring them to heaven to let them live wickedly; but the spirit that is within them will not allow them to live wickedly, nor to sin as the ungodly do. But with the unconverted, it is far otherwise. They "are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," and have still have no part or fellowship in the pardon of their sins, or in the hope of glory. Therefore, we have a work of greater necessity towards them, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified." Someone who sees one man sick of a mortal disease, and another only pained with the toothache, will be moved with more compassion towards the former than the latter; he will surely be quicker to help him, even though he is a stranger and the other a brother or a son. It is so sad a case to see men in a state of damnation in which, if they should die, they are lost forever, that I think we should not be able to leave them alone, either in public or private, whatever other work we may have to do. I confess, I am frequently forced to neglect what would further increase knowledge in the godly, because of the lamentable necessity of the unconverted. Who is able to talk of controversies, or of nice but unnecessary points, or even of truths of a lower degree of necessity, however excellent they may be, while he sees a company of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before his eyes, men who must be changed or damned? I think I even see them entering their final woe! I think I hear them crying out for help, for speediest help! Their misery speaks louder, because they do not have hearts to ask for themselves. I have known many a time that I had some who would listen to fantasies, look for rarities, and were addicted to ignoring the ministry, unless I told them something extraordinary; and yet I could not find it in my heart to turn from the needs of the impenitent to humor them; I would not leave speaking to miserable sinners for their salvation, in order to speak to those seeking novelties, or even to weak saints, even though it was for their confirmation and increase in grace. I think, as Paul's "spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the Athenians wholly given to idolatry,"16 so it should throw us into one of his paroxysms,17 to see so many men in the utmost danger of being eternally undone. I think if, by faith, we indeed saw them within a step of hell, it would untie our tongues more effectually than danger untied the tongue of Croesus' son.18 One who would let a sinner go down to hell for want of speaking to him, cares less for souls than the Redeemer of souls; and less for his neighbor than common charity would demand for his greatest enemy. O, therefore, brothers, whomever you neglect, do not neglect the most miserable! Whatever else you may pass over, do not forget poor souls who are under the condemnation and curse of the law, and who every hour may expect the infernal execution19 unless a speedy change prevents it. O call after the impenitent, and ply20 this great work of converting souls, whatever else you leave undone.

2. We must be ready to give advice to inquirers, who come to us with cases of conscience; especially the great case which the Jews put to Peter, and the jailer to Paul and Silas, "What must we do to be saved?" A minister is not to be merely a public preacher, but to be known as a counselor for their souls, just as the physician is for their bodies, and the lawyer for their estates. Each man who is in doubts and difficulties, may bring his case to him for resolution, just as Nicodemus came to Christ, and as the people of old usually went to the priest, "whose lips must keep knowledge, and from whose mouth they must ask the law, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." But because the people have become unacquainted with this office of the ministry, and with their own duty and necessity in this respect, it belongs to us to acquaint them with it, and to publicly to press them to come to us for advice about the great concerns of their souls. We must not only be willing to take the trouble, but we should draw it upon ourselves by inviting them to come. What an abundance of good might we do if we could only bring them to this! And, doubtless, much might be done by it if we did our duty. How few I ever heard of who heartily pressed their people to their duty in this way! Oh! It is a sad case that men's souls should be so injured and placed at risk by the total neglect of so great a duty, and that ministers hardly ever tell them of it, and awaken them to it. If only your listeners were duly informed of the need and importance of this, you would have them knocking at your doors more frequently, and making known to you their sad complaints, and begging

for your advice. I beg you, then, press them more to this duty for the future; and see that you perform it carefully when they do seek your help. To this end it is very necessary that you be well-acquainted with practical cases, and especially that you be acquainted with the nature of saving grace, and thus be able to assist them in testing their condition, and in resolving the main question that concerns their everlasting life, or death. One word of seasonable, prudent advice, given by a minister to people in need, may be more useful than many sermons. "A word fitly spoken," says Solomon, "how good is it!"

3. We must study to build up those who are truly converted already. In this respect, our work varies according to the various states of Christians.

(1) There are many of our flock who are young and weak, and who still have little proficiency or strength, even though long-standing Christians. This, indeed, is the most common condition of the godly. Most of them content themselves with low degrees of grace; and it is no easy matter to get them higher degrees. It is easy enough to bring them from the truth to higher and more rigid opinions of error; this they do left and right. But
to increase their knowledge and their gifts is not easy; and to increase their graces is the hardest of all.23 It is a very sad thing for Christians to be weak: it exposes us to dangers; it abates our consolations and our delight in God; it takes away the sweetness of wisdom's ways; it makes us less serviceable to God and to man, which brings less honor to our Master, and does less good to all those around us. We get small benefit in the use of the means of grace.24 We too easily play with the serpent's baits, and are ensnared by his wiles. A seducer will easily shake us: evil may appear as good to us, truth as falsehood, sin as duty, and so on. We are less able to resist and stand in an encounter; we fall sooner; we rise harder; and we are more apt to be a scandal and reproach to our profession. We know ourselves less, and are more apt to be mistaken as to our own estate, not observing corruptions when they have gained an advantage on us. We are dishonorable to the gospel by our very weakness, and of little use to those about us. In a word, though we live less profitably to ourselves or others, yet are we too unwilling and unready to die.

Now, seeing that the case of weakness in the converted is so sad, we should be diligent to cherish and increase their grace! The strength of Christians is the honor of the Church. They are to be inflamed with the love of God; and live by a lively working faith; and take lightly the profits and honors of the world; and love one another fervently with a pure heart; and bear and heartily forgive a wrong, and suffer joyfully for the cause of Christ; and study to do good, and walk inoffensively and harmlessly in the world; and ready to be servants to all men for their good; and become all things to all men in order to win them to Christ; and yet abstain from the appearance of evil, and season all their actions with a sweet mixture of prudence, humility, zeal, and heavenly mindedness – oh, when they do these things, what an honor they are to their profession! What an ornament they are to the Church; and how serviceable they are to God and man! Men would sooner believe that the gospel is from heaven, if they saw more of these effects on the hearts and lives of those who profess it. The world is better able to read the nature of religion in a man's life than in the Bible. "Those who are not persuaded by the word, may be won by the conduct" of those who are outstanding in godliness. It is therefore a most important part of our work to labor more in polishing and perfecting the saints, so that they may be strong in the Lord, and fitted for their Master's service.

(2) Another class of converts that needs our special help is those who labor under some particular corruption which stays beneath their graces, making them trouble to others, and a burden to themselves. Alas! There are too many such persons. Some are specially addicted to pride, and others to worldly-mindedness; some to sensual desires, and others to waywardness, or other evil passions. Now, it is our duty to give assistance to all these; partly we do it by dissuasions, and by clearly exposing the odiousness of the sin; and partly we do it by suitable directions about the remedy, to help them more completely conquer their corruptions. We are leaders of Christ's army against the powers of hell; we must resist all the works of darkness wherever we find them, even in the children of light. We must be no more tender toward the sins of the godly than we are of the ungodly; nor befriend or favor them any more than the ungodly. The more we love them, the more we must show it by opposing their sins. And yet we must expect to meet with some sensitive people in this, especially when iniquity has made some headway, and made a faction, and many have fallen in love with it; they will be as pettish and as impatient of reproof as some men who are worse off, and perhaps they will assert piety in their faults. But the ministers of Christ must do their duty, notwithstanding their peevishness; and must not hate their brother by forbearing rebuke, or by allowing sin to lie upon his soul. It must be done with much prudence, no doubt; yet it must be done.

(3) Another class that demands special help is declining Christians, who have either fallen into some scandalous sin, or else have abated their zeal and diligence, and show that they have lost their former love.27 As the case of backsliders is very sad, so our diligence must be very great for their recovery. It is sad for them to lose so much of their life, and peace, and serviceableness to God; and to become so serviceable to Satan and his cause. It is sad for us to see that all our labor is come to this; and that, when we have taken so many pains with them, and have had so many hopes for them, that all should be so far frustrated. It is saddest of all to think that God should be so dishonored by those whom he has so loved, and for whom he has done so much; and that Christ should be so wounded in the house of his friends. Besides that, partial backsliding has a natural tendency toward total apostasy; and it would effect it if special grace did not prevent it.

Now, the more sad the case is of such Christians, the more we must exert ourselves for their recovery. We must "restore those who are overtaken in a fault, in the spirit of gentleness,"28 and yet we must see that the sore is thoroughly examined and healed, and that the joint is well set again, whatever pain it may cost. We must look especially to the honor of the gospel, and see that they

give such evidence of true repentance, and make such a free and full confession of their sin, that thereby some reparation is made to the Church, and to their holy profession, for the wound they have given to religion. Much skill is required for restoring such a soul.

(4) The last class I will note here as requiring our attention, is the strong; for they also have need of our assistance: partly to preserve the grace they have; partly to help them in making further progress; and partly to direct them in improving their strength, for the service of Christ and the assistance of their brothers; and also to encourage them to persevere, so that they may receive the crown.

All these are the objects of the ministerial work, and in respect to each of them, we must "take heed to all the flock."

4. We must keep a special eye on families to see they are well-ordered, and that the duties of each relation are performed. The life of religion, and the welfare and glory of both the Church and the State, greatly depend on family government and duty. If we allow it to be neglected, we will undo everything. What are we likely to do ourselves in reforming a congregation, if all the work is thrown on us alone, and if heads of families neglect their own necessary duty, by which they are bound to help us? If any good is begun in some soul by the ministry, then a careless, prayerless, worldly family is likely to stifle it, or very much hinder it; whereas, if you could only get the rulers of families to do their duty, taking up the work where you left it and helping it on, then what an abundance of good might be done! I beg you, therefore, if you desire the reformation and welfare of your people, do all you can to promote family religion. To this end, let me entreat you to attend to the following things:

(1) Get information about how each family is ordered, so that you may know how to proceed in your endeavors for their further good.

(2) Go among them occasionally, when they are most likely to be at leisure, and ask the head of the family whether he prays with them, and reads the Scripture, or what he does? Labor to convince those who neglect these things of their sin; and if you have an opportunity, pray with them before you go: give them an example of what you would have them do. Perhaps, too, it might do well to get a promise from them, that they will be more conscientious about their duty in the future.

(3) If you find any who, through ignorance and lack of practice, are unable to pray, then persuade them to study their own deficiencies, and get their hearts burdened with them; in the meantime, advise them to use rote prayer, rather than not pray at all. Tell them, however, that it is to their sin and shame that they have lived so negligently as to be unacquainted with their own needs, and do not know how to speak to God in prayer, when every beggar can find words to ask for alms. Therefore, rote prayer is only done out of necessity, like a crutch is given to a cripple only as long they cannot do well without it; but they must resolve not to be content with it, but to learn to do better as quickly as possible, since prayer should come from the feelings of the heart, and vary according to our needs and circumstances.

(4) See that in every family there are some useful and moving books, besides the Bible. If they have none, persuade them to buy some: if they are not able to buy them, give them some, if you can. If you are not able yourself, get some gentlemen, or other rich persons who are ready to good works, to do it. And engage them to read them at night, when they have leisure, and especially on the Lord's Day.

(5) Direct them how to spend the Lord's day; how to finish their worldly business in a timely manner so as to prevent encumbrances and distractions; and when they have been at church, how to spend the time in their families. The life of religion greatly depends on this, because poor people have no other free time; and, therefore, if they lose this, they lose everything; they will remain ignorant and fleshly. Persuade the head of every family to make his children and servants repeat the Catechism to him every Sabbath evening, and give him some account of what they have heard at church during the day. I beg you, do not neglect this important part of your work. Get heads of families to do their duty, and they will not only spare you a great deal of labor, but they will greatly further the success of your labors. If a captain can get the officers under him to do their duty, he may rule the soldiers with much less trouble than if all is laid on his own shoulders. You are not likely to see any general reformation until you procure family reformation. There may be a little religion here and there; but while it is confined to individuals and not promoted in families, it will not prosper, nor will it promise much future increase.

5. We must be diligent in visiting the sick, and helping them prepare either for a fruitful life, or a happy death. Though this should be the business of our whole life and theirs, yet at such a time it requires extraordinary care of both them and us. When time is almost gone, and they must be reconciled to God, now or never, oh, how it concerns them to redeem those hours, and to lay hold on eternal life! And when we see that we are likely to have but a few days or hours more to speak to them of their everlasting welfare, who but a blockhead or an infidel would not be with them extensively, and do all he can for their salvation in that short space of time? Will it not awaken us to compassion, to look on a languishing man, and to think that within a few days his soul will be in heaven or in hell? Surely it will test the faith and seriousness of ministers to be around dying men much! They will thus have an opportunity to discern whether they themselves are in good earnest about the matters of the life to come. So great is the change that is made by death, that it should awaken us to the greatest sensibility to see a man so near it, and it should excite in us the deepest pangs of compassion, to do the office of inferior angels for the soul, before it departs from the body, so that it may be

ready for the convoy of superior angels to the "inheritance of the saints in light." When a man is almost at his journey's end, and the next step brings him to heaven or hell, it is time for us, while there is hope, to help him if we can.

And as their present necessity should move us to embrace that opportunity for their good, so should the advantage that sickness and the prospect of death affords. Even the stoutest sinners will hear us on their death-bed, even though they scorned us before. They will then let go of their fury, and be as gentle as lambs, those who were before as intractable as lions. I do not find one in ten of the most obstinate, scornful wretches in my parish, when they come to die, will not humble themselves, confess their faults, and appear penitent; and they promise, if they should recover, to reform their lives. Cyprian says to those in health, "He who reminds himself every day that he is dying, despises the present and hastens toward the things to come: much more the one who feels himself to be in the very act of dying." O how resolvedly will the worst of sinners seem to cast away their sins and promise reformation, and cry out of their folly, and of the vanity of this world, when they see that death is in good earnest with them; and away they must go without delay! Perhaps you will say that these forced changes are not sincere, and that, therefore, we have no great hope of doing them any saving good. I confess it is very common for sinners to be frightened into ineffectual purposes; but it is not so common to be converted to the Savior at such a time. Augustine remarks, "He cannot die badly who lives well; and scarcely will he die well who lives badly." Yet "scarcely" and "never" are not the same thing. It should make both them and us be more diligent in times of health, because it is "scarcely"; but still, we should rouse ourselves at the last to use the best remedies, because it is not "never".

But because I do not intend to furnish a directory for the whole ministerial work, I will not stop to tell you specifically what must be done for men in their last extremity; but I will note only three or four things especially worthy of your attention.

(1) Do not wait until their strength and understanding are gone, and the time is so short that you scarcely know what to do; but go to them as soon as you hear they are sick, whether they send for you or not.

(2) When the time is so short that there is no opportunity to instruct them in the principles of religion in an orderly way, be sure to ply the main points, and dwell on those truths most calculated to promote their conversion, showing them the glory of the life to come, and the way by which it was purchased for us, and the great sin and folly of having neglected it when they were healthy; yet the possibility remains of their obtaining it, if they will believe in Christ, the only Savior, and repent of their sins.

(3) If they recover, be sure to remind them of their promises and resolutions during their sickness. Go to them purposely to drive these home to their consciences; and whenever you see them remiss afterwards, go to them, and remind them what they said when they were stretched on a sick-bed. And because it is of such use to those who recover, and it has been the means of the conversion of many a soul, it is very necessary that you go to those whose sickness is not mortal, as well as to those who are dying, so that you may have some advantage in moving them to repentance, and so that afterward you may have this to plead against their sins. A bishop of Cologne is said to have answered the Emperor Sigismund, when he asked him what he must do to be saved, "He must be what he purposed, or promised to be, when he was last troubled with the stone and the gout."

6. We must reprove and admonish those who live offensively or impenitently. Before we bring such matters before the church, or its rulers, it is ordinarily most fit for the minister to see what he can do himself in private to bow the sinner to repentance, especially if it is not a public crime. Much skill is required here, and a difference must be made according to the various personalities of the offenders; but with most, it will be necessary to speak with the greatest plainness and power, to shake their careless hearts, and to make them see what it means to dally with sin; to let them know the evil of it, and of its sad effects as regards both God and themselves.

7. The last part of our oversight which I will note, consists in the exercise of Church discipline. This consists, after prior private reproofs, in more public reproof combined with an exhortation to repentance, in prayer for the offender, in restoring the penitent, and in excluding and avoiding the impenitent.

(1) In the case of public offenses, and even those of a more private nature, when the offender remains impenitent, he must be reproved before everyone, and again invited to repentance. This is no less our duty just because we have not been conscientious to practice it. It is not only Christ's command to tell the church, but Paul's to "rebuke before all;" and the Church constantly practiced it, until selfishness and formality caused them to be remiss in this and other duties. There is no room to doubt whether this is our duty, and there is just as little room to doubt whether we have been unfaithful to perform it. Many of us, who would be ashamed to omit preaching or praying half so much, have little considered what we were doing by living in the willful neglect of this duty, and of other parts of discipline, for as long as we have. We think little of how we have drawn the guilt of swearing, and drunkenness, and fornication, and other crimes upon our own heads, by neglecting to use the means which God has appointed to cure them.

If anyone says, "There is little likelihood that public reproof will do them good; they will instead be enraged by the shame of it", then I answer –

[a] It ill becomes a creature to plead that the ordinances of God are useless, or to reproach God's service instead of doing it, and to

set his wits in opposition to his Maker. God can render useful his own ordinances, or else he would never have appointed them.

[b] The usefulness of discipline is apparent, in shaming sin and humbling the sinner, and manifesting before all the world the holiness of Christ, and of his doctrine and Church.

[c] What will you do with such sinners? Will you give them up as hopeless? That would be more cruel than administering reproof to them. Will you use other means? All other means have supposedly been used without success; and this is the last remedy.

[d] The principal use of this public discipline is not for the offender himself, but for the Church. Its intent is to strongly deter others from like crimes, and thus keep the congregation and their worship pure. Seneca could say, "He who excuses present evils, transmits them to posterity." And elsewhere he says, "He who spares the guilty harms the good."

(2) Along with reproof, we must exhort the offender to repent, and to publicly profess it for the satisfaction of the church. As the church is bound to avoid communion with impenitent scandalous sinners when they have evidence of their sin, they must also have some evidence of their repentance; for we cannot know they are penitent without evidence; and what evidence can the church have but their profession of repentance, and afterwards their actual reformation. I confess, great prudence must be exercised in such proceedings, lest we do more hurt than good; but it requires the sort of Christian prudence that orders our duties, and suits them to their ends; it must not be carnal prudence that will enervate or exclude them. In performing this duty, we should deal humbly, even when we deal most sharply, and make it apparent that it is not from any ill will, nor any lordly disposition, nor from revenge for any injury; rather, it is a necessary duty which we cannot conscientiously neglect; and, therefore, it may be appropriate to show the people the commands of God which oblige us to do what we do, using words such as the following:

"Brothers, sin is so hateful an evil in the eyes of the most holy God, however light impenitent sinners may make of it, that he has provided the everlasting torments of hell to punish it.; no lesser means can prevent that punishment, than the sacrifice of the Son of God, applied to those who truly repent of and forsake it. And therefore God, who calls all men to repentance, has commanded us to 'exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,' (Heb 3.13); we do not hate our brother in our heart, but nonetheless, we rebuke our neighbor, and will not permit sin to continue (Lev 19.17).36 If our brother offends us, we should tell him his fault between him and us; and if he will not hear us, we should take two or three more with us; and if he will not hear them, we should tell the church; and if he will not hear the church, he must be treated as a heathen and a tax collector, (Matt 18.15-17); we must rebuke those who sin in front of everyone, so that others may fear, (1Tim 5.20); and we rebuke them with all authority: (Tit 2.15). Indeed, if it were an apostle of Christ who sinned openly, he must be reproved openly, just as Paul reproved Peter; (Gal 2.11,14); and if they will not repent, then we must avoid them, and not so much as eat with them, (2Th 3.6, 11, 12, 14 ; 1Cor 5:11-13).

For example: "Having heard of the scandalous conduct of A. B. of this church, or parish, and having received sufficient proof that he has committed the odious sin of, we have seriously dealt with him to bring him to repentance; but to the grief of our hearts, we perceive no satisfactory result of our endeavors; but he still seems to remain impenitent (or he still lives in the same sin, though he verbally professes repentance). We therefore judge it our duty to proceed to use that further remedy which Christ has commanded us to try; and so we beg him, in the name of the Lord, without further delay, to take to heart the greatness of his sin, the wrong he has done to Christ and to himself, and the scandal and grief that he has caused to others. And I earnestly beg him, for the sake of his own soul, that he consider what he can gain by his sin and impenitence, and whether it is worth the loss of everlasting life; and if he is found in this impenitent state when death snatches his soul from his body, how he thinks to stand before God in judgment, or to appear before the Lord Jesus. He will answer the contrary at the bar of God.37 And so, as a messenger of Jesus Christ, I beg him, and for the sake of his own soul, I require him, to lay aside the hardness and impenitency of his heart, and sincerely confess and lament his sin before God and this congregation. I make this desire public, not out of any ill will toward him, as the Lord knows, but in love for his soul, and in obedience to Christ, who has made it my duty; I desire that, if possible, he may be saved from his sin, and from the power of Satan, and from the everlasting wrath of God, and that he may be reconciled to God and to his church; and, therefore, that he may be humbled by true contrition, before he is humbled by a condemnation that has no remedy."

I conceive that our public admonitions should proceed in such a way. In some cases, where the sinner thinks his sin is small, it may be necessary to point out its aggravations, particularly by citing some passages of Scripture which speak of its evil and its danger.

(3) With these reproofs and exhortations, we must join the prayers of the congregation in behalf of the offender. This should be done in every case of discipline, but particularly if the offender will not be present to receive admonition, or if he gives no evidence of repentance, and shows no desire for the prayers of the congregation. In such cases especially, it would be fitting to beg the prayers of the congregation for him ourselves, entreating them to consider what a fearful condition the impenitent is in, and to have pity on a poor soul who is so blinded and hardened by sin and Satan, that he cannot pity himself; and have them think what it is like for a man to appear before the living God in such a condition. And, therefore, ask that they would join in earnest prayer to God that he would open his eyes, and soften, and humble his stubborn heart, before he is in hell and beyond remedy. Accordingly, let us be very earnest in prayer for him as well, so that the congregation may be affectionately excited to join with us; and who knows but that God may hear our prayers, and the sinner's heart may relent under them, more than it might under all our exhortations?

In my judgment, some churches take a very laudable course, having the congregation join together in earnest prayer to God for the next three days, praying for the opening of the sinner's eyes, and for the softening of his heart, and for his saving from impenitency and eternal death. If ministers would be conscientious in performing this duty entirely and self-denyingly, they might make something of it, and expect a blessing from it. But when we shrink from all that is dangerous or ungrateful in our work, and put off all that is costly or troublesome, we cannot expect any great good to be effected by such a carnal and partial use of means. Though some may be worked upon here and there, we cannot see that the gospel would operate freely and be glorified when we do our duty so lamely and so defectively.

(4) We must restore the penitent to the fellowship of the church. Just as we must not teach an offender to make light of discipline by too much pliability, so neither must we discourage him by too much severity. If he appears to be truly sensible of the sinfulness of his conduct, and penitent on account of it, we must see that he confesses his guilt, and that he promises to fly from such sins in the future, to watch more narrowly and to walk more warily, to avoid temptation, to distrust his own strength, and to rely on the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

We must assure him of the riches of God's love, and the sufficiency of Christ's blood to pardon his sins, if he believes and repents.

We must see that he begs to be restored to the communion of the church, and desires their prayers to God for his pardon and salvation.

We must charge the church to imitate Christ, in forgiving and in retaining the penitent person; or, if he was cast out, in restoring him to their communion; and that they must never reproach him with his sins, nor throw them in his face, but forgive them, even as Christ does. Finally, we must give God thanks for his recovery, and pray for his confirmation and future preservation.

(5) The last part of discipline is to exclude from the communion of the church those who remain impenitent after a sufficient trial.

Exclusion from church communion, commonly called excommunication, has various sorts or degrees, which are not to be confused; but what is most commonly practiced among us is only to remove an impenitent sinner from our communion until it pleases the Lord to give him repentance.
In this exclusion or removal, the minister or governors of the church are to authoritatively charge the people, in the name of the Lord, to have no communion with him, and to pronounce him as one whose communion the church is bound to avoid; and it is the people's duty to carefully avoid him, provided the pastor's charge does not contradict the Word of God. Nevertheless, we must pray for the repentance and restoration even of the excommunicated; and if God will give them repentance, we must gladly receive them again into the communion of the church.

I wish we were so faithful in the practice of this discipline, that we would be satisfied both with the matter and the manner of it; and that we did not disparage and reproach it by our negligence, while we write and plead for it with the highest commendations! It is worthy of us to consider who is likely to have the heavier charge about this matter at the bar of God: those who have reproached and hindered discipline by their tongues, because they did not know its nature and necessity? Or we who have so vilified it by our constant omission, while we have magnified it with our tongues? If hypocrisy is no sin, or if the knowledge of our Master's will does not aggravate our disobedience, then we may be in a better case than they.

But if these are great evils, then we must be much worse than the very persons whom we so loudly condemn. I would not advise those who zealously support discipline, and those who obstinately neglect it, to unsay all they have said until they are ready to do as they say; nor to recant their defenses of discipline, until they intend to practice it; nor to burn all the books which they have written for it, and all the records of their cost and risks for it, lest these things rise up in judgment against them, to their confusion. But I would persuade them, without any more delay, to conform their practice to these testimonies which they have given, lest the more they are proved to have commended discipline, the more they are proved to have condemned themselves for neglecting it. It has somewhat amazed me to hear some whom I took for reverend, godly divines, who reproach as a sect, the Sacramentarians38 and Disciplinarians. And, when I desired to know whom they meant, they told me they meant those who will not give the sacrament to the whole parish, and those who would make distinctions between parishioners by their discipline. I thought the tempter had obtained a great victory if he had gotten only one godly pastor of a church to neglect discipline, as if he had gotten him to neglect preaching; and much more if he had gotten him to approve of that neglect: but it seems that he has gotten some to scorn at those who perform the very duty which they neglect. I am sure that if it were well understood how much of pastoral authority and its work involves church guidance, it would also be discerned that to be against discipline is akin to being against the ministry; and to be against the ministry is akin to being absolutely against the church; and to be against the church, is akin to being absolutely against Christ. Do not blame the harshness of the inference until you can avoid it, and free yourselves from the charge of it before the Lord.

SECTION 2 – THE MANNER OF THIS OVERSIGHT

Having thus considered the nature of this oversight, we will next speak of the manner of it; not of each part distinctly, lest we be

tedious, but of the whole in general.

1. The ministerial work must be carried on purely for God and the salvation of souls, not for any private ends of our own. A wrong end makes all the work bad as being from us, however good it may be in its own nature. It is not serving God, but ourselves, if we do not do it for God, but for ourselves. Those who engage in the ministry as a common work, to make a trade of it for their worldly livelihood, will find that they have chosen a bad trade, although it is good employment. Self-denial is an absolute necessity in every Christian, but it is doubly necessary in a minister; without it, he cannot do God an hour's faithful service. Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching, if the ends are not right, are only more glorious ways to sin, hypocritically. Bernard's saying39 is commonly known:

Some desire to know merely for the sake of knowing, and that is shameful curiosity. Some desire to know so that they may sell their knowledge, and that too is shameful. Some desire to know for reputation's sake, and that is shameful vanity.

But there are some who desire to know so that they may edify others, and that is praiseworthy; And there are some who desire to know so that they may be edified themselves, and that is wise.

2. The ministerial work must be carried on diligently and laboriously, because it has such unspeakable consequences for ourselves and others. We are seeking to uphold the world, to save it from the curse of God, to perfect the creation, to attain the ends of Christ's death, to save ourselves and others from damnation, to overcome the devil and demolish his kingdom, to set up the kingdom of Christ, and to attain and help others to the kingdom of glory. And are these works to be done with a careless mind, or a lazy hand? O see then that this work is done with all your might! Study hard, for the well is deep, and our brains are willows; as Cassiodorus says: "Here the common level of knowledge is not to be the limit; here true ambition is demonstrated; the more a deep knowledge is sought after, the greater the honor in attaining it."

But especially be laborious in the practice and exercise of your knowledge. Let Paul's words ring continually in your ears, "Necessity is laid upon me; indeed, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"41 Always think to yourselves what lies on your hands: "If I do not motivate myself, Satan may prevail, and people may eternally perish, and their blood will be by my hand. By avoiding labor and suffering, I will draw on myself a thousand times more suffering than I avoid; but by present diligence, I will prepare for future blessedness." No man was ever a loser by God.

3. The ministerial work must be carried on prudently and orderly. Milk must go before strong meat; the foundation must be laid before we attempt to raise the superstructure. Children must not be dealt with as men of full stature. Men must be brought into a state of grace before we can expect the works of grace from them. The work of conversion, and repentance from dead works, and faith in Christ, must be first, and frequently, and thoroughly taught. We must not ordinarily go beyond the capacities of our people, nor teach perfection to those who have not learned the first principles of religion: for, as Gregory of Nyssa says: "We do not teach infants the deep precepts of science, but first letters, and then syllables, etc. So too the guides of the Church first propound to their hearers certain documents which are the elements; and by degrees they open to them the more perfect and mysterious matters." Therefore the Church took great pains with their catechumens before they baptized them, and would not place unpolished stones into the building.

4. Throughout the whole course of our ministry, we must insist chiefly upon the greatest, most certain, and most necessary truths, and be less frequent and more sparing with the rest. If we can just teach Christ to our people, we will teach them all. If we can get them well to heaven, they will have knowledge enough. The great and commonly acknowledged truths of religion are those that men must live by, and which are the great instruments of destroying men's sins, and raising their hearts to God. We must, therefore, ever have our people's needs before our eyes. To remember the "one thing needful"43 will take us off gaudy things and needless ornaments, and unprofitable controversies. Many other things might be desirable to know; but Christ must be known, or else our people are undone forever. I confess, I think necessity should be the great disposer of a minister's course of study and labor. If we were sufficient for everything, we might attempt everything, and take in order the whole Encyclopedia. But life is short, and we are dull- minded, and eternal things are necessary; the souls who depend on our teaching are precious. I confess, necessity has been the conductor of my studies and my life. It chooses what book I will read, and tells me when to read it, and for how long. It chooses my text, and makes my sermon, both for matter and manner, so far as I can keep out my own corruption. Though I know the constant expectation of death has been a great cause of this, yet I know no reason why the most healthy man should not make sure of the most necessary things first, considering the uncertainty and shortness of all men's lives. Xenophon thought, "there is no better teacher than necessity, which teaches all things most diligently." In studying, preaching, or laboring, who can be doing other things, if he knows that this thing must be done? Who can trifle or delay when he feels the urgent spurring of necessity? As the soldier says, "Where necessity urges us on, no lengthy discussing is needed, but speedy and strong contending;" and much more so for us, since our business is more important. Doubtless this is the best way to redeem time: to see that we do not lose an hour, because we spend it only on necessary things. This is the way to be most profitable to others, though it is not always the most pleasing and applauded; that is because, through men's frailty, Seneca says, truly, that, "We are attracted to novelties rather than to great things."

Thus it is that a preacher must often be focused on the same things, because the matters of necessity are few. We must neither fake

what is necessary, nor spend time on what is unnecessary, in order to satisfy those who are looking for novelties; though we must clothe the same truths with a grateful variety in how we deliver them. The great volumes and tedious controversies that trouble us so much, and waste our time, are usually made up of opinions more than necessary truths; for, as Ficinus says, "Necessity is contained within narrow limits; not so with opinion": and, as Gregory Nazianzen44 and Seneca often say, "Necessaries are common and obvious; it is superfluous things that we waste our time for, and labor for, and complain if we do not attain them." Ministers, therefore, must be observant of the condition of their flocks, so that they may know what is most necessary for them, both as to matter and manner; and it is usually the matter is to be regarded first, being more important than the manner in which it is delivered.

If you are to choose what authors to read yourselves, would you not rather take those who tell you what you do not know, and who speak the most necessary truths straightforwardly? Would you not rather read them, though they spoke in barbarous or unattractive language, than to read those who will most learnedly and elegantly tell you what is false or vain, and "by a great effort say nothing." I purpose to follow Augustine's counsel: "Give first place to the meaning of the Word, so that the soul is given preference over the body"; from this it follows that we seek what is true, more than we seek discerning46 discourses; just as we seek those who are sensible to be our friends, more than we seek those who are handsome. And surely, what I do in my studies for my own edification, I should do in my teaching for other men's edification. It is commonly empty, ignorant men who lack the matter and substance of true learning, who are over-scrupulous and solicitous about words and ornamentation, when the old, experienced, and most learned men abound in substantial truths, usually delivered in the plainest dress. Aristotle says the reason women are more addicted to pride in apparel than men is that, thinking they have little inward worth, they seek to make it up with outward borrowed ornaments; so is it with empty, worthless preachers, who want to be esteemed for what they are not, and have no other way to procure that esteem than outward ornamentation.

5. All our teaching must be as plain and simple as possible. This best suits a teacher's ends. One who would be understood must speak to the capacity of his hearers. Truth loves the light, and it is most beautiful when it is most naked. It is the sign of an envious enemy to hide the truth; and it is the work of a hypocrite to do this under the pretense of revealing it; and therefore painted and obscure sermons (like the painted glass in windows which keeps out the light) are too often the marks of painted hypocrites. If you would not teach men, then what are you doing in the pulpit?

If you would teach, then why do you not speak so as to be understood? I know the height of the matter may not make a man understood, even when he has studied to make it as plain as he can. But when a man purposely clouds the matter in strange words, and hides his mind from the people, those whom he pretends to instruct, he has found a way to make fools admire his profound learning, and wise men admire his folly, pride, and hypocrisy. Some men conceal their sentiments under the pretense of necessity; this is because of men's prejudices, and that they are unprepared in their common understanding to receive the truth. 47 But truth overcomes prejudice by the mere light of evidence. There is no better way to make a good cause prevail, than to make it as plainly, thoroughly, and generally known as we can. It is this light that will dispose an unprepared mind to receive the truth. It is, at best, a sign that a man has not well-digested the matter himself, if he is not able to deliver it plainly to others. I mean as plainly as the nature of the matter will bear, considering any prerequisite truths needed for the capacity to understand it; for I know that some men cannot at present understand some truths, even if you were to speak them as plainly as words can express them; even the easiest rules in grammar, most plainly taught, will not be understood by a child who is just learning his alphabet.

6. Our work must be carried on with great humility. We must carry ourselves meekly and condescendingly to all; and teach others while being ready to learn from anyone who can teach us; and so we both teach and learn at the same time; not proudly venting our own conceits, and disdaining all who in any way contradict them, as if we had attained the height of knowledge, and were destined for the chair, while other men must sit at our feet. Pride is a vice that badly fits those who must lead men in such a humble way to heaven.

Let us take heed, therefore, lest, when we have brought others there, the gate should prove too narrow for ourselves. For, as Grotius says, "Pride is born in heaven, as if unmindful that once the way to that place is closed, it is impossible for pride to return to it afterwards!" God, who thrust out a proud angel, will not entertain a proud preacher there. I think we should at least remember not to disdain the title of a Minister, though the popish priests do. It is this pride at the root, that feeds all the rest of our sins. From this flows the envy, contention, and unpeaceableness of ministers; from this flows the barriers to all reformation; all want to lead, but few will follow or concur. From this also flows the non-proficiency of too many ministers, because they are too proud to learn. Humility would teach them another lesson. I may say of ministers such as Augustine to Jerome, even of the aged among them, "Although it is more fitting for the aged to teach than to learn, it is much more fitting to learn than to be ignorant."

7. There must be a prudent mixture of severity and gentleness in both our preaching and our discipline; each must be predominant according to the quality or character of the person or matter we are dealing with. If there is no severity, then our reproofs will be ignored. If it is all severity, then we will be seen as usurpers of dominion over others, rather than those who persuade the minds of men to the truth.

8. We must be serious, earnest, and zealous in every part of our work. Our work requires greater skill, and especially greater life and zeal than any of us bring to it. It is no small matter to stand up in the face of a congregation, and to deliver a message of salvation or damnation, as from the living God, in the name of the Redeemer. It is no easy matter to speak so plainly that the most ignorant

may understand us; and so seriously that the deadest hearts may feel us; and so convincingly, that those who contradict and quibble may be silenced. The weight of our matter condemns coldness and sleepy dullness. We should see that we are well-awakened ourselves, and that our spirits are in such a plight that we may be fitted to awaken others. If our words are not sharpened, and do not pierce like nails, then they will hardly be felt by stony hearts. Speaking slightly and coldly of heavenly things is nearly as bad as saying nothing of them at all.

9. The whole of our ministry must be carried on in tender love towards our people. We must let them see that nothing pleases us except what profits them; and what does them good does us good; and that nothing troubles us more than their hurt. We must feel toward our people as a father feels toward his children: indeed, the tenderest love of a mother must not surpass ours. We must travail in birth, until Christ is formed in them. They should see that we do not care about outward things, not wealth, liberty, honor, or life, in comparison with their salvation; but along with Moses, we could even be content to have our names blotted out of the Lamb's book of life, than not to find their names there. Thus, as John says, we should be ready to "lay down our lives for the brothers,"and along with Paul, we should not count our lives so dear to us, but we may "finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus."

When the people see that you love them without feigning it, they will hear anything and bear anything from you; as Augustine says, "Love God, and do what you please." We ourselves will take all things well from someone we know loves us entirely. We will put up with a blow that is given to us in love, sooner than we will with a foul word spoken to us in malice or anger. Most men judge counsel as they judge the affection of the one who gives it, at least as to giving it a fair hearing.

Therefore, see to it that you feel a tender love towards your people in your hearts, and let them perceive it in your speech, and see it in your conduct. Let them see that you spend, and are spent, for their sakes; and that all you do is for them and not for any private ends of your own. To this end, charitable works are necessary, as far as your estate allows; for bare words will hardly convince men that you have any great love for them. But, if you are not able to give, show that you would be willing to give if you had it; and to do whatever sort of good you can. But see to it that your love is not carnal, flowing from pride, as if a suitor for yourself rather than for Christ; such a person loves because he is loved, or so that he may be loved. Take heed, therefore, that you do not ignore the sins of your people under a pretense of love, for that would cross the nature and the end of love. Friendship must be cemented by piety. A wicked man cannot be a true friend; and, if you befriend their wickedness, you show that you are wicked yourselves. You cannot pretend to love them if you favor their sins, and do not seek their salvation. By favoring their sins, you show your enmity to God; and then how can you love your brother? If you are their best friends, then help them against their worst enemies. And do not think that all sharpness is inconsistent with love: parents correct their children; God himself "chastens every son whom he receives." Augustine says, "It is better to love even when accompanied by severity, than to mislead by excessive lenience."

10. We must carry on our work with patience. We must bear with many abuses and injuries from those to whom we seek to do good. When we have studied for them, and prayed for them, and exhorted them, and begged them with all earnestness and humility, and given them what we were able to give, and tended them as if they had been our children, we must expect that many of them will repay us with scorn and hatred and contempt, and consider us their enemies, because we "tell them the truth." Now, we must endure all this patiently, and we must keep doing good without becoming weary, "in meekness instructing those who oppose you, that God may perhaps give them repentance to acknowledge the truth."5We have to deal with distraught men who will fly in the face of their physician, but we must not, therefore, neglect their cure. One who would be driven away from a frantic patient by foul words is unworthy to be a physician. Yet, unfortunately, when sinners reproach and slander us for our love, and are more ready to spit in our faces than thank us for our advice, what venom there will be in us, and how the remnants
of old Adam (pride and passion) will struggle against the meekness and patience of the new man! And how sadly many ministers come off under such trials!

11. All our work must be managed reverently, as befits those who believe the presence of God, and do not use holy things as if they were common. Reverence is that affection of the soul which proceeds from deep apprehensions of God; it indicates a mind that is very conversant with him. Manifesting irreverence in the things of God manifests hypocrisy; it shows that the heart does not agree with the tongue. I do not know how it is with others, but the most reverent preacher, who speaks as if he saw the face of God, affects my heart more, even though speaking with common words, than an irreverent man will affect it with the most exquisite preparations. Indeed, even though he wails it out with seeming earnestness, if reverence does not accompany his fervency, it will have little effect. Of all the preaching in the world, (which does not speak stark lies) I hate that preaching which tends to make the hearers laugh, or to move their minds with tickling levity, and affects them as stage-plays used to do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence for the name of God. Jerome says, "Teach in your church, not to get the applause of the people, but to set in motion the groan; the tears of the hearers are your praises." The more of God that appears in our duties, the more authority they will have with men. We should, as it were, suppose that we had seen the throne of God, and the millions of glorious angels attending him, so that we may be awed with his majesty when we draw near him in holy things; otherwise, we may profane them, and take his name in vain.

12. All our work must be done spiritually, as it should be by men who are possessed of the Holy Ghost. There is in some men's preaching a spiritual strain of music which spiritual hearers can discern and relish; while in other men's preaching, this sacred

quality is so lacking that, even when they speak of spiritual things, the manner in which they do it is as if they were speaking of common matters. Our evidence and our illustrations of divine truth must also be spiritual, drawn from the Holy Scriptures rather than from the writings of men. The wisdom of the world must not be magnified against the wisdom of God; philosophy must be taught to stoop and serve, while faith bears the main sway. Great scholars in Aristotle's school must take heed of glorying too much in their master, and despising those who are below them; otherwise, they may prove themselves lower in the school of Christ, and "least in the kingdom of God," though they would be great in the eyes of men. The wisest of them would glory in nothing but the cross of Christ, and be determined to know nothing but Him crucified.

And those who are so confident that Aristotle is in hell, should not rely on him too much as their guide in the way to heaven. It is an excellent memorandum that Gregory has left us: "God in the first place gathers together the unlearned; afterwards the wise ones. And he does not make fishermen of orators, but produces orators of fishermen." The most learned men should think of this.

Let all writers have their due esteem, but compare none of them with the Word of God. We will not refuse their service, but we must abhor them as rivals or competitors. It is the sign of a disaffected heart that it loses the relish of Scripture excellence. For in a spiritual heart, there is a natural affinity to the Word of God, because this is the seed which regenerated him. The Word is that seal which made all the holy impressions that are in the hearts of true believers, and stamped the image of God upon them; and, therefore, they must be like that Word, and highly esteem it as long as they live.

13. If you would prosper in your work, be sure to keep up earnest desires and expectations of success. If your hearts are not set on the outcome of your labors, and you do not long to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and you do not study and preach in hope, then you are not likely to see much success. It is a sign of a false, self-seeking heart, that a preacher can still be content to do his work, and yet see no fruit of his labor. Thus I have observed that God seldom blesses anyone's work so much as the man whose heart is set upon its success. Let it be the trait of a Judas to have more regard for the moneybag than for his work; and not to care much for what they only pretend to care about; and to think that if they have their salaries, and the love and commendations of their people, then they have enough to satisfy them. But let all those who preach for Christ, and men's salvation, be unsatisfied until they have obtained the thing they preach for. Someone who is indifferent whether he obtains them, and is not grieved when he misses them, and does not rejoice when he can see the desired outcome, never had the right ends of a preacher. When a man only studies what to say and how to say it, commending it, but just to spend the hour, without expecting anything more afterward, except to know what people think of his abilities – and he thus holds on from year to year – then I must think that this man preaches for himself and not for Christ, even when he preaches Christ, however excellently he may seem to do it. No wise or charitable physician can be content to constantly give medicine, but see no change among his patients, except to have them all die at his hands: nor will any wise and honest schoolmaster be content to continue teaching, even though his scholars do not profit by his instructions. Both of them should instead be weary of their employment.

I know that a faithful minister may be comforted when he lacks success; and "though Israel be not gathered, our reward is with the Lord," and our acceptance is not according to the fruit, but according to our labor. But then, the one who does not long for the success of his labors can have none of this comfort, because he was not a faithful laborer. What I say is only for those who are set upon the end, and grieved if they miss it. Nor is this the full comfort we must desire, but only the part that may quiet us, even though we miss the rest. What if God will accept a physician, even though the patient dies? He must, notwithstanding that acceptance, work in compassion, and long for a better outcome, and be sorry if he misses it. For it is not merely our own reward that we labor for, but other men's salvation. I confess, for my part, I marvel at some ancient reverend men who have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years with an unprofitable people, among whom they have scarcely been able to discern any fruits of their labors, and how they can continue among them with so much patience,. Were it my case, even though I dare not leave the vineyard or quit my calling, I would still suspect that it may be God's will that I go somewhere else, and that another should come in my place who might be better fitted for them; I would not be easily satisfied to spend my days in such a manner.

14. Our whole work must be carried on under a deep sense of our own insufficiency, and of our entire dependence on Christ. We must go for light, and life, and strength to him who sends us on the work. And when we feel our own faith is weak, and our hearts are dull, and unsuitable to so great a work as we have to do, we must have recourse to go to him, and say, "Lord, will you send me with such an unbelieving heart to persuade others to believe? Must I daily plead with sinners about everlasting life and everlasting death, and yet have no more belief or feeling of these weighty things myself? O, do not send me naked and unprovisioned to the work; but, just as you command me to do it, furnish me with a spirit suitable for it." Prayer must carry on our work as well as preaching: someone who does not preach heartily to his people, does not pray earnestly for them either. If we do not prevail with God to give them faith and repentance, then we will never prevail with them to believe and repent. When our own hearts are so far out of order, and theirs are so far out of order, if we do not prevail with God to mend and help them, then we are likely to have only unsuccessful work.

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

wounded; they must flee from being the leaders in making divisions among us; instead, they must take it as a principal part of their work to prevent and heal them. Day and night they should bend their studies to find means to close such breaches. They must not only respond to motions for unity, but propound them and prosecute them; not only should they entertain an offered peace, but even pursue it when it flees from them. They must, therefore, keep close to the ancient simplicity of the Christian faith, and to the foundation and the center of catholic unity. They must abhor the arrogance of those who frame new mechanisms to rack and tear the Church of Christ under a pretense of obviating errors and maintaining the truth.

The sufficiency of Scripture must be maintained, and nothing beyond it must be imposed on others. And if Papists or others ask us for the standard and the rule of our religion, then it is the Bible that we must show them, rather than any confessions of churches, or writings of men. We must learn to distinguish between certainties and uncertainties, necessaries and unnecessaries, universal truths and private opinions; and to lay the stress of the Church's peace upon the former, not upon the latter. We must avoid the typical confusion of those who do not distinguish between verbal and real errors, and who hate that "madness formerly among theologians", speaking of those who tear apart their brothers as heretics before they understand them. And we must learn to see the true state of controversies, and reduce them to the very point where the difference lies, and not make them seem greater than they are. Instead of quarrelling with our brothers, we must combine against our common adversaries. All ministers must associate with each other and have communion, correspondence, and constant meetings to these ends. Smaller differences of judgment are not to interrupt them. They must do as much of the work of God as they can in unity and concord, which is the proper use of synods; they do not exist to rule over one another and make laws, but to avoid misunderstandings, and to consult for mutual edification, and to maintain love and communion, and to go on unanimously in the work that God has already commanded us. Had the ministers of the gospel been men of peace, and of catholic rather than factious spirits, the Church of Christ would not have been in the situation it is now in. The nations of Lutherans and Calvinists abroad, and the differing parties here at home, would not have been plotting the subversion of one another; nor would they have remained at a distance and in uncharitable bitterness; nor would they have strengthened the common enemy, and hindered the building and prosperity of the Church, as they have done.

SECTION 3 – MOTIVES TO THE OVERSIGHT OF THE FLOCK

Having considered the manner in which we are to take heed to the flock, I will now proceed to lay before you some motives for this oversight; and here I will confine myself to those contained in my text.

1. The first consideration which the text suggests to us, is drawn from our relationship to the flock: we are overseers of it.

(1) The nature of our office requires us to "take heed to the flock." What else are we overseers for? "Bishop" is a title which intimates more of "labor than of honor," says Polydore Virgil.68 To be a bishop or pastor is not to be an idol for the people to bow to, nor to be idle "slow bellies," living for our fleshly delight and ease; but it is to guide sinners to heaven. It is a sad case that men should belong to a calling of which they do not know the nature, and that they undertake what they do not know. Do these men consider what they have undertaken, who live in ease and pleasure, and have time to take their extravagant recreations, and to spend an hour or more in loitering, or in meaningless conversations, when so much work depends upon their hands? Brothers, do you consider what you have taken upon yourselves? Why, you have undertaken the conduct, under Christ, of a band of his soldiers "against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places." You must lead them on to the sharpest conflicts; you must acquaint them with the enemies' stratagems and assaults; you must watch yourselves, and keep them watching. If you miscarry, then both they and you may perish. You have a subtle enemy, and therefore you must be wise. You have a vigilant enemy, and therefore you must be vigilant. You have a malicious and violent and unwearied enemy, and therefore you must be resolute, courageous, and indefatigable. You are in a crowd of enemies, encompassed by them on every side, and if you heed one and not all, you will quickly fall. Oh, what a world of work you have to do! If you had only one ignorant old man or woman to teach, what a hard task would it be, even if they were be willing to learn! But if they are as unwilling as they are ignorant, then how much more difficult it will prove to be! But to have a multitude of ignorant persons, as most of us have, what work it makes for us! What a pitiful life it is to have to reason with men that have almost lost the use of reason, and to argue with those who neither understand themselves nor you! O brothers, what a world of wickedness we have to contend against in one soul; and what a number of these worlds! And when you think you have accomplished something, you have only left the seed among the fowls of the air;71 wicked men are at their side to rise up and contradict all you have said. You speak just once to sinners for the ten or twenty times that the emissaries of Satan speak to them.

Moreover, how easily the business and the cares of the world choke the seed which you have sown. If the truth had no enemy but what is in sinners themselves, how easily a frozen and carnal heart would extinguish those sparks which you have been so long in kindling! Indeed, for lack of fuel and further help, they will go out by themselves. And when you think your work happily succeeds, and you have seen men confessing their sins and promising reformation, and living as new creatures and zealous converts, alas, after

all this, they may yet prove to be unsound and false at heart, and have changed only superficially: they have taken up new opinions, and keep new company, but without a new heart. After some considerable change, O how many, are deceived by the profits and the honors of the world, and are again entangled by their former lusts! How many only exchange a disgraceful way of flesh-pleasing, for a way that is less dishonorable, and

does not make so great a noise in their consciences! How many grow proud before they acquire a thorough knowledge of religion; and being confident in the strength of their unfurnished intellects, they greedily snatch at every error that is presented to them under the name of truth. Like chickens that straggle away from the hen, they are carried away by that infernal kite , while they proudly despise the guidance and advice of those whom Christ has set over them for their safety!

O brothers, what a field of work there is before us! There is not a person you see that will not make work for you. In the saints themselves, how soon the Christian graces languish if you neglect them; and how easily they are drawn into sinful ways, to the dishonor of the gospel, and to their own loss and sorrow! If this is the work of a minister, you may see by this what a life he has to lead. Let us then be up and doing it with all our might; difficulties must vitalize rather than discourage us in so necessary a work. If we cannot do it all, then let us do what we can. For, if we neglect it, woe to us and to the souls committed to our care! If we should pass over all these other duties, and, think to prove ourselves faithful ministers only by offering a plausible sermon, and to put off God and man with such a shell and a vizor74 , then our reward will prove as superficial as our work.

(2) Consider that it is by your own voluntary undertaking and engagement that all this work is laid upon you. No man forced you to be overseers of the Church. And does not common honesty bind you to be true to your trust?

(3) Consider that you have the honor, to encourage you in the labor. And a great honor it is to be the ambassadors of God, and to be the instruments of men's conversion, to "save their souls from death, and to cover a multitude of sins."The honor, indeed, only attends the work. Therefore, to do as the prelates of the Church in all ages have done, which is to strive for precedence and fill the world with contentions about the dignity and superiority of their seats, shows that we have largely forgotten the nature of the office which we have undertaken. I seldom see ministers strive so furiously for pre-eminence, if they will first go to a poor man's cottage to teach him and his family the way to heaven; or will first endeavor for the conversion of a sinner, or will first become the servant of all. It is strange that, notwithstanding all the plain statements of Christ, men will not understand the nature of their office! If they did, would they strive to be the pastor of a whole county and more, when there are so many thousands of poor sinners in it who cry out for help, and these pastors are neither able nor willing to relieve them? Would they patiently live in the same house with profane people, and not seriously and incessantly pursue them for their conversion? And would they want to have the name and honor of the work of a whole county, if they are unable to do all the work of a parish? The honor is only an appendage of the work. Is it names and honor, or is it the work and its end that they desire? Oh! If they would faithfully, humbly, and self-denyingly lay themselves out for Christ and for his Church, and never think of titles and reputation, then they would have honor, whether they wanted it or not; but by gaping after it, they lose it: for, this is the case of virtue's shadow: "What follows, I flee from; what flees, I follow after."

(4) Consider that you have many other excellent privileges of the ministerial office to encourage you to do the work. Therefore, if you will not do the work, you have nothing to do with its privileges. You earn your living by other men's labors. This is done for your work, so that you may not be taken from it; but instead, as Paul requires, you may "give yourselves wholly to these things;" then you will not be forced to neglect men's souls while providing for your own bodies. Either do the work, then, or do not take the income. But you have far greater privileges than this. Is it nothing to be brought up in learning, when others are brought up in the use of the cart and plow? And to be furnished with so much delightful knowledge, when the world lies in ignorance? Is it nothing to converse with learned men, and to talk of high and glorious things, when others must converse mostly with the vulgar and illiterate? But especially, what an excellent privilege it is to live in studying and preaching Christ! To be continually searching into his mysteries, or feeding on them! To be employed daily in the consideration of the blessed nature, works, and ways of God! Others are glad to have the leisure of the Lord's Day, and now and then to have another hour when they can lay hold of it. But we may keep a continual Sabbath. We may do almost nothing else except study and talk of God and glory, and engage in acts of prayer and praise, and drink in his sacred, saving truths. Our employment is all high and spiritual. Whether we are alone, or in company, our business is for another world. O that our hearts were more attuned to this work! What a blessed, joyful life we would then live! How sweet our study would be to us! How pleasant the pulpit would be! And what delight our discussions about spiritual and eternal things would afford us! To live among such excellent helps as our libraries afford, to have so many silent and wise companions whenever we please – all these and many other privileges of the ministry speak to our unwearied diligence in the work.

(5) By your work you are related to Christ, as well as to the flock. You are the stewards of his mysteries, and the rulers of his household; he that entrusted you with these things, will maintain you in his work. But then, "it is required of a steward that he is found faithful."76 Be true to him, and never doubt that he will be true to you. If you feed his flock, he will sooner feed you than Elijah, than leave you in want. If you are in prison, he will open the doors; but then you must relieve imprisoned souls. He will give you "a tongue and wisdom that no enemy will be able to resist,"77 but then you must use it faithfully for him. If you will put out your hand to relieve the distressed, he will wither the hand that is stretched out against you. The ministers of England, I am sure, may know this largely by experience. Many a time God has rescued them from the jaws of the devourer. Oh, the admirable preservations and deliverances that they have had from cruel Papists, from tyrannical persecutors, and from misguided, impassioned men! Consider, brothers, why it is that God has done all this. Is it for you, or for his Church? What are you to him, more than other men, except for his work and for the sake of his people? Are you angels? Is your flesh formed of better clay than your neighbors? Are you not of the same generation of sinners, who need his grace as much as they do? Get up then, and work as the redeemed of the Lord, as those who are purposely rescued from ruin for his service. If you believe that God has rescued you

for himself, then live for him, as being unreservedly his, the one who has delivered you!

2. The second motive in the text is drawn from the efficient cause of this relationship. It is the Holy Ghost that has made us overseers of his Church. Therefore, we are required to take heed to it. The Holy Ghost makes men bishops or overseers of the Church in three separate respects: By qualifying them for the office; by directing those who ordain them to discern their qualifications, and to know who the fittest men are; and by directing the people and themselves to assign them a particular charge. All these things were done at that time in an extraordinary way, by inspiration, or at least it was very often so. The same things are done now by the ordinary way of the Spirit's assistance. But it is still the same Spirit; and men are made overseers of the Church by the Holy Ghost (when rightly called), now as well as then. Therefore, it is a strange conceit of the Papists that ordination by the hands of man is considered an absolute necessary in the ministerial office, more than the calling of the Holy Ghost. God has determined in his Word that there will be such an office, and what the work and power of that office will be, and what the qualifications will be of the sort of men who receive it. None of these things can be undone by man, or made unnecessary. God also gives men the qualifications which he requires, so that all that the Church has to do, whether pastors or people, ordainers or electors, is merely to discern and determine which men God has thus qualified, and to accept those who are so provided, and upon consent, to solemnly install them in this office. What an obligation is laid upon us, then, by our call to the work! If our commission is sent from heaven, then it is not to be disobeyed. When the apostles were called by Christ from their secular employments, they immediately left friends, and house, and trade, and everything else, and followed him. When Paul was called by the voice of Christ, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Though our call is not so immediate or extraordinary, yet it is from the same Spirit. It is not a safe course to imitate Jonah, turning our back on the commands of God. If we neglect our work, he has a spur to quicken us; if we run away from it, he has messengers enough to overtake us and bring us back, and make us do it; it is better to do it at first, than at last.

3. The third motive in the text is drawn from the dignity of the object which is committed to our charge. It is the Church of God which we must oversee – that Church for which the world is chiefly upheld, which is sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and which is the mystical body of Christ. It is that Church with which angels are present, and on which they attend as ministering spirits, whose little ones have their angels beholding the face of God in heaven. Oh what a charge it is that we have undertaken! And will we be unfaithful to it? Have we the stewardship of God's own family, and will we neglect it? Have we the conduct of those saints who will live with God forever in glory, and will we neglect them? God forbid! I beg you, brothers, let this thought awaken the negligent. You who draw back from painful, displeasing, suffering duties, and put off men's souls with ineffectual formalities, do you think that this is honorable treatment of Christ's spouse? Are the souls of men thought fit by God to see his face, and to live forever in heaven, and yet they are not worthy of your utmost cost and labor on earth? Do you think so basely of the Church of God, as if it did not deserve the best of your care and help? If you kept sheep or swine, you would scarcely let them go astray saying, "They are not worth looking after", especially if they were your own. And do you dare say so of the souls of men, of the Church of God? Christ walks among them: remember his presence, and see that you are diligent in your work. They are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him who has called them." And yet would you neglect them? What a high honor it is just to be one of them, indeed, a door-keeper in the house of God! But to be the priest of these priests, and the ruler of these kings – this is such an honor that it multiplies your obligations to be diligent and faithful in so noble an employment.

4. The last motive that is mentioned in my text, is drawn from the price that was paid for the Church which we oversee: "Which God," says the apostle, "has purchased with his own blood." Oh what an argument this is to motivate the negligent, and to condemn those who will not be motivated to their duty by it! "Oh," says one of the ancient doctors, "If Christ had only committed to my keeping one spoonful of his blood in a fragile glass, how scrupulously I would preserve it, and how careful I would be with that glass! If then he has committed to me those purchased by his blood, should I not look to my charge as carefully?" What! Sirs, will we despise the blood of Christ? Will we think it was shed for those who are not worthy of our utmost care? You may see here that it is not a little fault of which negligent pastors are guilty. As much as it lies in them, the blood of Christ would be shed in vain by them. They would lose him those souls whom he has so dearly purchased. Oh then, let us hear these arguments of Christ whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless: "Did I die for these souls, and will you not look after them? Were they worth my blood, and are they not worth your labor? Did I come down from heaven to earth, "to seek and to save what was lost;" and yet you will not go next door, or to the next street or village, to seek them? How small your humility and labor are compared to mine! I debased myself for this; but it is your honor to be employed for it. Have I done and suffered so much for their salvation, and was I willing to make you a fellow-worker with me, and yet you refuse to do that little task which relies on your hands?" Every time we look at our congregations, let us believingly remember that they are the purchase of Christ's blood, and therefore they should be regarded by us with the deepest interest, and the most tender affection. Oh, think what a confusion it will be to a negligent minister, at the last day, to have this blood of the Son of God pleaded against him; and for Christ to say, "It was the purchase of my blood which you made so light of, and yet you think to be saved by it yourself?" O brothers, seeing that Christ will bring his blood to plead with us, let it plead us to our duty, lest it plead us to damnation.

I have now finished with the motives which I find in the text itself. There are many more that might be gathered from the rest of this exhortation of the apostle, but we must not stay to take it all in. If the Lord drove home only these few motives upon our hearts, I do not doubt that we will see reason to mend our pace; and the change will be such on our hearts and in our ministry, that we and our congregations will have cause to bless God for it. I know I am unworthy myself to be your monitor; but a monitor you must

have; and it is better for us to hear of our sin and our duty from anybody, than from nobody. Receive the admonition, and you will see no cause in the monitor's unworthiness to repent of it. But if you reject it, the unworthiest messenger may bear witness against you another day, which will then confound you.

Keep in mind that salvation, generally speaking, includes both justification (an event), and sanctification (a process). Justification proceeds from Christ's work on the cross alone. Sanctification, however, takes place within the context of the Church, under the tutelage and guidance of the overseers, using those means which God has provided. Be careful here. We are saved by faith alone, but never by a faith which is alone. Faith, which cannot be seen, produces evidence of its presence in the form of works. These works do not qualify, initiate, or sustain the work of Christ on the cross. We are not saved by the work of Christ, plus our own works. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And yet, works are the proof of our faith. If our works are weak or absent, whether through ignorance, neglect, indifference, or ineptitude, we are not eternally lost for that reason alone. Nonetheless, each of us will have to give an account of our work at the Last Day (Rom 14:12). And our works, in large part, are dependent on the effective ministry of our overseers. They equip us for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). They are our watchmen. They call us to account in this life and instruct us, so that we may do our work well. The issue Baxter raises, I think, is how much a pastor may have contributed to our malaise and sloth. That's why he must give an account for us (Heb 13:17).

Baxter is asking whether a pastor who neglects his charge, in the way he describes, is truly elect. Why else would Baxter suggest that the blood of Christ might be pleaded for his damnation? Recall Christ's words: "Away from me you evil-doers; I never knew you." (Mt 7:23) Let me ask: How do any of us prove our faith, and make our calling and election sure? (2Pet 1:10) The answer:

by our works, which flow from a changed heart. And that truth is no different for a pastor than it is for other believers: therefore work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). Each of us must live up to our calling (2Th 1:11). – WHG

CHAPTER 3 - APPLICATION

SECTION 1 – THE USE OF HUMILIATION

Reverend and dear brothers, our business here this day is to humble our souls before the Lord for our past negligence, and to implore God's assistance in our work for the time to come. Indeed, we can scarcely expect the latter without the former. If God will help us in our future duty, he will first humble us for our past sin. Someone who does not have a great sense of his faults so as to sincerely lament them, will hardly have any more to reform them. The sorrow of repentance may exist without a change of heart and life; that is because an emotion may be more easily evoked than a true conversion. But the change cannot take place without some good measure of that sorrow. Indeed, we may justly begin our confessions here: it is too commonplace with us to expect something from our people, which we ourselves would seldom do or have. What pains we take to humble them, while we ourselves are unhumbled! How hard we expostulate with them to wring a few penitential tears out of them (and all too little), while our own eyes are dry! Alas! How we set them an example of hard-heartedness, while we are endeavoring to melt and soften them by our words! Oh, if we only studied half as much to affect and amend our own hearts, as we do those of our hearers, it would not be as it is with many of us! It is a great deal too little that we do for their humiliation; but I fear it is much less that some of us do for our own humiliation. Too many do something for other men's souls, while they seem to forget that they have souls of their own to regard. They convey the matter as if their part of the work lies in calling for repentance, and the hearers' lies in repenting; theirs lies in speaking with tears and sorrow, and other men's lies in weeping and sorrowing; theirs lies in decrying sin, and the people's lies in forsaking it; theirs lies in preaching duty, and the hearers' lies in practicing it.

But we find that the guides of the Church in Scripture confessed their own sins, as well as the sins of the people. Ezra confessed the sins of the priests, as well as those of the people, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God. Daniel confessed his own sin, as well as the people's sin. I think, if we consider well the duties already stated, and how imperfectly we have performed them, we do not need to hesitate answering whether we have cause for humiliation. I must say, though I condemn myself in saying it, that whoever reads just this one exhortation of Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus, and compares his life with it, must be stupid and hard-hearted if he does not melt under a sense of his neglects, and is not laid in the dust before God, and forced to bewail his great omissions, and to fly for refuge to the blood of Christ, and to his pardoning grace. I am confident, brothers, that none of you in your own judgment would approve of the libertine doctrine that decries the need for confession, contrition, and humiliation, and indeed, would do so in order to pardon sin! Is it not a pity, then, that our hearts are not as orthodox as our heads? But we have only half-learned our lesson when we simply know it and can say it. When the understanding has learned it, it is more of a chore to teach our wills and our affections, our eyes, tongues, and hands. It is a sad thing that so many of us preach our hearers asleep; but it is sadder still, if we have studied and preached ourselves asleep, and have talked so long against being hard of heart, until our own heart has grown hardened under the noise of our own reproofs.

And so that you may see that it is not a baseless sorrow that God requires of us, I will call to your remembrance our many sins, and set them in order before you, so that we may deal plainly and faithfully in a free confession of them, and so that God, who is "faithful and just, may forgive them, and cleanse us from all iniquity."1 I suppose I have your hearty consent in this; and even though I may disgrace you and others in this office, you will not be so offended by me that you will not readily subscribe to the charge, and be humble self-accusers; and I am not so inclined to justify myself from the accusation of others, that I will not also unreservedly put my name with the first in the bill of indictment. For how can a wretched sinner, one who can be charged with so many and so great transgressions, presume to justify himself before God? Or how can someone plead he is guiltless, whose conscience has so much to say against him? If I cast shame upon the ministry, it is not on the office, but on our persons, by revealing the sin which is our shame. The glory of our high employment does not convey any glory for our sin; for "sin is a reproach to any people." And whether pastors or people, it is only those who "confess and forsake their sins that will have mercy," while "he that hardens his heart will fall into mischief."

I will not undertake to enumerate the great sins that we are guilty of; therefore, passing over any particular one is not to be taken as a denial or justification of it. But I will consider it my duty to give a few instances which cry loudly for humiliation and speedy reformation.

But first I must premise it with this profession: that, notwithstanding all the faults which may now be found among us, I do not believe that England ever had so able and so faithful a ministry since it became a nation, as it has today; and I fear that few nations on earth, if any, have its like. I am sure the change has been so great within these past twelve years,4 that it is one of the greatest joys that I ever had in the world to behold it. Oh, how many congregations are now plainly and frequently taught, who lived then in great obscurity! How many able, faithful men there are now in a county, in comparison to what we had then! How graciously God has prospered the studies of many young men who were little children in the beginning of the recent troubles, so that now they crowd out most of their seniors! How many miles I would have gone in the last twenty years to have heard one of those ancient reverend divines, whose congregations have now grown thin, and their roles esteemed minor, by reason of the notable improvement of their juniors! In particular, how mercifully the Lord has dealt with this poor county of Worcester, in raising up so

many who do credit to the sacred office, and who freely and self-denyingly lay themselves out for the good of souls, being zealous and steadfast in it! I bless the Lord that has placed me in such a neighborhood where I may have the brotherly fellowship of so many able, faithful, humble, unanimous, and peaceable men. Oh that the Lord would long continue this admirable mercy to this unworthy county! And I hope I will rejoice in God while I live that the change I have lived to see here has become common in other parts: that so many hundreds of faithful men are so hard at work to save souls, despite the muttering and gnashing of teeth of the enemy; and that more are quickly springing up. I know there are some men who, being of
another mind as to church government, will be offended at my very mention of this happy alteration, and I respect their positions. But I must profess that, even if I were absolutely prelatical, if I knew my heart, I could not help but rejoice. What! Not rejoice at the prosperity of the Church, because men differ in opinion about its order? Should I shut my eyes against the mercies of the Lord? Are the souls of men so contemptible to me that I would envy them the bread of life, simply because it was broken by a hand that did not have the approval of the prelate? O that every congregation was thus supplied with its bread! But everything cannot be done at once. They had a long time to settle a corrupted ministry; and when the ignorant and the scandalous are thrown out, we cannot readily create abilities in others to replenish the supply.
We must await the time of their preparation and growth. And then, if England does not drive away the gospel by their abuses, and their willful lack of reform, and their hatred of the light, then they are likely to be the happiest nation under heaven. As for all the sects and heresies that are creeping in and troubling us daily, I do not doubt that the gospel, if managed by an able and self-denying ministry, will effectually disperse and shame them all.

But, you may say, "This is not confessing sin; it applauds those whose sins you pretend to confess." To this I answer, it is due acknowledgment of God's kindness, and it is thanksgiving for his admirable mercies. I say it so that I may not appear unthankful in confessing it, nor appear to cloud or vilify God's graces as I expose the frailties that accompany them in many of us; for many things are sadly out of order in the best of us, as will become apparent from the following particulars.

1. One of our most heinous and palpable sins is PRIDE. This sin has too large an interest in the best of us, but it is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in other men. Yet is it so prevalent in some of us, that it dictates our discourses, it chooses our company, it shapes our demeanor, and it puts the accent and emphasis on our words. It fills some men's minds with aspirations and designs: it possesses them with envious and bitter thoughts against those who stand in their light, or who eclipse their glory in any way, or hinder the growth of their reputation. Oh what a constant companion, what a tyrannical commander, what a sly, subtle, and insinuating enemy this sin of pride is! It goes with men to the draper, the mercer, and the tailor : it chooses for them their cloth, their trimming, and their fashion. Fewer ministers would style their hair and clothing according to the latest fashion, if it were not for the command of this tyrannous vice. And I wish this were all of it, or the worst of it. But, alas! How frequently it goes with us into our study, and there it sits with us and does our work! How often it chooses our subject, and, more frequently still, our words and ornaments! God commands us to be as plain as we can, so that we may inform the ignorant; and as convincing and serious as we are able, so that we may melt and change their hardened hearts. But pride stands by and contradicts everything, and produces its toys and trifles. It pollutes rather than polishes; and under a pretense of laudable flourishes, it dishonors our sermons with childish decorations: as if a prince was to be dressed in the costume of a stage-player, or a painted fool. It persuades us to paint the window, so that it may dim the light: and to say to our people things they cannot understand; to let them know we are able to speak well – but unprofitably. If we have a plain and cutting passage of Scripture, our flowery speech takes off the edge, and dulls the life of our preaching under the pretense of filing off the roughness, unevenness, and excess. When God charges us to deal with men as if for their lives, and to beg them with all the earnestness that we are able to muster, this cursed sin controls all of it, and condemns the most holy commands of God. It says to us, "What! Will you make people think you are mad? Will you make them say you are raving? Can you not speak soberly and moderately?"8 And thus pride makes many a man's sermons; and what pride makes, the devil makes; and what sermons the devil would make, and to what end, we may easily conjecture. Though the subject matter is about God, yet if the dress, and manner, and end are from Satan, then we have no great reason to expect success.

And when pride has made the sermon, it goes with us into the pulpit; it forms our tone; it animates us in the delivery; it takes us away from what may be displeasing, however necessary; and it sets us in pursuit of vain applause. In short, the sum of all this is that pride makes men, both in studying and preaching, seek themselves and deny God, when they should seek God's glory and deny themselves. When they should inquire, "What will I say, and how will I say it, to please God best, and do the most good?", it makes them ask instead, "What will I say, and how will I deliver it, to be thought a learned and able preacher, and to be applauded by all who hear me?" When the sermon is done, pride goes home with them; it makes them more eager to know whether they were applauded, than whether they prevailed to save souls. Were it not for shame, they could find it in their hearts to ask people how they liked them, and to elicit their praise. If they perceive that they are highly thought of, then they rejoice, having attained their purposes; but if they see that they are considered only weak or common men, then they are displeased, having missed the prize that they had in mind.

But even this is not all or the worst of it, if there can be worse. Oh, that it should ever be said of godly ministers, that they are intent upon popular air, and sitting high in men's estimation. Or if it should be said that they envy the talents and names of their brothers who are preferred above them, as if any praise given to another was taken from their own praise; and as if God had given them his gifts to be their personal ornaments and trappings, so that they might walk as men of great reputation in the world; and as if all his gifts to others were to be trodden down and vilified, because they stood in the way of their own honor! What! A saint, a preacher of Christ, and yet he envies someone who bears the image of Christ, and he maligns his gifts for which Christ should

receive the glory, and all because they seem to hinder his own glory. Is not every true Christian a member of the body of Christ, and, therefore he partakes of the blessings of the whole, and of each particular member of it? And does not every man owe thanks to God for his brothers' gifts, not only having himself a part in them, as the foot has the benefit of the guidance of the eye; but also because his own ends may be attained by his brother's gifts, as well as by his own? For if the glory of God and the Church's happiness are not his end, then he is not a Christian. Will any workman malign another workman because he helps him do his master's work? Yet, alas! How common this heinous crime is among the ministers of Christ! They secretly blot the reputation of those who stand in the way of their own reputation. What they cannot do plainly and openly, for fear they may be proved liars and slanderers, they do generally, and by malicious intimations; they raise suspicions where they cannot fasten accusations. And some go so far that they are unwilling to have anyone abler than themselves come into their pulpits, lest that person receive more applause than themselves. It is a fearful thing for anyone who has the least fear of God, to so envy God's gifts that he would rather his carnal hearers remain unconverted, and the drowsy remain unawakened, than their conversion and awakening come at the hands of someone preferred above him. Indeed, this cursed vice prevails so far that in a number of large congregations, which need the help of many preachers, we can rarely get two of equality to live together in love and quietness, and to unanimously carry on the work of God. They contend for precedence, unless one of them is quite below the other in some area, and is content to be less esteemed; or unless he is an assistant to the other and is ruled by him. They envy each other's influence, and they walk like strangers, with jealousy towards one another. This shames their profession, and greatly wrongs their people. I am ashamed to think that when I have been laboring to convince people of public influence and power, of the great need for more than one minister in large congregations, they tell me that two would never agree to work together. I hope the objection is unfounded for most; but it is a sad case that it would be true of any. No, some men are so far gone in pride, that when they might have an equal assistant to further the work of God, they would rather take the whole burden on themselves (even though it is more than they can bear), than to have anyone share their honor, or to have their influence diminished in the eyes of the people.

Out of pride, men also magnify their own opinions; they are as critical of anyone who differs from them in little things, as if it were the same to differ from them as from God. They expect everyone to conform to their judgment, as if they were the rulers of the Church's faith; and while we decry papal infallibility, too many of us would be popes ourselves, and have everyone submit to our determinations, as if we were infallible. It is true that modesty will not let us say that expressly. Instead, we pretend that it is only the evidence of truth, apparent in our reasons, that we expect men to yield to; it is only our zeal for the truth, and not for ourselves. But if our reasons must be accepted as valid, then so must our truth. And if our reasons are openly examined, and found to be fallacious, then we refuse to see it, because they are our reasons; and so we become angry if our fallacious reasoning is disclosed to others. We defend the cause of our errors as if anything said against them is said against us personally; and as if we were heinously injured to have our arguments thoroughly refuted, those same arguments by which we injured the truth and the souls of men. Through our pride, the matter has come to this: that if an error or a fallacious argument comes under the patronage of a reverend name (which is nothing rare), then we must allow that argument the victory and give up the truth, or else we will injure the name that patronizes it. For even though you do not attack them personally, they put themselves under all the blows by which you assault their arguments. They feel them as sensibly as if you had spoken of them, because they think it follows in the eyes of others that weak arguing is a sign of a weak man. Therefore, if you consider it your duty to shame their errors and false reasonings by revealing their nakedness, they will take it as if you shamed them personally; and so their names become a garrison or fortress for their mistakes, and the reverence of their name requires them to defend all their sayings from attack.

So haughty indeed are our spirits, that when it is the duty of anyone to reprove or contradict us, we are commonly impatient with both the matter and the manner of it. We love the man who will say as we say, and have our opinion, and promote our reputation, though in other respects he may be less worthy of our esteem. But someone who contradicts us, and differs from us, and deals plainly with us as to our miscarriages, and tells us of our faults, is somehow ungrateful. Especially in managing our public discussions, where the eyes of the world are upon us, we can scarcely endure any contradiction or plain dealing. I know that railing language is to be abhorred, and that we should be as tender with each other's reputation as our fidelity to the truth permits. But our pride makes too many of us think that all men despise us who do not admire us, indeed, who do not admire all we say, and do not subjugate their own judgments to our most obvious mistakes. We are so sensitive that a man can scarcely touch us without hurting us. We are so high-minded, that a man who is not versed in complimenting us, and skilled in flattery above the norm, can scarcely tell how to handle us. He must be so observant as to meet our expectations at every turn, not saying or neglecting anything that our haughty spirits will fasten on and take as injurious to our honor.

I confess I have often wondered how this most heinous sin can be made so light of, and thought so consistent with a holy frame of heart and life, when we proclaim far less sins are so damnable in our people? And I have wondered even more to see the difference between godly preachers and ungodly sinners in this respect. When we speak to those who are drunkards, worldly, ignorant, and unconverted, we completely disgrace them, and lay it on as plainly as we can. We tell them of their sin, shame, and misery; and we expect them not only to bear all this patiently, but to receive it all thankfully. And most with whom I deal do take it patiently. Many gross sinners will commend blunt preachers the most, and say they do not care to hear a man who will not tell them plainly of their sins. But when we speak to godly ministers against their errors or their sins, if we do not honor them and reverence them, and if we do not speak as smoothly as we are able, indeed, if we do not mix commendations with our reproofs, and if the praise does not drown all the force of the reproof or refutation, then they take it as an almost insufferable injury.

Brothers, I know this is a sad confession, but the fact that all this exists among us should be more grievous to us than being told

about it. If the evil could be hidden, I would not have disclosed it, at least not so openly, and in the view of all. But, alas! It was open to the eyes of the world long ago. We have dishonored ourselves by idolizing our honor; we print our shame, and we preach it, thus proclaiming it to the whole world. Some will think I speak with too much charity when I call such persons godly men, those in whom so great a sin prevails, and to such an extent. I know, indeed, that where it is predominant in them, and it is not hated and bewailed, and it is not greatly mortified, there can be no true godliness; and I beg every man to exercise a strict wariness, and to search his own heart. But if all are graceless who are guilty of any pride, or who are guilty of most of the fore-mentioned evidences of pride, then may the Lord be merciful to the ministers of this land, and give us another spirit quickly; for then grace is rarer than most of us supposed. Yet I must say, that I do not mean to include all the ministers of Christ in this charge.

It is spoken to the praise of Divine grace that we have some among us who are eminently known for their humility and meekness, and who are exemplary in these respects to their flocks and to their brothers. It is and it will be their glory; and it makes them truly honorable and lovely in the eyes of God and of all good men, and even in the eyes of the ungodly themselves. O that the rest of us were but such ministers! But, alas! This is not the case with all of us.

O that the Lord would lay us at his feet, in the tears of unfeigned sorrow for this sin! Brothers, may I expostulate this case a little with my own heart and yours, so that we may see the evil of our sin and be reformed! Is not pride the sin of devils – the first-born of hell? Is it not that in which Satan's image greatly consists? And is it then to be tolerated in men who are engaged against him and his kingdom, as we are? The very design of the gospel is to abase us; and the work of grace is begun and carried on in humiliation. Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction in terms to be a Christian, and not be humble. All who will be Christians must be Christ's disciples, and "come to him to learn," and the lesson which he teaches them is, to "be meek and lowly." Oh, how many precepts and admirable examples our Lord and Master has given us to this end! Can we behold him washing and wiping his servants' feet, and yet still be proud and lordly? Will he converse with the lowliest of people, and yet we avoid them as beneath our notice, and we think that only persons of wealth and honor are fit for our company? How many of us are found more often in the houses of gentlemen than in the cottages of the poor, of those who most need our help? Many of us would think it beneath us to be with the most needy and beggarly people daily, instructing them in the way of life and salvation; as if we had taken charge only of the souls of the rich!

Alas! What do we have to be proud of? Is it of our physical body? Why, is it not made of the same materials as the beasts; and will it not shortly be as loathsome and abominable as any other carcass? Is it of our graces? Why, the more proud we are of them, the less we have to be proud of. When so much of the nature of grace consists in humility, it is absurd to be proud of it! Is it of our knowledge and learning? Why, if we have any knowledge at all, we know how much reason we have to be humble; and if we know more than other men, we have more reason than they do to be humble. How little the most learned know compared to what they are ignorant of! Knowing that things are beyond your reach, and how ignorant you are, should be no great cause for pride. Do not the devils know more than you? And will you be proud of that in which the devils excel you? Our very business is to teach the great lesson of humility to our people; how unfitting it is, then, for us to be proud ourselves. We must study and preach humility; must we not also possess and practice humility? A proud preacher of humility is at least a self-condemning man. What a sad case it is, that so vile a sin is not more easily discerned by us. Instead, many who are most proud blame others for it, and yet ignore it in themselves! The world can recognize some among us who have aspirations, and seek the highest positions, and must be the rulers, and hold sway wherever they go, or else there is no living or dealing with them. In any consultations, these men do not search for truth; rather they dictate to others who perhaps are better fit to teach them. In a word, they have such arrogant and domineering spirits, that the world buzzes about it, and yet they will not see it in themselves!

Brothers, I desire to deal closely with my own heart and yours. I beg you to consider whether it will save us to speak well of the grace of humility while we do not possess it, or to speak against the sin of pride while we indulge in it? Do not many of us have cause to inquire diligently whether sincerity is consistent with the measure of pride we feel in ourselves? When we are telling the drunkard that he cannot be saved unless he becomes temperate, and the fornicator that he cannot be saved unless he becomes chaste, do we not have as great a reason, if we are proud, to say to ourselves that we cannot be saved unless we become humble? Pride, in fact, is a greater sin than drunkenness or whoredom; and humility is as necessary as sobriety and chastity. Truly, brothers, a man may just as certainly (and more slyly) hasten to hell, despite his earnest preaching of the gospel, and his seeming zeal for a holy life, as he would by way of drunkenness and filthiness. For what is holiness but being devoted to God and living for him? And what is a damnable state, but being devoted to our carnal self and living for ourselves? And does anyone live more for himself, or less for God, than the proud man? And may not pride make a preacher study for himself, and pray and preach for himself, and live for himself, even when he seems to surpass others in the work? The work, without the right principle11 and end, will not prove us upright. The work may be God's, and yet we may do it for ourselves and not for God. I confess that I feel such a continual danger on this point, that if I do not watch, I will study for myself, and preach for myself, and write for myself, rather than for Christ, and I would soon go wrong; after all, if I must condemn the sin, then I must not justify it in myself.

Consider, I beg you, brothers, what baits there are in the work of the ministry to entice a man to selfishness, even in the highest works of piety. The fame of a godly man is as great a snare as the fame of a learned man. Woe to the one who seeks the fame of godliness instead of godliness itself! "Truly I say unto you, they have their reward." When the times were all about learning and empty formalities, the temptation of the proud inclined that way. But now, through the unspeakable mercy of God, the most vital and practical preaching is now in favor, and godliness itself is in favor. And so, the temptation of the proud is to pretend to be

zealous preachers and godly men. Oh, what a fine thing is it to have the people crowding around to hear us, and to be influenced by what we say, yielding their judgments and preferences to us! What a captivating thing it is to be acclaimed as the ablest and godliest man in the country, to be famed throughout the land for the highest spiritual excellences! Alas, brothers, a little grace combined with such inducements, will serve to make you join those who would be pre-eminent in promoting the cause of Christ in the world. No, pride may do it by itself, without special grace.

Oh, therefore, be jealous of yourselves; and, amid all your studies, be sure to study humility. "The one who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." I commonly observe that almost all men, whether good or bad, loathe the proud and love the humble. But pride so denies itself that, conscious of its own deformity, it often borrows the homely dress of humility. We have all the more cause to be wary of it, because it is a sin most deeply rooted in our nature, and as unlikely as any to be fully purged from the soul.

2. We do not lay ourselves out in the work of the Lord as seriously, unreservedly, and laboriously as men of our profession and activities should. I bless the Lord that there are so many who do this work with all their might. But, alas! How imperfectly and negligently most do their work, even those we take for godly ministers! How few of us behave ourselves in our office as men who are wholly devoted to it should, as men who have consecrated all they have to that end! And because you will see my grounds for this confession, I will mention some instances of our sinful negligence.

(1) If we were duly devoted to our work, we would not be so negligent in our studies. Few men take the pains necessary to rightly inform their understanding, and to equip them for further work. Some men have no delight in their studies, but take only an hour now and then, as it if it were an unwelcome task which they are forced to undergo; and they are glad when they are out from under the yoke. Will neither the natural desire for
knowledge, nor the spiritual desire to know God and things Divine, nor the consciousness of our great ignorance and weakness, nor the sense of the weight of our ministerial work – will none of all these things keep us closer to our studies, and make us more laborious in seeking after truth? O what an abundance of things there are that a minister should understand! And what a great defect it is to be ignorant of them! And how much we will miss14 such knowledge in our work! Many ministers study only to compose their sermons and little more, when there are so many books to be read, and so many matters that we should not be unacquainted with. No, we are too negligent in the study of our sermons, gathering only a few naked truths, and not considering the most forcible expressions by which we may drive them home to men's consciences and hearts. We must study how to convince and get inside our people, and how to bring each truth alive, and not leave all this to hasty preparation , unless in cases of absolute necessity. Certainly, brothers, experience will teach you that men are not made learned or wise without hard study and unwearied labor and experience.

(2) If we were heartily devoted to our work, it would be done more vigorously, and more seriously, than it is by most of us. How few ministers preach with all their might, or speak about everlasting joys and everlasting torments in such a way as to make men believe they are passionate about it! It should make a man's heart ache to see a group of dead and drowsy sinners sitting under a minister, not hearing a word that is likely to enliven or awaken them. Alas! We speak so drowsily, and so softly, that sleepy sinners cannot hear our words. The blow falls so lightly that hard-hearted sinners cannot feel it. Most ministers will not strain their voice, stirring themselves up to speak passionately. And if they do speak loud and earnestly, few accompany it with weighty and passionate subject matter! And yet without this, the voice does little good; the people will consider it mere wailing if the content does not match the voice. It should grieve one to the heart to hear what excellent doctrine some ministers have in hand, and yet they let it die in their hands for lack of a familiar and lively application. What appropriate matter they have to convince sinners, and yet how little they make of it. And what good they might do if they would only drive it home; yet they cannot or will not do it.

O sirs, how plainly, how familiarly, how passionately, we should deliver a message of such import as ours, when the everlasting life or death of our fellowmen is involved! I think we lack nothing more than we lack this seriousness; nothing is more unsuitable to such a business than to be delicate and dull. What! Speak coldly for God, and for men's salvation? Can we really believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet we speak to them in a drowsy tone? In the name of God, brothers, labor to awaken your own hearts before you go to the pulpit, so that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners! Remember they must be awakened or damned: a sleepy preacher will hardly awaken drowsy sinners. If your words give the highest praises to the holy things of God, and yet you say them coldly, then your manner will seem to unsay the matter. It is a kind of contempt to speak of great things, especially these great things, without much affection and fervency. The manner as well as the words, must deliver them. If we are commanded, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might," then certainly preaching for men's salvation should be done with all our might. But, alas, how few there are of such men! It is only here and there, even among good ministers, that we find one who has an earnest, persuasive, and powerful way of speaking, so that the people can feel him preach when they hear him.

I am not urging you to have a constant loudness in your delivery (that will make your fervency scorned); yet see to it that you have a constant seriousness; and when the matter requires it (as it should, in the application at least), then lift up your voice, and do not spare your spirits. Speak to your people as you would to men who must be awakened, either here or in hell. Look around at them with the eye of faith, and with compassion,
and think about which state of joy or torment they must be in forever; and then, I think, it will make you earnest, and it will melt

your heart to a sense of their condition. Oh, do not speak one cold or careless word about so great a business as heaven or hell. Whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest. Truly, brothers, these are great works which you have to do, and you must not think that trifling will somehow fulfill them. You cannot break men's hearts by jesting with them, or telling them a smooth tale, or pronouncing a gaudy oration. Men will not throw away their dearest pleasures at the drowsy request of someone who does not seem to mean what he says, or to care much whether his request is granted or not. If you say that the work is God's, and he may do it by the weakest means, I answer, "It is true, he may do so"; yet his ordinary way is to work by means, and to make not only the matter, but also the manner of preaching, instrumental to the work.

With most of our listeners, the very pronunciation and tone of speech is a great point. The best matter will scarcely move them, unless it is movingly delivered. See, especially, that there is no affectation, but that you speak as familiarly to them as you would if you were talking to any of them personally. The lack of a familiar tone and expression is a great fault in most of our deliveries, and we should be very careful to amend it. When a man has a reading or reciting tone, like a school-boy saying his lesson, or repeating an oration, few are moved by anything he says. Let us, therefore, rouse ourselves up to the work of the Lord, and speak to our people as if it was for their very lives, and save them by force, "pulling them out of the fire." Satan will not be charmed out of his possession: we must lay siege to the souls of sinners, discover where his garrison is located, find out where his chief strength lies, and then lay the battery of God's ordnance against it, and work it at close quarters until a breach is made; and then do not allow them by their evasions17 to repair it again. Because we have reasonable creatures to deal with, and because they abuse their reason against the truth, we must see that all our sermons are convincing, and that we make the light of Scripture and Reason shine so bright in the faces of the ungodly that it may even force them to see, unless they willfully shut their eyes. A sermon full of mere words, if it lacks the light of evidence and the life of zeal, however neatly it might be composed, is only an image of a well-dressed carcass.

In preaching, there is a communion of souls, and a communication of something from our souls to theirs. Just as we and they have understanding and will and affections, so the bent of our endeavors must be to communicate the fullest light of evidence from our understanding to theirs, and to warm their hearts by kindling in them a holy affection by communicating it from our own. The great things which we have to commend to our hearers have reason enough on their side, and lie plainly before them in the Word of God. We should, therefore, be furnished with all kinds of evidence so that we may come like a torrent upon their understanding; and so that with our reasoning and persuasion we may pour shame on all their vain objections, knocking them all down before us, so that their souls may be forced to yield to the power of truth.

(3) If we are heartily devoted to the work of God, then why do we not pity the poor unprovided congregations around us, and take care to help them to find able ministers? And, in the mean time, why do we not go out now and then to their assistance, when the business of our particular charge allows it? A sermon given in the more ignorant places, done purposely for the work of conversion, delivered by the most lively, powerful preachers, might be a great help where constant means are lacking.

3. Another sad evidence that we have not devoted ourselves and all we have to the service of God as we ought to have done, is our prevailing regard to our worldly interests – in opposition to the interest and the work of Christ. I will manifest this with three instances:

(1) The temporizing of ministers. I do not want anyone to be contentious with those who govern them, nor to disobey any of their lawful commands. But it is not the least accusation against ministers that most of them, for worldly advantage, accommodate the party which will most likely promote their ends. If they look for secular advantages, they accommodate secular power; if they look for applause, they accommodate the Church party that is most in favor. Alas! This malady is epidemic. In Constantine's days, the Orthodox were prevalent! In Constantius' days, almost all of them became Arians. There were very few bishops who did not apostatize or betray the truth, including the very men who had been at the Council of Nicaea. Indeed when not only Liberius, but great Ossius himself fell, the man who had been the president in so many orthodox councils, what more could be expected of weaker men? Were it not for secular advantage, how would it come to pass that ministers in all countries of the world are nearly all of whichever religion is most in favor, and most consistent with their worldly interests? Among the Greeks, they are all of the Greek profession: among the Papists, they are of Athanasius. After the death of Constantius in 361, Liberius annulled the decrees of that assembly. But in 366 Liberius admitted into his communion the more moderate of the old Arian party (heretical sect). almost all Papists: in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, they are almost all Lutherans: and so it is in other countries. It would be strange that they are all "in the right" in one country, and all "in the wrong" in another, if carnal advantages did not hold much sway with men, as they engage in the search for truth. The variety of intellect, and innumerable other circumstances, would unavoidably cause a great variety of opinions on various points if it did not. But if the prince and the stream of men who are in power run one way, most ministers will agree with them to a hair, without going out of their way to search for the truth. Look how common ministers generally changed their religion with a change in prince at various times in this land! Indeed, not all of them did, as our Martyrology can attest, yet most did. And that same subservient weakness still follows us; it causes our enemies to say that reputation and preference are our religion and our reward.

(2) We mind worldly things too much, and shrink from any duties that will injure or hinder our temporal interests. How common it is for ministers to drown themselves in worldly business! Too many are just what the sectarians want us to be, who tell us that we should go to the plow and labor for our living, and preach without so much study. This is a lesson which is easily learned. Men are

not anxious to cast off supporting themselves, so that their own souls and the Church may have all their care.

And especially how common it is to neglect any duties that are likely to diminish our own estates! Are there not many, for example, who dare not, and will not, exercise discipline in their churches because it may keep the people from paying them their dues? They will not offend sinners with discipline, lest the sinners offend them in their own estates. I find money is too strong an argument for some men to rebut, who yet proclaim that "the love of money is the root of all evil," and who still make long orations about the danger of covetousness. I will say no more to them at present except this: If money was so deadly a sin in Simon Magus who offered to buy the gift of God with money, then what kind of sin is it to sell God's gift, his cause, and the souls of men for money? And what reason do we have to fear, lest our money perish with us!

(3) We are barren in works of charity, and in improving all we have for our Master's service. If worldly interest did not prevail much against the interest of Christ and the Church, then surely most ministers would be more fruitful in good works, and would lay out more of what they have for his glory.

Experience has fully proven that works of charity remove prejudice most powerfully, and they open the heart to words of piety. If men see that you are addicted to doing good, then they will more easily believe that you are good, and that what you persuade them to is good. When they see that you love them, and seek their good, they will more easily trust you. And when they see that you are not seeking the things of the world, they will suspect your intentions less, and be more easily drawn by you to seek what you seek. Oh, how much good ministers might do if they set their minds entirely on doing good, and dedicated all their faculties and substance to that end! Do not say it is a minor thing to do good to men's bodies, or that this will only win them to us and not to God; for prejudice is a great hindrance to men's conversion, and this will help to remove it. We might do men more good, if they were only willing to learn from us; and this will make them willing. Then our further diligence may profit them. I beg you, brothers, do not think that ordinary charity is what is expected from you, any more than ordinary piety is expected. You must go far beyond others in proportion to your talents. It is not enough to give a little to a poor man: others do that as well as you. But what exceptional thing do you do with your estates for your Master's service?

I know you cannot give away what you do not have; but I think all that you have should be devoted to God. I know the great objection is, "We have a wife and children to provide for: a little will not serve them at present, and we are not obligated to leave them beggars." To this I answer:

[a] There are few texts of Scripture more abused than this one from the apostle Paul: "The one who does not provide for his own, and specially for those of his own house, has denied the faith, and he is worse than an infidel." This has become a pretense for hording savings, and providing a full estate for our heirs; the apostle was only speaking against those who threw their poor relations and family onto the Church, to be maintained out of the common funds, when they were able to do it themselves. This is like someone who has a widow in his house, such as his mother or daughter, and he would prefer to have her kept by the parish, even though he has enough to support her himself. The following shows that it is present and not future provisions that the apostle is speaking about when he bids "those who have widows relieve them, and do let not the church be charged, so that it may relieve those who are indeed widows."

[b] You may educate your children as other people do, so that they may be able to gain their own livelihood by some honest trade or employment, but do not make unnecessary provisions for them. I know that your charity and care must begin at home, but it must not end there. You are bound to do the best you can to educate your children so that they will be capable of serving God the most. But you are not bound to leave them rich, nor to withhold other necessary works of charity, merely to make a larger provision for them. There must be some proportionality between the provision we make for our families, and those we make for the Church of Christ. A truly charitable, self-denying heart, that has devoted itself and all it has to God, would be the best judge of the due proportions, and it would see which expenditures are likely to do God the greatest service; and that is the way it should take.

[c] I confess I would not have men lie too long under temptations of sexual impropriety, or they will wound themselves and their profession by their falls. And yet I think it is hard that men can do nothing more to mortify the desires of the flesh than to be single, and to have none of those temptations of caring for wife and children that may hinder them from furthering their ministerial ends through charitable works. If the man who does not marry, does better than one who does, surely ministers should labor to do what is best. And if the one who can "receive this saying,"28 must receive it, then we should strive after it. This is one of the highest points of the Romish policy, which alleges that it is the duty of bishops, priests, and other religious orders not to marry. Then they will have no posterity to drain the church's revenues, nor will their families require the church's care. Instead, they can make the public cause their interest, and lay themselves out for it while they live, and leave all they have to it when they die. It is a pity that, for lack of a better reason, we can only imitate them in self-denial where possible.

[d] But for those who must marry, they should take what is needed to support themselves and their children, or support them at whatever rate their temporal means will afford, and then devote as much of the church's means to the church's service as they can.

I would put no man to extremes. But in this case, flesh and blood makes even good men so biased that they regard their duties as extremes, and they are indeed duties of very great worth and weight. But if worldly vanities did not blind us, we might see when a

public good, or greater good, called us to deny ourselves and our families. Why should we not live simpler and poorer in the world, rather than leave works undone which may be of greater use than our own plentiful provision? But we contemplate our duties with flesh and blood; and what counsel we can expect from our flesh is easily known. It will tell us that we must have a sufficient income; and thus many a pious man's income is just below the rich man's rates in the parable (Luke 16:19). If they are not clothed in the best, and "feast sumptuously every day," they think they do not have a sufficient income. A man who preaches about an immortal crown, should not pursue transitory vanity so hard. And if he preaches about having a contempt for riches, they he should deny them himself, and show it by his life. And if he preaches about self-denial and mortification of sin, then he should practice these virtues in the eyes of those to whom he preaches; at least, if he wants his doctrine believed.

All Christians are sanctified; and therefore they, and all they have, are consecrated "to the Master's use." But ministers are doubly sanctified: they are devoted to God both as Christians and as ministers. And therefore, they are doubly obligated to honor him with all they have. Oh, brothers, what an abundance of good works are set before us, and how few have our hands put to them! I know the world expects more from us than we have; but even if we cannot meet the expectations of unreasonable men, let us do what we can to meet the expectations of God, and of conscience, and of all just men. "This is the will of God: that with well-doing we should silence the ignorance of foolish men." Especially ministers who have larger incomes must be larger in doing good. I will give only one example at this time. There are some ministers who have a hundred and fifty, two hundred, or three hundred pounds a-year of salary. Their parishes are so large that they are not able to do a quarter of the ministerial work, nor do they once in a year deal personally with half their people to instruct them. And yet they will content themselves with public preaching, as if that was all that is necessary, leaving almost all the rest undone, to the everlasting danger or damnation of multitudes. They do this rather than support one or two diligent men to assist them. Or if they have an assistant, it is some young man who is poorly qualified for the work; he is not one who will faithfully and diligently watch over the flock, and afford them that personal instruction which is so necessary. If this is not serving ourselves
instead of God, and selling men's souls to have a better lifestyle in the world, then what is? I think such men should fear that, while they may be considered excellent preachers and godly ministers by men, they will be considered cruel soul-murderers by Christ; and that the cries of those souls, whom they have betrayed to damnation, will ring in their ears forever and ever. Will preaching a good sermon serve in your defense when you never again look after them, and deny them the close help that is necessary? Will it serve when you divert for your own fleshly desires, what should have provided relief for so many souls? How can you open your mouths against oppressors, when you yourselves are such great oppressors, and not only of men's bodies, but of their souls? How can you preach against unmercifulness, while you are so unmerciful? And how can you talk against unfaithful ministers, while you are so unfaithful yourselves? The sin is not small just because it is unobserved, or because it is not odious in the eyes of men, or because the people do not blame you for withholding the charity. Satan himself, who is their greatest enemy, has their consent all along in the work of their destruction. It does not reduce your sin, therefore, that you have their consent: for you may sooner receive their consent for their everlasting hurt, than you will receive it for their everlasting good.

And now, sirs, I beg you to take into consideration what has been said; and see whether this is not the great and lamentable sin of the ministers of the gospel: that they are not fully devoted to God, and do not give themselves, and all they have, to carrying on the blessed work which they have undertaken. And consider whether flesh-pleasing, and self-seeking, and seeking an interest distinct from that of Christ, make us neglect much of our duty, and make us serve God in the cheapest and most applauded part of his work, and make us withdraw from whatever would subject us to cost and suffering? Then consider whether this does not show that too many of us who seem to be heavenly, are in fact earthly, and that they mind things below, while preaching things above, and they idolize the world while they call men to deny it? As Salvian says, "No one neglects salvation more than the one who prefers something above God."32 Those who despise God, will despise their own salvation.

4. We are sadly guilty of undervaluing the unity and peace of the whole Church. Though I rarely meet with anyone who will not speak for unity and peace, or at least, anyone who will expressly speak against it, yet it is uncommon to meet someone who seriously promotes it. Too often, instead, we find men who are averse to it, and wary of it, even if they are not themselves the instruments of division. The Papists have so long abused the name of the "catholic" Church that, in opposition to them, many either leave the word out of their creeds, or they merely retain the name without understanding it, or considering its nature. Or they think it is enough to believe that there is such a "catholic" body, even though they do not behave like members of it. If the Papists idolize the Church, will we therefore deny it, disregard it, or divide it? It is a great and a common sin throughout the Christian world, to take up religion through factions. Instead of having a love and tender care for the universal Church, they confine that love and respect to a party. This is not to deny that we must prefer, in both our estimation and communion, the purer parts of the Body above the impure; and we must refuse to participate with anyone in their sins. Yet the most infirm and diseased part of the body should be pitied and assisted to the best of our power; and communion must be held, as far as it is lawful to do so; it is an urgent necessity, and not to be avoided. We must do this just as we must love those in our neighborhood who have the plague or leprosy, and afford them all the relief we can, and acknowledge our proper relationship to them, and communicate with them, even though we may not have local communion with them. In other diseases which are not so infectious, we may be with them more for their help, according to how much help they need.

Of the multitude who say they belong to the catholic Church, it is rare to meet with men of a catholic spirit. Men do not have a universal consideration of, and respect for, the whole Church; instead, they look at their own party as if it were the whole. If there are some called Lutherans, some called Calvinists, some subordinate divisions among these, and other parties among us, most of

them will pray hard for the prosperity of their own party, and rejoice and give thanks when it goes well with them. But if any other party suffers, they regard it as if it were no loss at all to the Church. If it is the smallest parcel that does not contain many of the nations or cities on earth, they are still ready to support it as if they were the whole Church, and as if whatever goes well with them, goes well with the Church. We decry the Pope as the Antichrist for including the Church under the Roman umbrella; and there is no doubt that it is an abominable schism. But, alas! How many imitate them too far, even while they reprove them! Just as the Papists foist the word "Roman" into their creed, and turn the catholic Church into the Roman Catholic church, as if there were no other catholics, and as if the Church had no larger extent than their own, so it is with many others as to their separate parties. Some want it to be the Lutheran catholic church, and some the Reformed catholic church; some the Anabaptist catholic church, and so on with some others. If they do not differ among themselves, they are little troubled by differing from others, even though they differ from almost all the Christian world. They take the peace of their party for the peace of the Church. No wonder, therefore, that they carry this peace no further.

How rare it is to meet with a man who smarts or bleeds with the Church's wounds, or sensibly takes them to heart as his own, or ever entertains thoughts of a cure! Instead, almost every party thinks that the happiness of the rest consists in turning to them; and because the rest are not of their mind, they cry, "Down with them!" They are glad to hear of their fall, thinking that is the way to the Church's rising, that is, their own church. How few there are who understand the true state of controversies between the various parties, or who understand the difference between controversies over words, and ones that are real! If those who understand were to disclose it to others, in order to correct the information and be of service, it is seen as diminishing the error, and becoming complicit in their sin. Few men grow zealous for peace until they grow old, or gain enough experience of men's spirits and principles, to better see the true state of the Church, and the various differences, than they did before. And then they begin to write their Irenicons, and many of them still exist today. If a young man in the heat of his lust and passion was judged not to be a fit auditor of moral philosophy, we may find that this same young man is zealous for peace and unity when he has grown more experienced, and may have become zealous for the very factions which opposed him in his youthful heat. Therefore, such peace-makers as these can seldom do greater good than to quiet their own consciences in the discharge of so great a duty, and to moderate some others, and save them from further guilt, and to leave behind a witness against a willful, self-conceited, and unpeaceable world.

But commonly it brings a man under suspicion, either of favoring some heresy or of abating his zeal, if he merely attempts peace-making. It is as if no zeal were needed for the fundamental truths of the Church's universal unity and peace, but only for factions, and their parochial truths. And the devil has gotten a great advantage this way by employing his own agents, the unhappy Socinians,34 who wrote so many treatises for catholic unity and peace, but for their own benefit. By such means, the enemy of peace has brought it to pass, that whoever moves for peace, is shortly under suspicion of being someone who wants peace only to indulge his own errors. It is a fearful case that heresy should gain favor by this means, as if there were no better friends to unity and peace than they are. It is also fearful that so great and necessary a duty, on which the Church's welfare so depends, should be brought into such suspicion or disgrace by heretics.

Brothers, I do not say all this without apparent reason. We have had as sad divisions among us in England, considering the piety of the persons involved, and the smallness of the reasons for our discord, as most nations under heaven have known. What most keeps us at odds is only the right form and order of Church government. Is the distance so great that Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Independent might not be well-agreed? If they were just heartily willing and forward for peace, they might; I know they might. I have spoken with some moderate men of all the parties, and I perceive, by their concessions, that it would be an easy work. If men's hearts were only sensitive to the Church's need, and sincerely touched with love toward one another, and if they would heartily set themselves to seek it, settling a safe and happy peace would be an easy work. If we could not agree in every point, we might easily narrow our differences, and at least hold communion on our agreement in the main; we could determine the safest way to manage our few and small disagreements, without danger or trouble to the Church. But is even this much done?

No, it is not done. To the shame of all our faces, let it be said: it is not done. Let each party flatter themselves now as they please, it will be recorded to the shame of the ministry of England as long as the gospel abides in the world.

And oh what heinous aggravations accompany this sin! Not since the days of the apostles, I think, have men made a greater profession of their godliness. Most of them are bound by solemn oaths and covenants for unity and reformation: they all confess the worth of peace, and most of them will preach for it, and talk for it, even while they sit still and neglect it, as if it were not worth looking after. They will read and preach on those texts that command us to "pursue peace with all men," and "as much as it lies in us to do it, live peaceably with them." And yet they are so far from following it, and doing all they possibly can for it, that many snarl at it, and malign and censure anyone who endeavors to promote it. It is as if all zeal for peace required us to abate our zeal for holiness; and as if holiness and peace were so fallen out with one another, that there is no reconciling them. And yet it has been found, by long experience, that concord is a sure friend to piety, and piety always moves toward concord. On the other hand, errors and heresies are bred by discord, just as discord is bred and fed by errors and heresies. We have seen, to our sorrow, that where the servants of God should have lived together as one – of one heart, one soul, and one mouth – and should have promoted each other's faith and holiness, and admonished and assisted each other against sin, and rejoiced together in the hope of future glory, we have, on the contrary, lived in mutual jealousies. We have drowned holy love in bitter contentions, and studied how to disgrace and undermine one another, and to increase our own parties by right or wrong. We, that were accustomed to glory about

our love to the brothers as a mark of our sincerity in the faith, have now turned it into the love of a party; and those who are against that party have more of our anger, envy, and malice, than our love.

I know this is not so with all, nor is it prevalent with any true believer; yet it is so common, that it may cause us to question the sincerity of many who are thought by themselves and others to be most sincere. And it is not just ourselves who are scorched in this flame, but we have drawn our people into it, and trained them in it, so that most of the godly in the nation have fallen into factions. They have turned much of their ancient piety into vain opinions and disputes, envy and animosity. Indeed, it was customary to think that deriding the godly was the certain mark of a graceless wretch; how few are there now who hesitate to secretly deride and slander those who are not of their opinions! A pious Prelate can reverently scorn and slander a Presbyterian; and a Presbyterian can scorn and slander an Independent; and an Independent can scorn and slander both. And, what is worst of all, is that average people take notice of all this, and not only deride us, but are hardened by us against religion; and when we try to persuade them to be religious, they see so many factions, that they do not know which one to join. They think it is just as good to belong to none at all, as to belong to any, since they are uncertain which is right. And thus, by our divisions, thousands have contempt for all religion. Many poor carnal wretches begin to think they have the better of the two, because they hold to their old formalities, when we hold to nothing. I know that some of these men are learned and reverend, and they do not intend to produce such mischievous outcomes as these. Hardening men in ignorance is not their design. But this is the thing effected. To intend well in doing ill is no rarity. Who can, in reverence to any man on earth, sit still and hold his tongue while he sees people run to their own destruction, and the souls of men undone by the contentiousness of divines for their various parties and interests? The Lord that knows my heart, knows (if I know it myself) that as I am not a member of any of these parties, so I am not speaking a word of this in a factious partiality for one party, or against another as such, and much less do I speak in anger against any person; but if I could have dared in good conscience, I would have silenced all this, for fear of giving offense to those whom I must honor.

But what am I but a servant of Christ? And what is my life worth, but to do him service? And whose favor can recompense me for the ruin of the Church? And who can be silent while souls are undone? Not I, for my part, not while God is my Master, and his word my rule; his work is my business; and the success of it, to save souls, is my end. Who can be reconciled to what is so lamentably at cross purposes to his Master's interest, and his main end in life? Nor would I have spoken any of this, had it only been in respect to my own charge where, I bless God, the sore is only small compared to what it is in many other places. But the knowledge of some neighboring congregations, and others more remote, has drawn these observations out of me. We may talk of peace, indeed, as long as we live, but we will never obtain it except by returning to apostolic simplicity. The Papists' faith is too big for all men to agree upon, or even all of their own, if they did not enforce it with arguments drawn from the fire, the halter, and the strappado.38 And many Anti-papists imitate them too far, in the tedious length of their subscribed confessions, and the novelty of what they impose, and when they go furthest from the papists in the quality of the things imposed. Once we return to the ancient simplicity of faith, then, and not until then, we will return to the ancient love and peace. I would therefore recommend to all my brothers, as the thing most necessary to the Church's peace, that they unite in necessary truths, and bear with one another in things which may be borne39 ; do not make a larger creed, and more necessities, than God has made.

To this end, let me entreat you to attend to the following things:

(1) Do not lay too great a stress upon controversial opinions, which have godly men and, especially, whole churches on both sides.

(2) Do not lay too great a stress on those controversies which ultimately lead into philosophical uncertainties; these would include some unprofitable controversies about free-will, the manner of the Spirit's operations, and the Divine decrees.

(3) Do not lay too great a stress on those controversies which are merely verbal, and which, if properly analyzed, appear to evaporate. There are far more of this sort (I say this confidently and upon certain knowledge); they make a great noise in the world, and they tear the Church more than almost anyone I ever spoke with seems to discern, or is likely to believe.

(4) Do not lay not too much stress on any point of faith which was disowned by, or unknown to the whole Church of Christ, in any age since the Scriptures were delivered to us.

(5) Much less should you lay great stress on those points of which any of the more pure or judicious ages were wholly ignorant.

(6) And least of all should you lay much stress on any point which no single age since the apostles has ever received, but rather, all commonly held the contrary as true.

I know it is said that a man may subscribe to the Scripture, and subscribe to the ancient creeds, and yet maintain his Socinianism, or other heresies. To this I answer, "So he may pass another test which your brains will contrive: and while you make a snare to catch heretics, instead of a test for the Church's communion, you will miss your intended purpose; and the heretic will break through by the slipperiness of his conscience, but the tender Christian may possibly be ensnared. And by your new creed, the Church is likely to have new divisions if you do not keep close to the words of Scripture."

The man who lives until that happy time when God heals his broken churches, will see all this that I am pleading for reduced to practice; and this moderation takes the place of new-dividing zeal, and the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is established; and all men's confessions and comments will be valued only as subservient helps, instead of being made the test of Church communion, but no further than Scripture allows. However, until the healing age comes, we cannot expect that healing truths will be entertained, because there are no healing spirits in the leaders of the Church. But when the work is to be done, the workmen will be equipped for it; and blessed will be the agents of so glorious a work.

5. Lastly, we are sadly negligent in performing our acknowledged duties: for example, church discipline. If there is any work of reformation to be set in motion, how many are there who will go no further than they are drawn! It would be good if all of us would do even that much. And when a work is likely to prove difficult and costly, how averse we are to it, and how many excuses we make to omit it! What has been more talked of, and prayed for, and contended about in England for many years past, than discipline? There are, in fact, only a few men who do not seem zealous in disputing for one side or the other; some for the Prelate's way, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Congregational. And yet, when we come to the practice of it, for all I see, we are quite agreed: most of us are for no way. It has made me wonder sometimes to look at the face of England, and to see how few congregations in the land have any semblance of discipline, and to think about the volumes that have been written about it, and how almost the entire ministry of the nation is enlisted for it. How zealously they have contended for it, and made many just outbursts against its opposers, and yet, notwithstanding all this, they will do little or nothing to exercise it. I have marvelled as to what would make them so zealous in siding with what their practice shows their hearts are against.

But I see that a zeal for disputing is more natural than a holy, obedient, practicing zeal. How many ministers are there in England who do not know their own charge, and cannot tell who its members are; who never cast out one obstinate sinner, nor brought one to public confession and to a promise of reformation, nor even admonished one publicly to call him to such repentance! But they think they have done their duty if they do not give them the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (when it is perhaps voluntarily avoided by the persons themselves). In the meantime, we leave them as stated members of our churches, (for church membership does not consist merely in partaking of the Lord's Supper, or else what are the children who have been baptized in their infancy?); and they grant them all other communion with the Church; and they do not call them to personal repentance for their sin. Is it not God's ordinance that they should be personally rebuked, and admonished, and publicly called to repentance, and be separated if they remain impenitent? If these are not our duties, then why have we made such an uproar about them in the world? If they are our duties, then why do we not practice them? Many of these sinners avoid the very hearing of the Word. The ancient discipline of the Church was stricter: the Sixth General Council at Trull ordained that, "Whoever misses three consecutive days from church, without urgent necessity, is to be excommunicated."

Brothers, I do not desire to offend any specific party, but I must say that these sins are not to be covered over with excuses, diminishments, or denials. We have long cried for discipline, and every party has cried for its particular way. Would you have people value your form of government, or would you not? No doubt you would. Now, if you would have them value it, then it must be for some excellence. Show them that excellence. What is it? In what does it consist? And if you would have them believe you, then show it to them, not merely on paper, but in practice; not simply in words, but in deeds. How can the people know the worth of discipline, without the thing itself? Is it a name and a shadow that you have made all this noise about? How can they think something is good, if it does no good? Truly, I fear we do not take the right way to maintain our cause; and that we betray it, even while we hotly dispute for it.

Speak truly. Is it not the following two things that sustain the reputation of the long-contended- for discipline among men: with the godly, it is the mere reputation of their ministers who favor it that persuades them; and with many of the ungodly, we are not executing discipline, and so they are not dissuaded from it; they find it is toothless, and not as troublesome as they expected. If our Government is to be upheld by the votes of those who would be corrected or ejected by it, and the worst men were its friends, because it is a friend to them in their ungodliness, then we will enlist the Lord against it, and he will appear as enlisted against us. Sum up all the discipline that has been practiced in an entire county, ever since it was contended for, and I doubt it would be enough to attract godly people to like it for the effects it produces. How can you wonder, if many who desire deeds and not words, who desire reformation and not merely the name "reformation," turn to separate congregations when you show them nothing but the bare name of discipline in your own? All Christians value God's ordinances; they do not think they are vain things; and therefore, they are unwilling to live without them. Discipline is not a needless thing to the Church: if you will not make a difference between the precious and the vile by discipline, then people will do it by separation. If you keep many in your churches who are notoriously ignorant, and utterly destitute of religion, and never publicly (nor, perhaps, privately) reprove them, nor call them to repentance, nor throw them out, then you need not marvel if some fearful souls run out of your churches, as they would run from a ruinous structure which they fear is ready to fall on their heads. Consider, I ask you, if you would act the same way with the sacrament as you do with discipline? Would you only show them the bread and wine, and never let them taste these memorials of their Redeemer's love? Could you expect that the mere name "sacrament" would satisfy them, or that they would like your communion? Why then should you think that they will be satisfied with the empty sound of the word "church-government"?

Besides, consider the disadvantage to your cause, in all your disputes with men of different views. If your principles are better than theirs, and their practice is better than yours, the people will suppose that the question is whether it is the name, or the thing itself, that is more desirable, the shadow or the substance; and they will think your way is a mere formality, a delusion, because

they only see you being formal in using it, or indeed, that you do not use it at all.

In what I now say, I am not speaking against your form of government, but for it; and I tell you that it is you who are against it, though you seem so earnest for it. You disgrace it more by your lack of exercising it, than you credit it by all your arguments. And you will find, before you are done, that faithfully executing it would be your strongest argument. Until then, the people will understand you as though you openly proclaimed, "We want no public admonitions, confessions, or excommunications; our way is not to do good, but to set up the bare name of government." I do not desire to spur anyone on to an unseasonable performance of this great duty. But will it never be a fit season? Would you withhold sermons and sacraments for so many years using the pretense that it is unseasonable to give them? Will you have a better season for it when you are dead? How many are dead already, before they ever did anything in this important work, even though they long prepared for it! I know that some have more discouragements and hindrances than others; but what discouragements and hindrances can excuse us from such a duty?

Besides the reasons which we have already stated, let these few be seriously considered: (1) In preaching to our people, we make a sad sign by living in the willful and continued omission of our known duty! And will we continue to do so year after year, in fact, all our days? If excuses will hide the danger of this sign, then what man will not find them out, as well as you?

(2) We plainly manifest laziness and sloth, if not unfaithfulness, in the work of Christ. I speak from experience. It was laziness that kept me from this duty for so long, and that pleaded hard against it. It is indeed a troublesome and painful work, and it calls for some self-denial, because it will bring the displeasure of the wicked upon us. But dare we prefer our carnal ease and peace, or the love and peace of wicked men, before our service to Christ our Master? Can slothful servants expect a good reward? Remember, brothers, that we of this county have promised before God, in the second article of our agreement, this: "We agree and resolve, by God's help, that so far as God makes known our duty to us, we will faithfully endeavor to discharge it, and we will not stop because of any fears or losses in our estates, or because of the frowns and displeasure of men, or because of any similar carnal inducements whatever." I pray that you study this promise, and compare your performance with it. And do not think you were ensnared by subscribing to it: for God's law laid an obligation on you to perform the very same duty before your signature did. There is nothing here except what others are bound to, as well as you.

(3) The neglect of discipline has a strong tendency to delude immortal souls, by making some think they are Christians when they are not, and permitting them to assume the character of a Christian, and not separating them from the rest by God's ordinance. It may make the scandalous think their sin is tolerable, because it is tolerated by the pastors of the church.

(4) We corrupt Christianity itself in the eyes of the world. We to make them believe that Christ is no more in favor of holiness than Satan, or that the Christian religion no more requires holiness than the false religions of the world. For if the holy and the unholy are all permitted to be sheep
of the same fold, without using any means to separate them, then we defame the Redeemer, as if he was guilty of it, and as if this was the nature of his precepts.

(5) We push some to separate from us, by permitting the worst to be uncensured in our churches, so that many honest Christians think they are obliged to withdraw from us. I have spoken with some members of the separated churches who were moderate men, and have argued with them against separation. They have assured me that they were Presbyterian minded, or had nothing to say against it; but they joined themselves to other churches out of pure necessity, thinking that discipline, being an ordinance of Christ, must be used by all who can. Therefore, they dare no longer live without it when they might have it; and they could find no Presbyterian churches which executed discipline as they prescribed it. They told me, that they separated only pro tempore, until the Presbyterians use discipline, and then they will willingly return to them again.

I confess I was sorry that such persons had any such occasion to withdraw from us. Keeping offenders from the sacrament does not excuse us from the further exercise of discipline while they remain members of our churches.

(6) We do much to bring the wrath of God upon ourselves and our congregations, and thereby destroy the fruit of our labors. If the angel of the church of Thyatira was reproved for suffering seducers in the church, we may be reproved on the same basis: for suffering open, scandalous, and impenitent sinners.

And what hindrances now keep the ministers of England from executing that discipline for which they have contended so hard? The main reason, as far as I can learn, is this:

"The difficulty of the work, and the trouble or suffering we are like to incur by it. We cannot publicly reprehend a sinner without his storming about it, and bearing us deadly malice. We can prevail with very few to make a public profession of true repentance. But if we proceed to excommunicate the others, they will be raging mad against us. If we were to deal with all the obstinate sinners in the parish as God requires us, there would be no living with them; we would be so hated of all that, just as our lives would become uncomfortable, so our labors would become unprofitable. For men will not hear us when they hate us: therefore duty ceases to be duty for us, because the hurt that would follow would be greater than the good."
These are the main reasons for not executing discipline, together with the exceeding labor that privately admonishing each

offender would cost us. Now, to all of this I answer:

[a] Are these reasons not as valid against Christianity itself, especially in some times and places, as they are against discipline? Christ did not come to bring peace on earth: We will have his peace, but not the world's peace; for he told us that the world will hate us. Might not Bradford, or Hooper, or any who were burned in Queen Mary's days, have alleged more than all this against the duty of supporting the Reformation? Might they not have said, "It will make us hated, and it will expose our very lives to the flames?" Christ concludes that someone who does not hate all that he has, including his own life, is no Christian; and yet we claim the risk of worldly loss is a reason for not doing his work!

Is it not hypocrisy to shrink from our sufferings, and to take up only safe and easy works, and make ourselves believe that the rest are not our duties? Indeed, this is the common way to escape suffering: to neglect the duty that would expose us to it. If we did our duty faithfully, we ministers would find our lot was the same among professed Christians as our predecessors found among Pagans and other infidels. But if you cannot suffer for Christ, then why did you put your hand to his plow? Why did you not first sit down and count the cost?47 This is what makes the ministerial work so unfaithfully executed: because it is so carnally undertaken. Men enter the ministry to find a life of ease, and honor, and respectability; they resolve to attain these ends, and they will get what they are looking for, whether by right or wrong. They did not look for hatred and suffering, and so they avoid it, even though they do it by avoiding their work.

[b] As for making yourselves less able to do them good by disciplining them, I answer that such an excuse is just as valid against plain preaching, reproof, or any other duty for which wicked men will hate us. God will bless his own ordinances to do them good, or else he would not have appointed such ordinances. If you publicly admonish and rebuke the scandalous, and call them to repentance, and cast out the obstinate, you may do good to many whom you reprove, and possibly to the excommunicated themselves. I am at least sure it is God's means; and it is his last means when reproofs will do no good. It is therefore perverse to neglect the last means, lest we frustrate the foregoing means, for the last means are not to be used unless all the former means were frustrated. However, those within and those outside the Church may still receive good by it, even if the offender receives none. God receives the honor when his Church is manifestly distinguished from the world, and the heirs of heaven and hell are not totally confused with one another. He does not receive it when the world is made to think that Christ and Satan only contend for superiority, and that they both have the same inclination toward holiness or sin.

[c] But still, let me tell you that there are no such difficulties in the way of discipline, nor is discipline so useless as you imagine. I bless God at the small and tardy test which I made of discipline myself. I can speak by experience that it is not in vain; nor are its risks the kind that may excuse our neglect.

I confess, if I had my way, the man who will not rule his people by discipline, should be ejected as a negligent pastor, the same as one who will not preach; for ruling, I am sure, is as essential a part of the pastor's office as preaching.

I will proceed no further in these confessions. And now, brothers, what remains except for all of us to cry "guilty!" of these fore-mentioned sins, and to humble our souls for our miscarriages before the Lord? Is this "taking heed to ourselves and to all the flock?" Is this like the pattern that is given to us in the text? If we should now prove hard-hearted and unhumbled, how sad a symptom it would be to ourselves, and to the Church! The ministry has often been threatened and maligned by many sorts of adversaries; and though this may show their impious malice toward us, yet it may also intimate God's just indignation. Believe it, brothers, that the ministry of England is not the least nor the last among the sins of the land. It is time, therefore, for us to take our part in that humiliation to which we have been calling our people for so long. If we have our wits about us, we may perceive that God has been offended with us, and that the voice that called this nation to repentance, spoke to us as well as to others. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear" the precepts of repentance that have been proclaimed in so many admirable deliverances and recordings; he that has eyes to see, let him see these precepts written in so many lines of blood. By fire and sword has God been calling us to humiliation. Just as "judgment has begun at the house of God," if humiliation does not begin there too, then it will be a sad forecaster to us and to the land.

What! Will we deny or diminish our sins while we call our people to a free and full confession? Is it not better to give glory to God by our humble confession, than to protect ourselves by looking for fig-leaves to cover our nakedness; and put it on God to build his glory (which we denied him) on the ruins of our own, which we preferred ahead of him; and to aggravate it by still worse judgments which we refused to voluntarily surrender to him? Alas! If you put it on God to get his honor as best he can, he may get it, but to your everlasting sorrow and dishonor. Sins openly committed are more dishonorable to us when we hide them, than when we confess them. It is the sin, and not the confession, that is our dishonor. We have committed them under the sun, so they cannot be hidden; and attempts to cloak them only increase our guilt and shame. There is no way to repair the breaches in our honor which our sin has made, except by free confession and humiliation. I dare not avoid confessing my own sins: and if any is offended that I have confessed theirs, let them know that I only do to them what I have done to myself. And if they dare disown the confession of their sin, let them do it at their peril. But as for all the truly humble ministers of Christ, I do not doubt that they would prefer to be provoked to lament their sins more solemnly in the face of their various congregations, and to promise reformation.

SECTION 2 – THE DUTY OF PERSONAL CATECHIZING

INSTRUCTING THE FLOCK PARTICULARLY IS RECOMMENDED

Having disclosed and lamented our miscarriages and neglects, our duty for the future lies plainly before us. God forbid that we should now continue in the sins we have confessed, as carelessly as we did before. Leaving these things, therefore, I will now proceed to exhort you to faithfully discharge the great duty which you have undertaken: namely, personal catechizing and instructing everyone in your parishes or congregations who will submit to it.

First, I will state some motives to persuade you to perform this duty. Secondly, I will answer some objections which may be made to this duty. Lastly, I will give you some directions for performing this duty.

PART I - MOTIVES TO PERFORM THIS DUTY

In line with this plan, I will proceed to state to you some motives to persuade you to perform this duty. The first group of reasons by which I will persuade you are taken from its benefits; the second group, from its difficulty; and the third group, from its necessity, and from the many obligations we are under to perform it.

ARTICLE I - MOTIVES FROM THE BENEFITS OF THE WORK

When I look before me, and consider what, through the blessing of God, this work is likely to effect if well managed, it makes my heart leap for joy. Truly, brothers, you have begun a most blessed work, one your own consciences may rejoice in, and your parishes may rejoice in, and the nation may rejoice in, and the child that is yet unborn may rejoice in. Indeed, thousands and millions, for all we know, may have cause to bless God for it, when we have finished our course. And though it is our business this day to humble ourselves for neglecting it so long (and we have good cause to do so), yet the hopes of a blessed success are so great in me, that they are ready to turn it into a day of rejoicing.

I bless the Lord that I have lived to see such a day as this, and to be present at so solemn an engagement of so many servants of Christ to commit to such a work. I bless the Lord that has honored you of this county to be the beginners and awakeners of the nation to this duty. It is not a controversial point, one with which the exasperated minds of men might pick quarrels with us; nor is it a new invention, for which envy might charge you are innovators, or pride might refuse to follow, because you led the way. No; it is a well-known duty. It is just a more diligent and effectual management of our ministerial work. It is not a new invention, but simply the restoration of the ancient ministerial work. And because it is so overflowing with advantages to the Church, I will enumerate some of the particular benefits which we may hope will result from it, so that when you see its excellence, you may be more intent upon it, and be more loath to let any negligence or failing of yours frustrate or destroy it. For certainly anyone who has the true intentions of a minister of Christ will rejoice in the appearance of any further hope of attaining the ends of his ministry; and nothing will be more welcome to him than what will further the very business of his life. I will now show you more particularly that this work is calculated to accomplish this.

1. It will be a most hopeful means of converting souls; for it unites those great things which most further such an end.

(1) As to the matter of conversion: it is about the most necessary things, the principles or essentials of the Christian faith.

(2) As to the manner of conversion: it will be by private conversation, when we may have an opportunity to drive it all home to the conscience and the heart.

The work of conversion consists of two parts: first, informing the judgment in the essential principles of religion; second, changing the will by the efficacy of the truth. Now in this work we have excellent advantages for both. For informing their understanding, it is an excellent help to have the sum of Christianity fixed in their memory. Bare words which are not understood will make no change. Yet, when the words are in plain English, someone who has them is far more likely to understand their meaning, and thus the Gospel, than someone without them. For what do we have to make invisible things known, except words or other signs? Those, therefore, who deride all catechisms as unprofitable forms of instruction, might better deride themselves for talking, and using the form of their own words, to make their minds known to others. Why would written words, which are constantly before their eyes, and in their memories, not instruct them as well as the transient words of a preacher? These “forms of sound words” are therefore far from being unprofitable, as some persons imagine; indeed, they are of admirable use to everyone. Besides, we will have the opportunity, by personal conference, to test how far people understand the catechism, and to explain it to them as we go along; and to insist on those particulars which the persons we speak to have most need to hear. A form of sound words, joined with a plain explication of them, may do more than either of them could do alone.

Moreover, we will have the best opportunity to impress the truth upon their hearts, when we can speak to each individual’s particular need, and say to the sinner, “You are the man,” and plainly speak about his particular case; we can drive home the truth with familiar importunity. If anything in the world is likely to do them good, it is this. Those who do not understand a sermon will understand familiar speech; and they will have far greater help to apply it to themselves. Besides, you will hear their objections, and know where Satan has his best advantage over them; and so you may be able to show them their errors, and confute their objections, and more effectually convince them. We can better bring them to the point of repentance, and urge them to reveal their resolutions for the future, and get them to promise to use means and reformation,
than we could otherwise do. What more proof do we need of this, than our own experience? I seldom deal with men purposely on this great business, in private, serious conference, except they go away with some seeming convictions, and promises of new obedience, if not some deeper remorse, and a sense of their condition.

O brothers, what a blow may we give to the kingdom of darkness, by the faithful and skillful management of this work! If then,

saving souls, your neighbors' souls, many souls, from everlasting misery is worth your labor, then get up and do it! If you want to be the fathers of many who are born again, and you want to "see of the travail of your souls," and want to be able to say at last, "Here am I, and the children whom you have given me" – get up and ply blessed work! If it would do your heart good to see your converts among the saints in glory, and praising the Lamb before the throne; if it would rejoice you to present them blameless and spotless to Christ, then prosecute with diligence and ardor this singular opportunity that is offered you. If you are ministers of Christ indeed, you will long for the perfecting of his body, and the gathering in of his elect; and you will "travail as in birth" until Christ is formed in the souls of your people. You will embrace those opportunities which your harvest-time affords you, and which the days of sunshine in a rainy harvest afford you, those times during which it would unreasonable and inexcusable for you to be idle. If you have a spark of Christian compassion in you, it will surely seem worth your greatest labor to save so many "souls from death, and to cover" so great "a multitude of sins."5 If, then, you are indeed fellow-workers with Christ, then set to his work, and do not neglect the souls for whom he died. O remember, when you are talking with the unconverted, that at that moment you have an opportunity to save a soul, and to rejoice the angels of heaven, and to rejoice Christ himself, to cast Satan out of a sinner, and to increase the family of God! And what is your "hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" Is it not your saved people "in the presence of Christ Jesus at his coming?" Yes, doubtless "they are your glory and your joy."

2. Personally catechizing will necessarily promote the orderly edification of those who are converted, and it will establish them in the faith. It risks our whole work, or at least it greatly hinders it, if we do not do it in the proper order. How can you build, if you do not first lay a good foundation; or how can you put on the top-stone, while the middle ones are missing? "Grace makes no leaps," any more than nature does. The second order of Christian truths have such a dependence upon the first, that they can never be well-learned until the first ones are learned.

This is what makes so many labor in vain; they are "ever-learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth," because they want to read before they learn to spell, or to know their letters. This makes so many fall away: they are shaken with every wind of temptation, because they were not well-settled in the fundamental principles of religion. It is these fundamentals that must lead men to further truths; it is these they must build upon; it is these that must actuate all their graces, and animate all their duties; it is these that must fortify them against temptations. One who does not know these things, knows nothing; one who knows them well, knows much that will make him happy; and one that knows them best, is the best and most understanding Christian. The most godly people, therefore, in your congregations, will find it worth their labor to learn the very words of a catechism. If you want to safely edify them, and firmly establish them, then be diligent in this work.

3. It will make our public preaching better understood and regarded. When you have instructed them in the principles, they will better understand all you say. They will perceive what you drive at once they are once acquainted with the main points. This prepares their minds, and opens a way to their hearts. But without this, you may lose most of your labor; the more pains you take in accurate preparation, the less good you may do. Therefore, just as you do not want to lose your public labor, see that you are faithful in this private work.

4. By means of it, you will come to be familiar with your people, and you may thereby win their affections. The lack of this by those who have very large congregations, is a great impediment to the success of our labors. By their distance from their people, and being unacquainted with them, many missteps are fomented between ministers and people; on the other hand, familiarity will tend to engender those affections which may open their ears to further instruction. Besides, when we are familiar with them, they will be encouraged to open their doubts to us, and deal freely with us. But when a minister does not know his people, or is a stranger to them, it necessarily hinders him in doing any good among them.

5. By means of it, we will become better acquainted with each person's spiritual state, and so we will better know how to watch over them. When we know their temper, and their main objections, we will better know how to preach to them, and to conduct ourselves toward them; we will better know what they most need to hear. We will better know how to be "jealous over them with a godly jealousy," 8 and what temptations to most guard them against. We will better know how to lament for them, and to rejoice with them, and to pray for them. Someone who wants to pray correctly for himself must know his own wants, and the diseases of his own heart; so too, someone who wants to pray correctly for others, must know theirs as far as possible.

6. By means of this test, and by acquainting ourselves with our people's spiritual state, we will be greatly assisted in admitting them to the sacraments. I do not doubt that a minister might require his people to come to him at an appropriate time to give an account of their faith and proficiency, and to receive instruction; and thus he does it in preparation for the Lord's Supper. Yet, ministers have stressed that examination only within the context of that ordinance, and have not considered it their common duty to observe the state and proficiency of each member of their flock at all times; nor have they conveyed that it is the people's duty to submit to the guidance and instruction of their pastors at all times. Because of this, they have caused their people to ignorantly object to their examinations. Now, by this course of action, we will discover their fitness or unfitness in a way that is not open to objection; and in a way that is far more effectual than partially examining them before they are admitted to the Lord's table.

7. It will show men the true nature of the ministerial office, and awaken them to better consider it than is now usual. It is too common for men to think that the work of the ministry is nothing but preaching, baptizing, administering the Lord's Supper, and visiting the sick. Because of this, the people will submit to no more; and too many ministers are such strangers to their own calling,

that they will do no more. It has often grieved my heart to observe how little some eminent and able preachers do to save souls, except in the pulpit; and by this neglect, how much of their labor is to so little purpose. They have hundreds of people that they never spoke a word to personally for their salvation; and if we may judge by their practice, they do not consider it their duty; the principal thing that hardens men in this oversight, is the common neglect of this private aspect of the work by other ministers. There are so few who do much in it, and the omission has grown so common among pious and able men, that its disgrace is abated by their other abilities. A man may be guilty of it these days without any particular notice or dishonor. Sin never reigns so much in a church or state, as when it has gained a reputation, or at least, when it is no longer a disgrace to the sinner, or an offense to the beholder. But I have no doubt, through the mercy of God, that restoring the practice of personal oversight will convince many ministers that this is as truly their work as what they now do; and it may awaken them to see that the ministry is a different kind of business than what too many excellent preachers make of it. Brothers, if you will set yourselves closely to this work, and follow it diligently (even though you do it silently, without any words to those who neglect it), I am hopeful that most of you may live to see the day when neglecting private personal oversight of all the flock will be taken for a scandalous and odious omission. It will be as much a disgrace to those who are guilty of it, as preaching only once a day was considered to be up to now. A schoolmaster must take a personal account of his scholars, or else he is likely to do them little good. If physicians only read a public lecture on medicine, their patients will not be made much better by them; nor would a lawyer secure your estate by reading a lecture on law. The charge of a pastor requires personal dealing, as much as any of these others. Let us show this to the world by our practice; for most men are not grown by bare words.

The truth is, we have been led to greatly wrong the Church in this neglect, by over-reacting to the extreme of the Papists, who bring all their people to auricular confession. In doing away with this error of theirs, we have gone to the opposite extreme; and we have led our people much further into this neglect than we have gone ourselves. It troubled me greatly to read from an orthodox historian, that licentiousness and a desire to escape the strict inquiries of the priests in confession, substantially motivated the Reformation in Germany. And yet it is likely enough to be true: that those who were against reformation in other respects, might join with better men in decrying the Romish clergy, in order to do away with confession. I have no doubt that the Popish auricular confession is a sinful novelty, which the ancient Church was unacquainted with. But perhaps some will think it strange if I said that our common neglect of personal instruction is much worse than their confessions in themselves (i.e. ignoring their doctrines of satisfaction and purgatory). If any among us were guilty of so gross a mistake as to think that, when he has preached, he has completed all his work, then let us show him by our practice of the rest, that there is much more to be done. Let us show that "taking heed to all the flock," is a different business than careless, lazy ministers imagine. If a man thinks that this main duty is not his duty, then he is likely to neglect it, and to be impenitent in his neglect.

8. It will help our people better to understand the nature of their duty toward their overseers, and consequently, to discharge their duty better. This indeed would be a matter of no consequence if it were only for our sakes; but it greatly concerns their own salvation. I am convinced, by sad experience, that it is no small impediment to their salvation, and to a true reformation of the Church, that the people do not understand what the work of a minister is, and what their own duty towards him ought to be. They commonly think that a minister has nothing more to do with them than preach to them, administer the sacraments to them, and visit them in sickness. They think that if they hear him, and receive the sacraments from him, then they owe him no further obedience, nor can he require any more of them. Little do they know that the minister is in the church, just as the schoolmaster is in his school. He is there to teach, and to take an account of everyone in particular. All Christians, ordinarily, must be disciples or scholars in such a school. They do not consider that a minister is in the church, for the same reason that a physician is in a town. He is there for all people to resort to for personal advice, for curing all their diseases; "the priest's lips should preserve knowledge, and the people should ask for the law from his mouth, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." They do not consider that all souls in the congregation are bound to have personal recourse to him for their own safety, to resolve their doubts, for help against their sins, for direction in their duty, and to increase knowledge and every saving grace; and that ministers are purposely placed in congregations for this purpose, to be ready to advise and help the flock.

If our people only knew their duty, they would readily come to us when they desire to be instructed, and to give an account of their knowledge, faith, and life. They would come of their own accord, without being sent for. And they would knock oftener at our doors; and call for advice and help for their souls, and ask, "What must we do to be saved?" Whereas now the matter has come to such sad pass that they think a minister has nothing to do with them: and if he admonishes them, or if he calls upon them to be catechized and instructed, or if he takes an account of their faith and income, they want to ask him by what authority he does these things? They think he is a busy-body who loves to meddle where he has no business; or a proud man who wants to rule over their consciences. They may as well ask by what authority he preaches, or prays, or gives them the sacrament? They do not consider that all our authority is only for our work, a power to do our duty; and that our work is for them: so that it is only an authority to do them good. They speak no more wisely than if they quarreled with a man who wanted to help put out a fire in their house, and they asked him by what authority he did it? Or with someone who wanted to give money to relieve the poor, and they asked him by what authority he requires them to take his money? Or it is as if I offered my hand to someone who has fallen to help him up, or to someone in the water to keep him from drowning, and the person asked me by what authority I did that?

What has brought our people to this ignorance of their duty, except custom? To speak truly and plainly, it is we, brothers, who are to blame. We have not accustomed them and ourselves to anything more than common public work. We see what custom does with the people. Among the Papists, they do not hesitate to confess all their sins to the priest; but among us, they disdain to be

catechized or instructed – because it is not the custom. They look at it as though it is strange, and they say, "Such things were never done before." And if we can only prevail to make this duty as common as other duties, then they will much more easily submit to it than they do now. What a happy thing would it be, if you live to see the day that it becomes as ordinary for people of all ages to come to their ministers for personal advice, and for help with their salvation, as it is now usual for them to come to the church to hear a sermon, or to receive the sacrament. Our diligence in this work, is the way to bring this about.

9. It will give the governors of the nation more correct views about the nature and burden of the ministry, and so it may procure from them further assistance. It is a lamentable impediment to the reformation of the Church, and to saving souls, that in most populous towns, there are only one or two men to oversee many thousands of souls, and so the laborers are not in any degree equal to the work. Instead, it becomes impossible to do a substantial amount of that personal duty which faithful pastors should do for all the flock. I have often said it, and I must say it still, that this is a great part of England's misery: that a great degree of spiritual famine reigns in most cities and large towns throughout the land, even where they have no sense of it, and mistakenly think themselves well-provided for. Alas! we see multitudes of ignorant, carnal, sensual sinners around us – here a family, and there a family, and there almost a whole street or village of them – and our hearts pity them, and we see that their needs cry loudly for our speedy and diligent relief, so that "he that has ears to hear" must hear. Yet even if we were fervently committed, we could not help them. And that is not merely because of their obstinacy, but also because our lack of opportunity. We found by experience, that if we only had time to speak to them, and to plainly reveal their sin and danger to them, there would be great hope of doing good to many of those who receive very little from our public teaching. But we cannot come to them because more necessary work prohibits us; and we cannot do both at once. Our public work must be preferred to private instruction, because there we can deal with many at once. It is as much as we are able to do, to perform the public work, with perhaps a little more. And if we do take the time, when we should be eating or sleeping instead, then besides ruining our weakened bodies, we will still be unable to speak to very many of them. So we must stand by and see poor people perish. We can only be sorry for them; we cannot even speak to them to try for their recovery. Is this not a sad case in a nation that glories in the fullness of the gospel? An infidel might say no. But I think that no man who believes in an everlasting joy or torment should give such an answer.

I will give you my own case for instance. We have two ministers, and a third at a chapel, who are willing to spend every hour of our time in Christ's work. Before we undertook this work, our hands were full; now we are committed to set apart two days every week, from morning to night, for private catechizing and instruction. Anyone may see that we must leave undone all that other work that we were used to doing during that time. We must conduct the public work of preaching with little preparation, and so we deliver the message of God raw and confused, and not in accord with its dignity and the need of men's souls. This greatly troubles our minds to consider it, and troubles us more when we are doing it. And yet it must be so; there is no remedy. Unless we omit this personal instruction, we must run into the pulpit unprepared. And we dare not omit this – it is so great and necessary a work. When we have incurred all those inconveniences, and we have set apart two whole days a week for this work, it is as much as we can do to go over the parish once in a year (there being about 800 families). Worse than that, we will be forced to cut it short, and do it less effectually for those we meet with, having more than fifteen families a week to deal with. And, alas! How paltry it is to speak to a man only once in a year, and be forced to do it so cursorily, compared to what their needs require. Yet we hope to have some fruit of even this much work. But how much more there might be if we could speak to them once a quarter, and do the work more fully, and deliberately, as you who are in smaller parishes may do.

Many ministers in England have ten times the number of parishioners that I have. If they were to undertake the work we have undertaken, they could go over their parish only once in ten years. So while we are hoping for opportunities to speak to them, we hear of one dying after another, and to the grief of our souls, we are forced to go with them to their graves before we could ever speak a word to them personally, to prepare them for their change. And what is the cause of all this misery? Why, our rulers have not seen the need to have more than one or two ministers in such parishes; and so they have not allotted any funds for that purpose. Some have taken much from the Church (the Lord humble all those who consented to it, for it may prove to be the consumption of the nation in the end) while leaving this famine in major areas of the land. It is easy to separate from the multitude, and gather distinct churches, and let the rest sink or swim. It is easy to let them be damned unless they can be saved by public preaching. But it should not be hard to answer whether this is the most charitable and Christian course to take.

But what is the matter with us, that wise and godly rulers should thus be guilty of our misery, and that none of our cries awaken them to compassion? What! Are they so ignorant that they do not know these things? Or have they grown cruel to the souls of men? Or are they false-hearted to the interests of Christ, and plan to undermine his kingdom? No, I hope it is none of these; but from all I can find, we are to blame, the ministers of the gospel, whom they should employ in this way. For those ministers who have small parishes, and might do this private part of the work, still will not do it, or at least few of them will. And those who are in great towns and cities, who might do something, even though they cannot do it all, will do nothing except what accidentally falls in their way, or they will do next to nothing. Thus, the magistrate is not aware of our work; he does not observe or consider the weight of it. Or if they do apprehend its usefulness, if they see that ministers are careless and lazy and will not do it, then they think it a waste to provide them funding for it – it would be like cherishing idle drones – and so they think, that if they furnish ministers enough income to preach in the pulpit, they have done their part. Thus they are involved in heinous sin, and we are the cause of it. We must heartily set ourselves to this work, and show the magistrate to his face that it is a most weighty and necessary part of our work; and that we would do it thoroughly if we could; and that if there were hands enough, the work might go on. If we do this, and they see the happy success of our labors, then no doubt, if the fear of God is in them, and they have any love for his

truth and men's souls, they will offer their helping hand. They will not let men perish because there is no one to speak to them to prevent it. They will one way or another raise funds in such populous places for laborers, proportioned to the number of souls, and to the extent of the work. Just let them see us dive into the work, and behold it prospering in our hands, as no doubt it will, if it is well-managed through God's blessing. Then their hearts will be drawn to promote it. Instead of pulling parishes together to diminish the number of teachers, they will either divide them, or allow more teachers per parish. But when they see so many carnal ministers who make a greater stir for income for themselves, than they do to obtain more help in the work of God, they are tempted by such worldly men to hurt the Church, so that particular ministers may have their ease and luxury.

10. It will greatly facilitate the ministerial work in succeeding generations. Custom, as I said before, is the thing that holds so much sway with the multitude. Those who first break a destructive custom, must bear the brunt of the multitude's indignation. Now, somebody must do it. If we do not, it will fall to our successors to do it; and how can we expect that they will be any more hardy, and resolute, and faithful than we are? It is we who have seen the heavy judgments of the Lord, and heard him pleading by fire and sword with the land. It is we who have been in the furnace ourselves, and should be the most refined. It is we who are most deeply obliged by oaths and covenants, by wonderful deliverances, experiences, and mercies of all sorts. And if we still flinch and turn our backs, and prove false-hearted, why should we expect any better from those who have not been driven by such scourges as we have, nor drawn by such ropes? But, if they do prove better than we are, the same odium and opposition must befall them which we avoid, and it will be increased because of our neglect; for the people will tell them that we, their predecessors, did no such things. But if we would now break the ice for those who follow us, their souls will bless us, and our names will be dear to them, and they will feel the happy fruits of our labor every day of their ministry. They will do so when the people willingly submit to their private instructions and examinations, and even to discipline, because we have acquainted them with it, and removed the prejudice, and broken the evil custom which our predecessors were the cause of. Thus we may do much to save many thousands of souls, in all ages to come, as well as in the present age in which we live.

11. It will be conducive to ordering our families better, and spending the Sabbath better. Once we get the masters of families to examine their children and servants every Lord's Day, and make them repeat some of the catechism and passages of Scripture, this will provide them profitable employment; otherwise many of them would be idle or ill-employed. Many masters, who know little themselves, may still be brought to do this for others, and in this way they may even teach themselves.

12. It will do good to many ministers, who are too apt to be idle, and to mis-spend their time in unnecessary discourse, business, journeys, or recreations. It will let them see that they have no time to spare for such things; and thus, when they are engaged in so much pressing employment of so high a nature, it will be the best cure for all that idleness, and loss of time. Besides, it will cut off that scandal which usually follows from these things; for people are apt to say, 'Such a minister can spend his time at bowling, or other sports, or empty discourse; why may we not do so the same? 'Let us all set diligently to this part of our work, and then see what spare time we can find to live idly, or in sensual pleasure or worldliness, if we can.

13. It will produce many personal benefits to ourselves. It will do much to subdue our own corruptions, and to exercise and increase our own graces. It will afford much peace to our consciences, and comfort us when it comes time to review our past.

Spending time provoking others to repentance and heavenly-mindedness may do much to excite these things in ourselves. To decry the sin of others, and engage them against it, and direct them to overcome it, does much to shame us out of our own. Our conscience will scarcely allow us to live in what we take so much bother to draw others away from. Even our constant employment for God, and busying our minds and tongues against sin, and for Christ and holiness, will do much to overcome our fleshly inclinations, both by direct mortification and by diversion, leaving our fancies no room or time for their old employment. All the austerities of monks and hermits who addict themselves to unprofitable solitude, and who think to save themselves by neglecting to show compassion to others, will not do nearly so much in the true work of mortification as this fruitful diligence for Christ.

14. It will be some benefit, that by this means we will remove ourselves and our people from pointless controversies, and from expending our care and zeal on the lesser matters of religion, which least tend to their spiritual edification. While we are taken up in teaching, and they are taken up in learning the fundamental truths of the gospel, we will divert our minds and tongues, and have less room for lower things; and so it will cure many of the wranglings and contentions that take place between ministers and people. For we do what we need not and should not do, because we will not diligently do what we need and should do.

15. And then for the extent of the aforesaid benefits: The design of this work is the reforming and saving of all the people in our several parishes. For we will not leave out any man who will submit to be instructed. Though we can scarcely hope that every individual will be reformed and saved by it, yet have we reason to hope that as the attempt is universal, so the success will be more general and extensive than we have seen up till now from our other labors. I am sure this work is most like the spirit, and precept, and offers of the gospel, which require us to preach Christ to every creature, and promise life to every man, if he will accept it by believing. If God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, (that is, as Rector and Benefactor of the world, he has shown himself willing to save all men if they are willing themselves, even though he will also make his elect willing) then surely it befits us to offer salvation to all men, and to endeavor to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. And, if Christ "tasted death for every man," it is fitting that we should preach his death to every man. This work has a greater design, than accidental conferences now and then with a particular person. I have observed that in such occasional discourses, men satisfy

themselves with having spoken some good words, but they seldom drive the matter home plainly and personally, so as to convince men of their sin and misery, and of God's mercy. In this purposely appointed work, we are more likely to do that.

16. It is likely to be a work that will reach over the whole land, and not stop with those of us who have now engaged in it. For though it is presently neglected, I suppose the cause of that neglect is the same for our brothers as it has been with us: namely, inconsiderateness and laziness, which we are bewailing here this day; but especially, it is despairing that the people will submit to it. But when the people are reminded of so clear and great a duty, and see the practicability of it in good measure, and when it is done by common consent, no doubt they take it up universally, and gladly concur with us in so blessed a work. For they are the servants of the same God; they are as sensible of the interests of Christ, as compassionate toward men's souls, as conscientious and self-denying, and as ready to do or suffer for such excellent ends as we are. Therefore, since they have the same spirit, rule, and Lord, I will not be so uncharitable as to doubt whether all who are godly throughout the land (or at least most of them,) will gladly join with us. And oh, what a happy thing it will be to see such a general combination for Christ; and to see all England so seriously called upon, and importuned for Christ, and placed in so fair a path to heaven! I think considering it should make our hearts rejoice, to see so many faithful servants of Christ all over the land addressing every particular sinner with such importunity, like men who will not accept a denial. I think I even see all the godly ministers of England commencing the work already, and resolving to embrace the present opportunity, so that unanimity may facilitate it.

17. Lastly, the duty which we are now recommending is of so great a weight and excellence, that the main part of Church reformation that remains, as to means, consists in this; and it must be the primary means to answer the judgments, mercies, prayers, promises, cost, endeavors, and blood of the nation. Without this, it will not be done; the ends of all these will never be well attained; a reformation will never be worked to any purpose; the Church will be still run down; the interest of Christ will be greatly neglected; and God will still have a controversy with the land, and above all, with the ministry that has been deepest in guilt.

How long have we talked of reformation, how much have we said and done for it generally, and how deeply and devoutly have we vowed our own parts in it; and, after all this, how shamefully we have neglected it, and still neglect it to this day! We carry ourselves as if we had not known or considered what that reformation was which we vowed to make. As carnal men will claim to be Christians, and profess with confidence that they believe in Christ, and accept his salvation, and may even contend for Christ, and fight for him, yet for all this, they will have none of him, but perish for refusing him, those who little dreamed that they had refused him. And all because they did not understand what his salvation is, and how it is carried on, but instead they dream of a salvation without displeasing their flesh, and without denying themselves and renouncing the world, and parting with their sins, and without any holiness, or taking any pains and labor on their own to be subservient to Christ and the Spirit. In the very same way, too many ministers and private men talk, and write, and pray, and fight, and long for reformation, and they would little believe someone who presumed to tell them that, notwithstanding all this, their hearts were against reformation; and that those who were praying for it, and fasting for it, and wading through blood for it, would never accept it, but would themselves reject and destroy it. And yet so it is, and so it has too plainly proved to be.

And from where is all this strange deceitfulness of heart, that good men should know themselves no better than this? Why, the case is plain: they thought of a reformation that would be given by God, but not of a reformation that would worked on, and by, themselves. They considered the blessing, but they never thought of the means to accomplish it. Instead, it is as if they expected all things, other than themselves, would be mended without them, or that the Holy Ghost would again descend miraculously, or that every sermon would convert thousands, or that some angel from heaven or some Elijah would be sent to restore all things, or that the law of the parliament, and the sword of the magistrate, would convert or constrain all and do the deed. Little did they think of a reformation that must be worked by their own diligence and unwearied labors, by earnest preaching and catechizing, and personal instructions, and taking heed to all the flock, whatever pains or reproaches it might cost them. They did not think that a thorough reformation would multiply their own work; but all of us had too carnal thoughts, so that when we had ungodly men at our mercy, all would be done, and conquering them was simply converting them, or using such a means as would frighten them to heaven. But the business is far different than that. Had we known then how a reformation must be attained, then perhaps some of us would have been colder in effecting it. And yet I know that even foreseen labors seem small matters at a distance, while we only hear and talk about them. But when we come nearer to them, and we must lay our hands to the work, and put on our armor, and charge through the thickest of opposing difficulties, then the sincerity and the strength of men's hearts is brought to trial, and it will become apparent how they purposed and promised beforehand.

To many of us, reformation is like the Messiah was to the Jews. Before he came, they looked and longed for him, and boasted of him, and rejoiced in hope of him. But when he finally came, they could not abide him, but hated him, and would not believe that he was indeed the person they waited for. Therefore they persecuted him and put him to death, to the curse and confusion of most of their nation. "The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. But who may abide the day of his coming and who will stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, so that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." And the reason was, because it was another kind of Christ that the Jews expected; it was one who would bring them riches and liberty; to this day they profess that they will never believe in any Messiah than that kind. So it is with too many of us concerning reformation. They hoped for a reformation that would bring them more wealth and honor with the people, and more power to force men to do what they wanted of them; but now they see a

reformation that puts them to more condescension and more pains than ever before. They thought of having those who oppose godliness under their feet; but now they see they must go to them with humble entreaties, and put their own hands under their feet if they would do them any good; and they must meekly beg even those who sometimes sought their lives, and make it their daily business now to overcome them by kindness, and win them with love. O how many carnal expectations are crossed up here!

ARTICLE 2 - MOTIVES FROM THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE WORK

Having stated to you the first class of reasons, drawn from the benefits of the work, I come to the second sort which is taken from the difficulties. If these, indeed, were taken alone, I confess they might be discouragements rather than motives; but taking them together with those motive that
go before and after them, the case is far otherwise: for difficulties must excite us to greater diligence in a necessary work.

And we will find many difficulties, both in ourselves and in our people; but because they are such obvious things, your experience will leave you no room to doubt them, and so I will pass over them in a few words.
1. Let me note the difficulties in ourselves.

(1) In ourselves there is extensive dullness and laziness, so it will not be easy to get us to be faithful in so hard a work. Like a sluggard in bed who knows he should rise, yet he delays and would lie there as long as he can; we do the same thing with our duties to which our corrupt natures are averse. This will force us to use all our powers. Mere sloth will tie the hands of many.

(2) We have a base man-pleasing disposition, which makes us let men perish for fear of losing their love, and so we let them go quietly to hell, lest we make them angry with us for seeking their salvation. We are ready to draw the displeasure of God, and risk the everlasting misery of our people, rather than draw on ourselves their ill-will. This attitude must be diligently resisted.

(3) Many of us also have a foolish bashfulness, which makes us reluctant to begin this work with them and speak plainly. We are so modest, in fact, that we blush to speak for Christ, or to contradict the devil, or to save a soul, while at the same time we are less ashamed of shameful works.

(4) We are so carnal that our fleshly interests entice us to be unfaithful in the work of Christ, lest we should lessen our income, or bring trouble on ourselves, or set people against us, or such things. All these require diligence in order to resist them.

(5) We are so weak in the faith, that this is the greatest impediment of all. And so, when we ought to set upon a man for his conversion with all our might, there is a stirring of unbelief within us as to whether there is a heaven and a hell, or at least our belief in them is so feeble that it hardly excites in us a kindly, resolute, and constant zeal for the work. Thus, our whole endeavor is weak, because the spring of our faith is so weak. O what a need there is, then, to have ministers for their own souls and their work, to look intently at their faith, and especially to see that their assent to the truth of Scripture is sound and lively concerning the joys and torments of the life to come.

(6) Lastly, we commonly lack sufficient skillfulness and fitness for this work. Alas! How few of us know how to deal with an ignorant, worldly man for his conversion! To get within him and win him over; to suit our speech to his condition and temper; to choose the most appropriate subjects, and follow them up with a holy mixture of seriousness, and terror, and love, and meekness, and evangelical allurements – Oh! Who is fit for such a thing? I profess seriously that it seems to me, by experience, that it is just as hard to converse with such a carnal person, for his change, as it is to preach the sermons we ordinarily do, if not much more. All these difficulties in us should awaken us to holy resolution, preparation, and diligence, so that we may not be overcome by them, and be hindered in the work.

2. Having noticed these difficulties in ourselves, I will now mention some which we meet with in our people.

(1) Many of them will be obstinately unwilling to be taught; they scorn to come to us, thinking they are too good to be catechized, or too old to learn; we must deal wisely with them in public and in private, and study by the force of reason, and the power of love, to conquer their perverseness

(2) Many who are willing are so dull that they can scarcely learn a page of a catechism over a long time; therefore they will keep away, ashamed of their ignorance, unless we are wise and diligent to encourage them.

(3) And when they do come, the ignorance and limited comprehension of many is so great that you will find it hard to get them to understand you; so if you do not have the fortunate art of making things plain, you will leave them as ignorant as before.

(4) You will find it still harder to work things on their hearts, and to drive home to their consciences so as to produce that saving change which is our grand aim, and without which our labor is lost. Oh what a block, what a rock, is a hardened, carnal heart! How strongly it will resist the most powerful persuasions, and hear of everlasting life or death as if it were nothing! Therefore, if you do not have great seriousness, and fervency, and powerful material, and express them appropriately, you can expect little good. And

when you have done all, the Spirit of grace must still do the work. Just as God and men usually choose instruments suitable to the nature of the work or end, so the Spirit of wisdom, life, and holiness does not usually work with foolish, dead, and carnal instruments. He works by persuasions of light, life, and purity that are like himself, and that fit the work which is to be accomplished by them.

(5) Lastly, when you have made some desirable impressions on their hearts, if you do not look after them, and take special care of them, their hearts will soon return to their former hardness; their old companions and temptations will destroy it all again. In short, all the difficulties of the work of conversion, which you will use to acquaint your people, are involved in our present work.

ARTICLE 3 - MOTIVES FROM THE NECESSITY OF THE WORK

The third sort of motives is drawn from the necessity of the work. For if it was not necessary, the slothful might be discouraged rather than excited by the difficulties mentioned now. But because I have already been longer than I intended, I will give you only a brief hint of some of the
general basis of this necessity.

1. This duty is necessary for the glory of God. Because every Christian lives to the glory of God as his end in life, he will gladly take that course which most effectually promotes it. For what man would not attain his ends? O brothers, if we could set this work on its feet in all the parishes of England, and get our people to submit to it, and then prosecute it skillfully and zealously ourselves, what a glory it would put on the face of the nation; and what glory would redound to God by means of it! If our common ignorance were thus banished, and our vanity and idleness turned into the study of the way of life, and every shop and every house were busied in learning the Scriptures and catechisms, and speaking of the Word and works of God, what pleasure would God take in our cities and country! He would even dwell in our homes, and make them his delight. It is the glory of Christ that shines in his saints, and all their glory is his glory. What honors them in number or excellence, therefore honors him. Will not the glory of Christ be wonderfully displayed in the New Jerusalem when it descends from heaven in all that splendor and magnificence described in the Book of Revelation? If, therefore, we can increase the number or strength of the saints, we will thereby increase the glory of the King of saints; for he will have service and praise where before he had only disobedience and dishonor. Christ will also be honored in the fruits of his shed blood, and the Spirit of grace will be honored in the fruit of his operations in us. And do such important ends as these not require that we use these means with diligence?

Every Christian is obliged to do all he can for the salvation of others. But every minister is doubly obliged, because he is set apart for the gospel of Christ, and he is to give himself wholly to that work. It is needless to further question our obligation, when we know that this work is necessary to our people's conversion and salvation, and when we know that we are in general commanded to do all that is necessary to these ends, as far as we are able. I hope we do not doubt that the unconverted need conversion. Whether this is a means to that end, and a most necessary means, experience may put beyond a doubt, if we had no other evidence. Let those who have taken the most pains in public examine their people, and test whether many of them are not nearly as ignorant and careless as if they had never heard the gospel. For my part, I study to speak as plainly and movingly as I can, (and next to my study to speak truly, these are my main studies). Yet I frequently meet with those who have heard me for eight or ten years, who do not know whether Christ is God or man, and wonder when I tell them the history of his birth and life and death, if they had ever heard it before. Of those who know the history of the gospel, how few are there who know the nature of that faith, repentance, and holiness which it requires, or at least who know their own hearts? But most of them have an ungrounded trust in Christ, hoping that he will pardon, justify, and save them somehow, while the world owns their hearts and while they live according to the flesh. They take this trust for justifying faith! I have found by experience that some ignorant persons, who have long been unprofitable hearers, have gotten more knowledge, and more remorse of conscience, in half an hour's close discourse, than they did from ten years of public preaching.

I know that preaching the gospel publicly is the most excellent means, because we can speak to many people at once. But it is usually far more effectual to preach it privately to a particular sinner. For the plainest man can scarcely speak plainly enough in public for them to understand; but in private we may do it much more effectively. In public we do not use the plain expressions or repetitions their dullness requires, but in private we may. In public our speeches are long, and we over-run their understanding and memory; they are confounded and at a loss, not being able to follow us; one thing drives out another, and so they do not know what we have said. But in private we can take our work a step at a time, and bring our hearers along with us. By our questions and their answers, we can see how far they understand us, and what we have to do next. In public, by the length, and because we alone speak, we lose their attention; but when they are participating in the discussion, we can easily cause them to attend to our words. Besides, we can better answer their objections, and engage them with promises before we leave them, which we cannot do in public. I conclude, therefore, that public preaching will not be sufficient: for though it may be an effectual means to convert many at a time, yet not as many as experience and God's appointment of further means may assure us. If you neglect this duty, you may study long, and preach to little purpose.

2. This duty is necessary to the welfare of our people. Brothers, can you believe that you may look at your people, who are miserable, and not see them calling to you for help? There are no sinners with whom you cannot be compassionate, so as to be willing to relieve them at a much higher cost than this comes to. Can you see them like the wounded man by the wayside, and

unmercifully pass them by? Can you hear them cry out to you, as the man of Macedonia cried out to Paul in vision, "Come and help us," and yet refuse your help? Say you were entrusted with the charge of a hospital, where one languishes in one corner, and one groans in another, and cries out, "Oh, help me, pity me for the Lord's sake!" and where a third is raging mad, and would destroy both himself and you; would you sit idle and refuse your help? If it may be said of someone who does not relieve men's bodies that the love of God is not in him, then how much more may it be said of one who does not relieve men's souls? "If he sees his brother in need, and withholds compassion from him, how does the love of God dwell in him?" You are not such monsters, such hard-hearted men; rather, you pity a leper; you pity the naked, the imprisoned, or the desolate; you pity one who is tormented with grievous pain or sickness. Will you not pity an ignorant, hard-hearted sinner? Will you not pity someone who is shut out from the presence of the Lord, and lies under his wrath without a remedy, unless thorough repentance speedily prevents it? Oh what heart is it that will not pity such a person? What will I call the heart of such a man? A heart of stone, a very hard rock or adamant;21 the heart of a tiger; or rather the heart of an infidel: for surely if he believed the misery of the impenitent, it is impossible not to take pity on him. Can you tell men in the pulpit that they will certainly be damned unless they repent, and yet have no pity on them when you have proclaimed such a danger to them? And if you do pity them, will you not do this much for their salvation?

How many around you are blindly hastening to perdition, while your voice is appointed to be the means of arousing and reclaiming them? The physician, who is doubly bound to relieve the sick, has no excuse when even every neighbor is likewise bound to help. Brothers, what if you heard a sinner crying after you in the streets, "O sir, have pity on me, and afford me your advice! I am afraid of the everlasting wrath of God. I know I must leave this world shortly, and I am afraid that I will be miserable in the next." Could you deny your help to such a poor sinner? What if a sinner came to your study-door and cried for help, and would not go away until you told him how to escape the wrath of God? Could you find in your hearts to drive him away without that advice? I am confident you could not. Why, alas! Such persons are less miserable than those who will not cry for help. It is the hardened sinner, who does not care for your help, who needs it the most: and he has not even enough life to sense he is dead, nor does he have enough light to see his danger, nor enough sense to pity himself – this is the man who is most to be pitied. Look at your neighbors around you, and think how many of them need your help in nothing less than the apparent danger of their damnation. Suppose you heard every impenitent person whom you see and know around you, crying to you for help, "If you ever pitied poor wretches, pity us, lest we be tormented in the flames of hell: if you have a heart, pity us." Now, do for your people what you would do for someone who followed you about with such cries. How can you walk, and talk, and be merry with such people, when you know their situation? I think, when you look them in the face, and think about how they must suffer everlasting misery, you would break into tears (just as the prophet did when he looked at Hazael), and then break into the most importuning exhortations. When you visit them in their sickness, would it not wound your hearts to see them ready to depart into misery, before you ever dealt seriously with them about their conversion?

Oh, then, for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of poor souls, have pity on them, stir yourselves up, and spare no pains that might be conducive to their salvation.

3. This duty is necessary to your own welfare, as well as to your people's. This is your work, for which, among others, you will be judged. You can no more be saved without ministerial diligence and fidelity, than they or you can be saved without Christian diligence and fidelity. Therefore, if you do not care about others, at least care about yourselves. Oh what a dreadful thing it is to answer for the neglect of such a charge! And what sin is more heinous than betraying souls? Does this threat not make you tremble: "If you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man will die in his iniquity; but will I require his blood at your hand." I am afraid, no, I have no doubt, that the day is near when unfaithful ministers will wish they never knew what is to have charge of souls; but that they had rather been colliers, sweeps, or tinkers, than pastors of Christ's flock. Besides all the rest of their own sins, they will have the blood of so many souls to answer for. O brothers, our death as well as our people's death is at hand, and it is as terrible to an unfaithful pastor as to any other. We all must die, and there is no remedy, nor wit, nor learning, nor popular applause that can avert the stroke of the clock or delay the time. Willing or not, our souls must go into a world we have never seen, where our persons and our worldly interest will not be respected. Oh, to have then a clear conscience that can say, "I did not live to myself but to Christ; I did not spare my pains; I did not hide my talents; I did not conceal men's misery from them, nor their way of recovery." O sirs, let us therefore take
time while we have it, and work while it is day; "for the night comes, when no man can work."

This is our day too; and by doing good to others, we will do good to ourselves. If you would prepare for a comfortable death, and a great and glorious reward, the harvest is before you. Gird the loins of your minds, and quit yourselves like men, that you may end your days with these triumphant words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: after this there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day."26 If you would be blessed with those who die in the Lord, then labor now, so that you may rest from your labors then, and do those works you wish would follow you, and not those that will prove to be your terror

ARTICLE 4 - APPLICATION OF THESE MOTIVES

Having found so many and such powerful reasons to move us to this work, I will now apply them further for our humiliation and motivation.

1. Why do we bleed before the Lord this day? It is that we have neglected so great and good a work for so long; that we have been ministers of the gospel for so many years, and done so little by way of personal instruction and conferring to save men's souls! If we had only set about this business sooner, who knows how many souls might have been brought to Christ, and how much happier our congregations might have been? And why might we not have done it sooner as well as now? I confess, there were many impediments in our way, and there still are, and they will continue to exist while there is a devil to tempt us, and a corrupt heart in man to resist the light. But if the greatest impediment had not been in ourselves, even in our own darkness and dullness, and being indisposed to our duty, and our dividedness and reluctance to come together for the work of God, much might have been done before this. We had the same God to command us, and the same miserable objects of compassion, and the same liberty from governors that we have now. We have sinned, and we have no just excuse for our sin; and the sin is so great because the duty is so great, that we should be afraid of pleading any excuse for it. May the God of mercy forgive us, and all the ministry of England, and not lay this or any of our ministerial negligence to our charge! Oh that he would cover all our unfaithfulness, and by the blood of the everlasting covenant, wash away our guilt of the blood of souls, so that when the chief Shepherd will appear, we may stand before him in peace, and not be condemned for scattering his flock. And oh that he would make his controversy against the pastors of his Church; and not deal any the worse with the flock for our sakes, nor allow them to be scattered by those who would undermine or persecute them, as the pastors have allowed his sheep to be scattered; and that he will not care as little for us as we have cared little for the souls of men; nor think that his salvation is too good for us, as we have thought that our labor and sufferings were too much for men's salvation!

Because we have had many days of abasement in England for the sins of the land, and for the judgments that have fallen on us, I hope we hear that God will more thoroughly humble the ministry, and cause them to bewail their own neglects, and to set apart some days throughout the land to that end, so that they may not think it enough to lament the sins of others while they overlook their own. And I hope that God may not abhor our solemn national abasements, because they are managed by unhumbled guides; and that we may first prevail with him for a pardon for ourselves, so that we may be better fit to beg for the pardon of others.

And oh that we may cast out the dung of our pride, contentiousness, self-seeking, and idleness, lest God cast our sacrifices in our faces like dung, and cast us out as the dung of the earth, as he has done to many others of late for a warning to us; and that we may presently resolve in concord to mend our pace, before we feel a sharper spur than we have felt before.

2. And now, brothers, what do we have to do for the time coming, except to deny our lazy flesh, and rouse ourselves up to the work before us. The harvest is great, the laborers are few; the loiterers and hinderers are many, the souls of men are precious; the misery of sinners is great, and the everlasting misery to which they near is greater; the joys of heaven are inconceivable, the comfort of a faithful minister is not small; the joy of extensive success will be a full reward. To be fellow-workers with God and his Spirit is no little honor; to be subservient to the shed blood of Christ for men's salvation is not a light thing. To lead the armies of Christ forward through the thickest of the enemy; to guide them safely through a dangerous wilderness; to steer the vessels through such storms and rocks and sands and shelves, and bring it safely into the harbor of rest, requires no small skill and diligence. The fields now seem white for harvest;27 the preparations made for us are very great; the season of working is more calm than most of the ages before us have seen. We have carelessly loitered too long already; the present time is posting away; while we are trifling, men are dying; oh how fast they are passing into another world! And is there nothing in all this to awaken us to our duty, nothing to resolve us to speedy and unwearied diligence? Can we think that a man can be too careful and laborious under all these motivations and obligations? Or that a man who is blind himself, can be a fit instrument to illumine other men? Or that someone who is so senseless himself, can enliven others? What, sirs! Are you, who are men of wisdom, as dull as the common people? And do we need a torrent of words to persuade you to take up your known and weighty duty? One would think it should be enough to put you to work; to show a line in the Book of God; to prove it to be his will; or to prove to you that the work has a tendency to promote men's salvation. One would think the very sight of the misery of your neighbors would be a sufficient motive to elicit your most compassionate endeavors for their relief. If a cripple just unwraps his sores, and shows you his disabled limbs, it will move you without words; will souls who are near to damnation not also move you?

O happy church, if the physicians were only healed themselves! If we did not have too much of the infidelity and stupidity which we daily preach against in others; and if we were more soundly persuaded of what we persuade others; and if we were more deeply affected by the wonderful things with which we want to affect them! If only there were such clear and deep impressions upon our own souls of those glorious things which we daily preach, oh what a change it would make in our sermons, and in our private course of life! Oh what a miserable thing it is to the Church and to themselves, that men preach of heaven and hell before they soundly believe that there are such things, or before they have felt the weight of the doctrines they preach! It would amaze a sensible man to think about the matters of which we preach and talk, about what it means for the soul to pass out of this flesh, and appear before a righteous God, and enter into unchangeable joy, or unchangeable torment! Oh, with such amazing thoughts dying men apprehend these things! How such matters should be preached and discussed! Oh the gravity, the seriousness, the incessant diligence, which these things require!

I do not know what others think of them, but for my part, I am ashamed of my stupidity. I wonder at myself that I do not deal with my own and others' souls, as someone who looks for the great day of the Lord. I wonder that I can have room for almost any other thoughts or words, and yet such astonishing matters do not wholly absorb my mind. I marvel how I can preach of them slightly and coldly, and how I can leave men alone in their sins and not go to them, and beg them for the Lord's sake to repent, however

they may take it, and whatever pains or trouble it may cost me! I seldom come out of the pulpit, without my conscience striking me that I have not been more serious and fervent in preaching. It does not accuse me so much for lack of embellishments or elegance, nor for using an unattractive word; but it asks me, "How could you speak of life and death with such a heart? How could you preach of heaven and hell in such a careless, lethargic way? Do you believe what you say? Are you in earnest or in jest? How can you tell people that sin is such an awful thing, and that so much misery lies upon them and before them because of it, and yet be no more affected by it? Should you not weep over such people, and should your tears not interrupt your words? Should you not cry aloud, and show them their transgressions, and entreat and beg them as you would for life and death?" Truly, this is the peal that conscience rings in my ears, and yet my drowsy soul will not be awakened.

Oh what a thing is an insensitive and hardened heart! O Lord, save us from the plague of infidelity and hard-heartedness ourselves, or else how will we be fit instruments to save others from it? Oh, do to our own souls what you would use us to do on the souls of others! I am even confounded to think what a difference there is between my sickbed understanding, and my pulpit understanding, of the life to come. How can it seem so light a matter to me now, when it seemed so great and dreadful a matter on my sickbed (and I know it will be so again when death looks me in the face), especially when I know and think of that approaching hour daily? And yet these thoughts will not restore such a working understanding! O sirs, surely if you had all conversed with our neighbor Death as often as I have, and had as often received the sentence of death in yourselves, you would have a disquieted conscience, if not a reformed life, with regard to your ministerial diligence and fidelity. And you would have something within you that would frequently ask questions such as these: "Is this all the compassion you have for lost sinners? Will you do no more to seek and to save them? Look how many there are around you who are still the visible sons of death! What have you said to them, or done for their conversion? Will they die and be in hell before you will speak one serious word to them to prevent it? Will they curse you there forever, because you did not do more in time to save them?"

Such cries of conscience ring in my ears daily, though the Lord knows I have too little obeyed them. May the God of mercy pardon me, and awaken me, along with the rest of his servants who have been sinfully negligent in this way. I confess to my shame that I seldom hear the bell toll
for someone who is dead, without my conscience asking me, "What have you done to save that soul before it left the body? There is one more who has gone to judgment; what did you to prepare him for it?" And yet I have been slothful and reluctant to help those who survive. When you are laying a corpse in the grave, how can you do other than think to yourselves, "Here lies the body; but where is the soul? And what have I done for it before it departed? It was part of my charge; what account can I give of it?"

O sirs, is it a small matter to you to answer such questions as these? It may seem so now, but the hour is coming when it will not seem so. "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts." He will condemn us much more, and with another kind of condemnation than our conscience uses. The voice of our conscience is a quiet voice, and the sentence of our conscience is a gentle sentence, compared to the voice and the sentence of God. Alas! Conscience sees just a little bit of our sin and misery compared to what God sees. What mountains these things would appear to your souls, which now seem molehills. What beams these would be in your eyes, which now seem splinters, if you could only see them with a clearer light (I dare say, as God sees them). We can easily adapt and plead our cause with our conscience either by bribing it, or by bearing its sentence. But God is not so easily dealt with, nor is his sentence so easily borne. "Wherefore we receiving," and preaching, "a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." But because you will not say that I frighten you with monsters, and tell you of dangers and terrors when there are none, I will show you here the certainty and sureness of that rise up against us and condemn us if we willfully neglect this great work after this.

(1) Our parents, who destined us to the ministry, will condemn us, and say, "Lord, we devoted them to your service, and they made light of it, and served themselves."

(2) Our masters who taught us, our tutors who instructed us, the schools and universities where we lived, and all the years that we spent in study, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us; for why was all this done, except for the work of God?

(3) Our learning and knowledge and ministerial gifts will condemn us; for to what purpose did we partake of these, except for the work of God?
(4) The act of voluntarily undertaking the charge of souls will condemn us; for all men should be faithful to the trust which they have undertaken.
(5) All the care of God for his Church, and all that Christ has done and suffered for it, will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us if we are negligent and unfaithful,; because by our neglect we destroyed those for whom Christ died.

(6) All the precepts and charges of Holy Scripture, all the promises of assistance and reward, all the threats of punishment, will rise up against us and condemn us; for God did not speak all this in vain.

(7) All the examples of the prophets and apostles, and other preachers recorded in Scripture, and all the examples of the faithful and diligent servants of Christ in these latter times, and in the places around us, will rise up in judgment and condemn us; for all these were for our imitation, and to provoke us to a holy emulation in fidelity and ministerial diligence.

(8) The Holy Bible that lies open before us, and all the books in our studies that tell us of our duty, directly or indirectly, will condemn the lazy and unprofitable servant; for we do not have all these helps and furnishings in vain.

(9) All the sermons that we preach to persuade our people to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, to lay forceful hands upon the crown of life, and take the kingdom by force,34 to strive to enter at the narrow gate, and to run so as to obtain the prize, will rise up against the unfaithful and condemn them; for if it so dearly concerns them to labor for their salvation, does it not concern us who have charge of them to also be forceful, laborious, and unwearied in striving to help with their salvation? Is it worth their labor and patience, and not also worth ours?

(10) All the sermons that we preach to them to present the evil of sin, the danger of a natural state, the need of a Savior, the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, yes, and the truth of the Christian religion, will rise up in judgment against the unfaithful, and condemn them. And a sad review it will be to them, when they are forced to think, "Did I tell them of such great dangers and hopes in public, and would I not do more in private to help them? What? Tell them daily of damnation, and yet let them run into it so easily? Tell them of such glory, and scarcely speak a word to them personally to help them towards it? Were these such great matters to me at church, and such small matters when I came home?" Ah! This will be dreadful self-condemnation.

(11) All the sermons that we have preached to persuade other men to such duties – as neighbors who exhort one another daily, and parents and masters who teach their children and servants the way to heaven – will rise up in judgment against the unfaithful, and condemn them. For would you persuade others to do what you yourselves will not do, as far as you can? When you threaten them for neglecting their duty, how much more you threaten your own souls!

(12) All the income which we take for our service, if we are unfaithful, will condemn us; for who will pay a servant to take his pleasures, or sit idle, or work for himself? If we have the fleece, 37 surely it is so we may look after the flock; by taking wages, we obligate ourselves to the work.

(13) All the witness that we have borne against the scandalous, negligent ministers of this age, and all the endeavors we made to remove them, will condemn the unfaithful; for God is no respecter of persons. If we are their successors in such sins, then we spoke all that against ourselves. Just as we condemned them, God and others will condemn us, if we imitate them. And, though we may not be as bad as they were, it will prove sad if we are even like them.

(14) All the judgments God executed on negligent ministers in this age, before our own eyes, will condemn us if we are unfaithful. Has he made idle shepherds and pleasure-seeking drones a stench in the nostrils of the people? And will he honor us if we are idle and pleasure-seeking? Has he sequestered them, and thrown them out of their homes, and out of their pulpits, and treated them as dead while they are still alive, and made them a mockery and an example in the land? And yet we dare imitate them? Are their sufferings not our warnings? And did all this not befall them as an example to us? If anything in the world would awaken ministers to self-denial and diligence, I think we have seen enough to awaken us to it. Would you have imitated the old world if you had seen the flood that drowned it? Would you have indulged in the sins of Sodom– idleness, pride, gluttony – if you had seen the flames which consumed it rising up to heaven?

Who would have been a Judas if he had seen him hanged and burst open? And who would have been a lying, sacrilegious hypocrite, if he had seen Ananias and Sapphira die?40 And who would not have been afraid to contradict the gospel, if he had seen Elymas struck with blindness? And will we prove idle, self-seeking ministers, when we have seen God scourging such men, driving them out of his temple,42 and sweeping them away like dirt into the gutters?

God forbid! For then how great and how manifold our condemnation is.

(15) Lastly, all the days of fasting and prayer which have been kept in England in recent years for a reformation, will rise up in judgment against the un-reformed, those who will not be persuaded to do the painful part of the work. This, I confess, so heavily aggravates our sin that I tremble to think of it. Was there ever a nation on the face of the earth, which so long and so solemnly followed God with fasting and prayer, as we have done? Before the parliament began, we were bowed frequently and fervently in secret! After that, for many years together, we had a monthly fast commanded by the parliament, besides frequent private and public fasts on other occasions. And what was all this for? Whatever means we looked at for some time, the end of all our prayers was still Church-reformation, and in that, our prayers were especially for these two things: a faithful ministry, and the exercise of discipline in the Church. And if it once entered the hearts of the people, or even our own hearts, to imagine that when we had all we wanted and the matter was put into our hands to be as painstaking as we could, and to exercise what discipline we would, that we would do nothing more than publicly preach, that we would take no pains to personally catechize and instruct our people, nor exercise any significant part of discipline at all? It astonishes me to think of it. What a depth of deceit is in the heart of man! What? Are good men's hearts so deceitful too? Are all men's hearts so deceitful? I confess that I told many soldiers and other carnal men at that time that, although they had fought for a reformation, I was confident they would abhor it, and be its enemies, once they attained it. Once they realized that the yoke of discipline would pinch their own necks, and when they were catechized and dealt with personally, and reproved for their sin in both private and public, and brought to public confession and repentance, or avoided

as impenitent, they would scorn and spurn all this, and see the yoke of Christ as tyranny. But little did I think that the ministers would drop it all, and put almost none of this on them; but instead leave them alone for fear of displeasing them, and let everything go on as before.

Oh, the earnest prayers which I have heard for a serious ministry, and for discipline! It was as if they had even wrestled for salvation itself. Indeed, they commonly called discipline, "the kingdom of Christ, or the exercise of his kingly office in his church," and that is how they preached and prayed for it, as if establishing discipline had been establishing the kingdom of Christ. I never thought then that they would refuse to establish it when they were free to do so. What! Is the kingdom of Christ now considered of no particular interest or concern?

What if the God of heaven, who knew our hearts in this matter, had with his dreadful voice given us, in the middle of our prayers and cries, or during one of our public monthly fasts, this answer in the presence of the assembly? "You deceitful-hearted sinners! What hypocrisy is this, to weary me with your cries for what you will not have, even if I would give it to you; and thus you lift up your voices to ask for what your souls abhor! What is reformation, except the instruction and importunate persuading of sinners to accept my Christ and my grace as offered to them, and governing my Church according to my word? Yet you will not be persuaded to do these things, which are your work, because you find them troublesome and disagreeable. Though I have delivered you, it is not me, but yourselves, whom you want to serve. I must be as earnest to persuade you to reform the Church, in doing your own duty, as you are earnest with me to grant you liberty for reformation. And, when all is done to grant you liberty, you will still leave your work undone; and it will be a long time before you are persuaded to do my work." If the Lord, or any messenger of his, had given us such an answer, would it not have shocked us? Would it not have seemed incredible to us that our hearts would become as they now prove to be? Would we not have said, as Hazael said, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Or as Peter said, "Though all men forsake you, yet I will not." Well, brothers, sad experience has shown us our frailty. We have refused the troublesome and costly part of the reformation that we prayed for. But Christ still turns back, and looks upon us with a merciful eye. Oh if we still had the hearts to go out immediately and weep bitterly, and to do no more as we have done, lest a worse thing come upon us; and now, instead, to follow Christ, whom we have so far forsaken, through his labor and suffering, even to the point of death!

I have thus shown you what will come of it, if you will not set yourselves faithfully to this work, to which you are under so many obligations and engagements. What an inexcusable thing our neglect will be, and how great and manifold a condemnation it will expose us to! Truly, brothers, if I did not understand the work to be exceedingly important to you, to the people, and to the honor of God, I would not have troubled you with so many words about it, nor would I have presumed to speak so sharply as I have done. But when the question is about life and death, men are apt to forget their reverence and courtesy and compliments and good manners. For my own part, I understand that this is one of the best and greatest works I will ever put my hand to in my life; and I truly think that if your thoughts of it are like mine, then you will not think my words are too many or too sharp. I can well remember the time when I was earnest to reform matters of ceremony. If I were cold in such a substantial matter as this, how disorderly and disproportionate my zeal would appear to have been back then! Alas! Can we think the reformation is finished when we have only tossed out a few ceremonies, and changed some vestures, gestures, and forms? Oh no, sirs! It is converting and saving souls that is our business. That is the main part of reformation, the one that does the most good, and tends most to save the people.

And now, brothers, the work is before you. It consists in personally instructing all the flock, as well as in public preaching. Others have done their part and borne their burden, and now comes yours. You may easily see how great a matter lies upon your hands, and how many will be wronged if your fail in your duty, and how much will be lost by sparing your labor. If your labor is worth more than the souls of men, and more than the blood of Christ, then sit still, and do not look after the ignorant or the ungodly. Instead, follow your own pleasure or worldly business, or take your ease; do not displease sinners, or your own flesh, but instead let your neighbors sink or swim. If public preaching will not save them, let them perish. But, if the case is far different than that, then you had best look around you.

PART II - OBJECTIONS TO THIS DUTY

I will next answer some of those objections which might be made to the practice I have been recommending.

OBJECTION 1:

We teach our people in public; how then are we to additionally teach them one by one?

ANSWER:

You pray for them in public: must you not also pray for them in private? Paul taught every man, and exhorted every man, and did so both publicly, and from house to house, night and day, with tears.49 But why need we say more, when experience speaks so loudly on this subject? I am daily forced to wonder how lamentably ignorant many of our people are, who seemed to diligently hear me these past ten or twelve years, while I spoke as plainly as I was able to speak. Some do not know that each person in the Trinity is God; nor that Christ is God and man; nor that he took his human nature to heaven; nor what they must trust in for pardon and salvation; nor many similar important principles of our faith. Indeed, some who constantly come to private meetings are still grossly ignorant: whereas, by one hour's personal instruction in private, they seem to understand more, and better accept it than they did in all their lives before.

OBJECTION 2:

All who are in the parish are not in the church, nor do I take pastoral charge of them; and therefore I am not satisfied that I am bound to take these pains with them.

ANSWER:

[a] The usual income which most receive is for teaching the whole parish, even though you are not obliged to take them all into the church.

[b] Why do we need to look for a stronger obligation than the common bond that lies on all Christians, to further the work of men's salvation and the good of the Church, and the honor of God, to the utmost of their power; combine this with the common bond that is on all ministers to further these ends by ministerial teaching to the utmost of their power? Can it be a work that is so good, and so apparently conducive to greatly benefit men's souls, and yet you perceive no obligation to do it?

OBJECTION 3:

This course will take up so much time, that a man will have no opportunity to follow his studies. Most of us are young and inexperienced, and need much time to improve our own abilities, and to increase our own knowledge, which this course will entirely prevent.

ANSWER:

(1): We suppose that those whom we persuade to this work understand the substance of the Christian religion, and are able to teach it to others; the addition of lower and less necessary things is not to be preferred above this needed communication of the fundamental principles of religion. I highly value common knowledge, and I would not encourage anyone to treat it lightly; but I value saving souls more. That work, which is our great end, must be done whatever else is left undone. It is a very desirable thing for a physician to be thoroughly studied in his art, and to be able to see the reason for his practice, and to resolve whatever difficult controversies are before him. Say a physician had charge of a hospital, or lived in a city where pestilence was raging. And say he wanted to study fermentation, the circulation of the blood, blisters, and other similar and excellent points instead of visiting his patients and saving men's lives. If he turned them away, and let them perish, and told them he did not have time to give them advice because he must follow his own studies, I would consider that man a preposterous student; he preferred the indirect means of study before the ends of those studies: indeed, I would think him as a civil kind of murderer. Men's souls may be saved without knowing whether God predetermined the creature in all its acts; whether the understanding necessarily determines the will; whether God works grace in a physical or in a moral way of causation; what freewill is; whether God has scientiam mediam, or uses positive decrees when considering the blame for evil deeds; and a hundred similar questions, which are probably the things you would be studying when you should be saving souls. Get to heaven, and help your people get there, and you will know all these things in a moment, and a thousand more, which now, by all your studies, you will never know. Is this not the most expeditious and certain way to knowledge?

(2) If you do not grow extensively in knowledge, you will by this way of diligent practice obtain intensive and more excellent growth. If you do not know as many things as others, you will know the great things better than they do; dealing seriously with sinners for their salvation will help give you far deeper understandings of the saving principles of religion than you will get by any other means; and a little more knowledge of these is worth all the other knowledge in the world. Oh, when I am looking heavenward, and gazing towards the inaccessible light, and aspiring after the knowledge of God, and find my soul so dark and distant, that I am ready to say, "I do not know God – he is above me – quite out of my reach," I think I could willingly exchange all the other knowledge I have for one glimpse more of the knowledge of God and of the life to come. Oh that I had never known a word in logic or metaphysics, nor known whatever schoolmen said, so that I had just one spark more of that light which would show me the things I must shortly see. For my part, I conceive that by seriously speaking of everlasting things, and teaching the creed, or a short catechism, you may grow more in knowledge (though not in the knowledge of more things), and prove to be much wiser men than if you spent that time studying ordinary, or interesting, yet less necessary things.

And perhaps it will be found, before we have finished, that this employment tends to make men much abler pastors for the Church, than private studies alone. The ablest physician, lawyer, and divine too, is the one who adds practice and experience to his studies; while the one who proves to be a useless drone, refuses God's service all his life under the pretense of preparing for it, and lets men's souls go to perdition while he pretends to be studying how to recover them, or to get more ability to help save them.

(3) Yet let me add, that though I count this the main thing, I want you to have more, because these subservient sciences are very useful; and therefore I say, so that you may have sufficient time for both, lose no time on vain recreations and employments; do not consume it in needless sleep; do not trifle away a minute. Do what you do with all your might and then see whether you will not have sufficient time for these other pursuits. If you set apart just two days a week to do this great work, you may find some time for common studies out of the other four.

Indeed, are not four days in the week (after spending so many years in the university) a fair proportion for men to study controversies and sermons? Though my weakness deprives me of an abundance of time, and extraordinary works take up six, if not eight tenths of my time, yet I bless God that I can find time to provide for preaching two days a week, notwithstanding the two days for personal instruction. Now, for those who are not troubled with any extra work (I mean writing and occupations of various kinds, besides the ordinary work of the ministry), I can only believe that, if they are willing, they may find at least two half-days a week for this work.

(4) Duties are to be taken together: the greatest is to be preferred, but none are to be neglected that can be performed; one is not to be pleaded against another, but each is to know its proper place. But if such a case of necessity arose that we could not carry on further studies and instruct the ignorant too, then I would throw aside all the libraries in the world rather than be guilty of the perdition of one soul; or at least, I know this would be my duty.

OBJECTION 4:

But this course will destroy the health of our bodies by consuming our energies, and allowing us no time for needed recreations; it will wholly keep us up from friendly interaction with others so that we never leave home, or enjoy a day with our friends to relax our minds; instead, we will seem discourteous and morose to others, and so we will tire ourselves; the bow that is always bent is in danger of breaking in the end.

ANSWER:

(1): This is the plea of the flesh for its own interest. The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the way," and he will not plow because of the cold. There is no duty of importance and self-denial that your flesh and blood will not give you "wise" reasons such as these against it. Who would ever have been burned at the stake for Christ if this kind of reasoning had been valid? Indeed, who would ever have become a Christian?

(2) We may take time for needed recreation and still attend to this work. An hour or half-hour walk before eating is all the recreation needed for the health of most of the weaker sorts of students. I have reason to know something of this by long experience. I have a body that has languished under great weaknesses for many years. My diseases have required as much exercise as almost any in the world, and I have found exercise the principal means of my preservation until now. Therefore, I have as great a reason to plead for it as any man I know. Yet I have found that the amount I mentioned has blessed my preservation, though I know that much more would likely have tended toward my greater health. Indeed, I do not know one minister in a hundred that needs as much exercise as me. Indeed, I know an abundance of ministers who scarcely use exercise at all, though I do not commend them in this. I have no doubt it is our duty to use as much exercise as necessary to preserve our health, so far as our work requires. Otherwise, for one day's work we would lose the opportunity of many days. But this may be done, and yet the work we are engaged in may be done too. On those two days a week that you set apart for this work, what hinders you from taking an hour or two to walk for the exercise of your bodies, and much more on other days? Some men do not limit their recreation to fixed hours, but must have hours to please their luxurious temperament, and not merely to fit them for their work. Such sensualists need to study the nature of Christianity better, and learn the danger of living after the flesh, and practice mortification and self-denial more, before they preach

these things to others.

If you must have your pleasures, you should not have put yourselves into a calling that requires you to make God and his service your pleasure, and that restrains you so much from fleshly pleasures. Is it not your baptismal obligation to fight against the flesh? Do you not know that much of Christian warfare consists in the combat between the flesh and the spirit? This is the difference between a true Christian and an unconverted man: the one lives after the spirit and mortifies the deeds and desires of the body; the other lives after the flesh. Do you make it your calling to preach this to others and, notwithstanding that, you must have your own pleasures? If you must, then for shame, give up preaching the gospel and professing Christianity, and instead profess what you are. As "you sow to the flesh, from the flesh you will reap corruption." Paul says: "Therefore I do not run uncertainly; I do not fight as someone who beats the air: but I keep my body under, and bring it into, subjection; lest somehow, after I have preached to others, I myself might be a castaway." Do not sinners such as we need to do so even more? What? Will we pamper our bodies and give them their desires in unnecessary pleasure, when Paul must keep his body under, and bring it into, subjection? Must Paul do this lest, after all his preaching, he might be a castaway? And yet do we not have much more cause to fear it ourselves? I know that some pleasure is lawful; that is, when it is useful to fit us for our work. But for a man to be so in love with his pleasures, as to needlessly waste his precious time for their sake, and to neglect the great work of men's salvation, indeed, to plead for the right to do so, as if it ought to be done, so as to justify himself in it – this is a wickedness that is inconsistent with the common fidelity of a Christian, much less the fidelity of a minister of Christ. Those wretches who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," must look to be loved by him accordingly. They are better fit to be cast out of Christian communion, than to be the leader of the Church, for we are commanded "to turn away from such." Recreations for a student must especially be used for the exercise of his body, for he has before him such a variety of delights for his mind. They must be used like a whetting stone is used by a mower for his blade; that is, only as needed for the work. We must be careful that they do not rob us of our precious time, but are kept within the narrowest possible bounds.

(3) The labor in which we are engaged is not likely to impair our health much. It is true, it must be serious; but that will only excite and revive our spirits, not spend them so much. Men can talk all day long about other matters without diminishing their health any; why may we not talk with men about their salvation without diminishing our own?

(4) What do we have our time and strength for, except to expend them for God? What is a candle made for, except to burn? Thus, burned and expended we must be; and is it not more fitting that it should be in lighting men's way to heaven, and in working for God, than in living for our flesh? How little difference there is between the pleasure of a long life, and of a short life, when they are both at an end! What comfort will it be to you at death that you lengthened your life by shortening your work? One who works much, lives much. Our life is to be valued according to its ends and its works, and not according to its mere duration. As Seneca says of a drone, "There he lies, not there he lives; and long he abode, though not long he lived." Will it not comfort us more at death, to review a short time faithfully spent, than a long life spent unfaithfully?

(5) As for visits and civilities, if they are more useful than our ministerial employments, you may break the Sabbath for them; you may forbear preaching for them; and you may also forbear this private work. Otherwise, how dare you make them a pretense for neglecting so great a duty?
Must God wait on your friends? Whether they are lords, or knights, or gentlemen, must they be served before God? Or is their displeasure or censure a greater hurt to you than God's displeasure or censure? Or dare you think, when God questions you about your neglects, that you can put him off with this excuse: "Lord, I would have spent more time seeking men's salvation, but such a gentleman, or such a friend, would have taken it badly, if I had not waited on him?" If you still "seek to please men," you are no longer the servants of Christ.56 Someone who dares to spend his life in flesh-pleasing, and man-pleasing, is bolder than I am. And one who dares waste his time in compliments, little considers his involvement with it. Oh if I could only improve my use of time according to my convictions about the need to improve it! I will not resent someone who has looked death in the face as often as I have, if he values his time. I profess that I wonder about those ministers who have time to spare, those who can hunt or shoot or bowl, or spend two or three hours, indeed, whole days together in similar recreations; or those who can sit an hour together in empty conversation, and spend whole days in friendly visits, and take long journeys to attain such ends. Good Lord! What do these men think about, when so many souls around them cry for help, and death gives us no respite; and they do not know how short a time they may be together with their people; when the smallest parish has so much work that it might employ all their diligence, night and day?

Brothers, I hope you are content to be dealt with plainly. If you have no sense of the worth of souls, and of the preciousness of that blood which was shed for them, and of the glory to which they are going, and of the misery of which they are in danger, you are not Christians; and consequently, you are very unfit to be ministers. And if you have that sense, then how can you find time for needless recreations, visits, or conversations? Like idle gossips, do you dare to chat and trifle away your time when you have works such as these to do, and so many of them?

O precious time! How swiftly it passes away! How soon will it be gone! What are the forty years of my life that have past? If every day were as long as a month, I think it would still be too short for the work of a day. Have we not already lost time enough in the days of our vanity? I never come to a dying man, who is not utterly stupid, who cannot better see the worth of time. O then, if they could call time back again, how loudly they would call! If they could only buy it, what would they not give for it? And yet we can

afford to trifle it away; yes, and allow ourselves to willfully cast off the greatest works of God. O what a befooling thing sin is, that it can thus distract men who seem so wise! Is it possible that a man of any compassion and honesty, or with any concern about his ministerial duty, or any sense of the strictness of his account, has time to spare for idleness and vanity?

And I must tell you further, brothers, that if someone else may take time for mere delight that is not necessary, you cannot do so; for your undertaking binds you to stricter attendance than other men are bound to. May a physician, when the plague is raging, take more relaxation or recreation than is necessary for his life, when so many are expecting his help in a case of life and death?

Just as his pleasure is not worth men's lives, still less is yours worth men's souls. Suppose a city were besieged, and the enemy is watching on one side for any advantage to surprise it; and on the other side it is seeking to fire it with grenades, which they throw in continually. Certain men undertake as their duty to watch the ports, and others undertake to quench the fire that may be kindled in the houses. I pray you, tell me what time would you allow these men for recreation or relaxation when the city is in danger, and the fires will burn on and prevail if they pause in their diligence? Would you excuse one of these men, if he leaves his work and says, "I am but flesh and blood; I must have some relaxation and pleasure"? Surely, at most, you would allow him only what was absolutely necessary. Do not protest this and say, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" For it is your mercy; and you are well, if you know when you are well, as I will show you in answering the next objection.

OBJECTION 5:

I do not think it is required of ministers to make drudges58 of themselves. If they preach diligently, and visit the sick, and perform other ministerial duties, and occasionally do good to those they interact with, I do not think God requires us to thus obligate ourselves to instruct every person distinctly, and make our lives a burden and a slavery.

ANSWER:

I showed before what use and weight this duty has, and how plainly it is commanded. Do you think that God does not require you to do all the good you can? Will you stand by and see sinners gasping under the pangs of death, and say, "God does not require me to make myself a drudge to save them?" Is this the voice of Christian or ministerial compassion? Is it not rather the voice of sensual laziness and diabolical cruelty? Does God give you work to do, and will you not believe that he would have you do it? Is this the voice of obedience, or of rebellion? It is all the same, whether your flesh prevails with you to refuse obedience to an acknowledged duty, and to say plainly, "I will obey no further than it pleases me"; or whether it makes you willfully reject the evidence that should convince you that it is a duty, and say, "I will not believe it is my duty unless it pleases me." It is the character of a hypocrite to make a religion of the cheapest part of God's service which fits with his fleshly ends and pleasure, and to reject the rest which is inconsistent with them. And in addition to these words of hypocrisy, this objection superadds the words of gross impiety. For what a wretched slander this is against the most high God, to call his service slavery and drudgery! What thoughts do such men have of their Master, their work, and their wages? The thoughts of a believer, or of an infidel? Are these men likely to honor God and promote his service, if they have such base thoughts of it? Do these men delight in holiness, if they consider it a slavish work? Can they believe the misery of sinners is real, if they consider it drudgery to be diligent to save them? Christ says, that "whoever does not deny himself and forsake all, and does not take up his cross and follow him, cannot be his disciple." But these men consider it slavery to labor hard in his vineyard, and to deny their own ease at a time when they have every accommodation and encouragement. This is so far from forsaking all! How can these men be fit for the ministry if they are such enemies to self-denial and to true Christianity?

I am therefore forced to say that the main misery of the Church arises from this: that so many are made ministers before they are Christians. If these men had seen the diligence of Christ in doing good, when he neglected his meal to talk with one woman, and when he had no time to eat bread, would they not have been of the same mind as his carnal friends who restrained him and said, "He is beside himself"? They would have told Christ he had made a drudge or slave of himself, and God did not require all this bother. If they had seen him preaching all day, and praying all night, it seems he would have received this same censure from them for his labor. I can only advise these men to search their own hearts, whether they sincerely believe the Word which they preach. Do you indeed believe that such glory awaits those who die in the Lord, and such torment awaits those who die unconverted? If you do, then how can you think any labor is too much for such weighty ends? If you do not believe it, then say so, and get out of the vineyard, and go with the prodigal son to keep swine! Do not undertake to feed the flock of Christ!

Do you not know, brothers, that it is your own benefit which you protest? The more you do, the more you will receive: the more you lay out now, the more you will have coming in. If you are strangers to these Christian paradoxes, you should not have undertaken to teach them to others. At present, our incomes of spiritual life and peace are commonly acquired in the course of duty; so the one who is most dutiful, has the most from God. Exercising grace increases it. Is it slavery to be more with God than other men, and to receive more from him than other men? It is the main solace of a gracious soul to do good, and to receive by doing; and to be greatly exercised about those Divine things which have his heart. Besides, we prepare to receive more hereafter: we spend out our talents to gain interest on them, and by improving them we will make five become ten, and so we will be made rulers of ten cities. Is it a drudgery to send to the most distant parts of the world, to exchange our trifles for gold and jewels? Do these men not seek to justify the profane when they characterize all diligent godliness as a drudgery, and reproach it as a strict and

tedious life, and say they will never believe that a man cannot be saved without all this bother? Yet that is exactly what they are saying in respect to the work of the ministry. They consider this diligence as disagreeable tediousness, and they will not believe that a man cannot be a faithful minister without all this bother!

It is a heinous sin to be negligent in so great a business; and to approve of that negligence; and to be so impenitent about it; and to plead against this duty as if it were not a duty at all. When they should be expending themselves to save souls, they say, "I do not believe that God requires it." This so aggravates the sin that, if the needs of the Church did not force us to use such men for lack of better ones, I can only think that they are worthy to be thrown out as rubbish, as "salt that has lost its savor, neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill…" "He that has ears to hear," adds Christ, "let him hear." If such ministers become an epithet and a reproach, then they may thank themselves, for it is their own sin that makes them vile. While they thus debase the service of Christ, they only debase themselves, and prepare for a greater debasement at the Last Day.

OBJECTION 6:

The times that Paul lived in required more diligence than ours. The churches were only in their planting stage, the enemies were many, and the persecutions were great. But now it is not so.

ANSWER:

This argument smacks of a man locked up in a study, and unacquainted with the world. Good Lord! Are there not multitudes around us who do not know whether Christ is God or man, nor whether he has taken his body to heaven or left it on earth, nor what he has done for their salvation, nor what they must trust in for pardon and everlasting life? Are there not many thousands around us who are drowned in presumption, security, and sensuality; and when we have done all we can in the pulpit, who neither believe nor understand us? Are there not many who are willfully drunk, worldly, and self-seeking; who are revilers, hate a holy life, and want nothing but death as their remedy? Are there not many who are ignorant, dull, and scandalous professors of Christ, and many who would divide, seduce, and trouble the Church? And yet the happiness of our times is claimed to be so great, that we may excuse ourselves from personal instruction, because there is less need in our times?! What else besides faith and experience will answer this objection? Believe better within, and look more without – among the miserable people of our own times – and I guarantee that you will not see any reason to spare your pains, nor lack of work or necessities to invite you to it. What conscientious minister does not find work enough to do from one end of the year to the other, even if he only has a hundred souls to care for? Are ungodly men less miserable because they profess Christ, or more miserable?

OBJECTION 7:

But if you make such severe laws for ministers, the Church will be left without them. For what man will choose such a toilsome life for himself? Or what parents will impose such a burden on their children? Men will avoid it both because of the bodily toil that is involved, and because of the danger to their consciences should they fail to discharge their task well.

ANSWER:

(1): It is not we, but Christ, who made and imposed these laws which you call severe. If I were to silence or misinterpret them, that would not relax them, nor would it excuse you. The one who made them knew why he did it, and he will expect obedience to them. Is infinite goodness to be questioned by us, or suspected of making bad or unmerciful laws? No, it is pure mercy in him to impose this great duty upon us. If physicians were required to be as diligent as possible in hospitals, or pest-houses,67 or with other kinds of patients, in order to save their lives, would there not be more mercy than rigor in this law? What! Must God let the souls of your neighbors perish in order to save you a little labor and suffering, and do so as a mercy to you? Oh, what a miserable world we would have if blind, self-conceited man ruled it!

(2) As for a supply of pastors, Christ will take care of that. The one who imposes this duty has the fullness of the Spirit, and he can give men the heart to obey his laws. Do you think Christ will allow all men to be as cruel, unmerciful, fleshly, and self-seeking as you? The one who undertook the work of our redemption, and who bore our transgressions himself, and who has been faithful as the chief Shepherd of the Church, will not lose all his labor and suffering for lack of instruments to carry on his work. Nor will he come down again to do all these things himself because no one else will do it. But he will provide men to be his servants and ushers in his school, men who willingly take up the labor, and rejoice to be employed in this way, and who consider this to be the happiest life in the world – the one you consider so great a toil, and would not exchange for your ease and your carnal pleasure. To save souls and propagate the gospel of Christ, they will be content to bear the burden and the heat of the day; they will fill up the full measure of the sufferings of Christ in their bodies; and work while it is day; and do whatever they do with all their might; and be servants of all; and do all this not to please themselves, but others, for their edification; and they will become all things to all men so that they may
save some; and they will endure all things for the elect's sake; and spend and be spent for their fellow-creatures. And they will do this even though the more they love others, the less they might be loved by them, and even though they might be accounted enemies for telling them the truth. Christ will provide such pastors to his people, men after his own heart, those who will "feed them

with knowledge and understanding," those who will not "seek what is theirs, but them." What? Do you think Christ wants servants such as you, who like Demas, would turn to the present world and forsake him?

If you dislike his service, you may seek better employment where you can find it, and boast of your gain in the end; but do not threaten him with the loss of your service. He has made the laws you will call severe for all who will be saved, as well as for his ministers. For all who will be his disciples must "deny themselves, and mortify the flesh, and be crucified to the world, and take up their cross, and follow him."85 And yet Christ will not be without disciples, nor will he conceal his seemingly hard terms from men in order to entice them to his service. Instead, he will tell them of the worst, and then he will let them come or not come, as they choose. He will call to them beforehand to count the cost. He will tell them that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head," that he does not come to give them worldly peace and prosperity, but to call them to "suffer with him, that they may reign with him," and "in patience possess their souls," to conquer, that they may be crowned and "sit down with him on his throne." And all this he will cause his chosen to do. Have you come to that pass with Christ, as the Israelites did with David, and now say as Saul did, "Will the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards?" Or as Sheba did, "We have no portion in David, no inheritance in Jesse's son. Every man to your tents, O Israel!" If you say "Now look to your own house, Son of David," you will see that Christ will look to his own house; and you should look to yours, as well as you can. And then tell me, at the hour of death and judgment, which is the better bargain? Is Christ more in need of you, or you of him?

As for scruples of conscience, from your fear of failing at the task, let me remark: First, it is not our involuntary imperfections that Christ will take so heinously; it is our unfaithfulness and willful negligence. Second, it will not serve your defense to run out of the vineyard on the pretense of having doubts that you can do the work as well as you ought to. He can follow you, and overtake you, just as he overtook Jonah, with such a storm that it will put you "in the belly of hell." To shirk a duty, because you cannot be faithful in its performance, will prove a poor excuse in the end. If men would consider at the beginning what the difference is between temporal things and eternal things, and what they will gain or lose by Christ, and if they only possessed that faith which is "the evidence of things not seen,"96 and had lived by faith and not by sense,97 all these objections would easily be resolved. The pleas our flesh and blood give for gratifying their desires would sound like children's reasoning, or like men who lost their senses.

OBJECTION 8:

But to what purpose is all this, when most of the people will not submit anyway? They will not come to us to be catechized; they will tell us they are too old to go to school. And therefore it is better to leave them alone, than to trouble them and ourselves to no purpose.

ANSWER:

(1) It is not denied that too many people are obstinate in their wickedness, that the "simple ones love simplicity, and the scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge." But the worse they are, the sadder their case is, and the more they are to be pitied, and the more diligent we should be for their recovery.

(2) I wish it were not the blame of ministers that a large portion of the people are so obstinate and contemptuous. If we only burned and shined before them as we ought to do; if we only had convincing sermons and convincing lives; if only we set ourselves to do all the good we could, whatever it might cost us; if only we were more meek and humble, more loving and charitable, and we let them see that we treat worldly things lightly compared to their salvation. Then much more might be done by us than has been done so far, and the mouths of many would be shut. Though the wicked will still be wicked, perhaps more would be receptive, and perhaps the number of wicked would be fewer, and maybe they would be calmer than they are. If you say that some of the ablest and most godly ministers in the country have just as many unreceptive and scornful parishioners as others do, then I answer that some able and godly men have been too lordly and distant; and some of them have been too uncharitable and worldly, and reluctant to do costly though necessary good works; and some of them have done but little in private, when they have done so excellently in public; and so they have hindered the fruit of their labors. But where these impediments do not exist, experience tells us that the success is much greater, at least regarding getting the people to be calmer and more teachable; yet we cannot expect they will all be brought to so much reason.

(3) The willfulness of the people will not excuse us from our duty. If we do not offer them our help, how do we know who will refuse it? Offering it is our part, and accepting it is theirs. If we do not offer it, we leave them excusable, for they have not refused it; but then we are left without excuse. But if they refuse our help when it is offered, then we have done our part, and delivered our own souls.

(4) If some refuse our help, others will accept it; and the success with them may be enough to reward all our labor, even if our labor were greater. Consider that all our people are not worked on by our public preaching either; and yet we must not, on this basis, give it up as unprofitable.

OBJECTION 9:

But what likelihood is there that men will be converted by this means, when they are not converted by the preaching of the Word, which is God's main ordinance to that end? "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the preaching of the word."

ANSWER:

(1) I showed you the advantages of this course before, and therefore I will not repeat them now; only, lest anyone still thinks that this will hinder him from preaching, I may add to the many benefits mentioned before that it will be an excellent means of helping you in preaching. For just as the physician's work is only half done when he understands the disease, so too, when you are well acquainted with your people's condition, you will know what to preach about. Talking for an hour with an ignorant or obstinate sinner will furnish you with as much useful material for your sermons as an hour's study will do; for you will learn what you need to insist on, and what objections they have to repel it.

(2) I hope there are none who are so silly as to think this conference I am talking about is not preaching. What? Is it the number to whom we speak that makes it preaching? Or do questions and answers not make it preaching? Surely a man may just as truly preach to one person, as he does to a thousand. And as we already said, if you examine Scripture, you will find that most preaching recorded in the New Testament was done by conference, frequently by question and answer, and that it was done with one or two, fewer or more, as opportunity served. Christ himself most commonly preached this way. Besides, we must take account of our people's learning if we value the success of our work.
There is therefore nothing from God, from the Scriptures, or from right reason, that would cause us to question our work, or be unwilling to do it. But from the world, from the flesh, and from the devil, we have much more, perhaps, than we anticipate. But against all these temptations, if we rely on God, and we look at our great obligations on the one hand, and the hopeful effects and blessed rewards on the other, then we will see that we have little cause to draw back or faint.

Let us set before us the pattern in our text (Ac 20:19-28), and learn our duty from there. O what a lesson is found here before us! But how badly it is learned by those who still question whether these things are their duty! I confess, some of these words of Paul have so often been presented before my eyes, and impressed upon my conscience, that I have been much convinced by them of my duty, and my neglect. And I think this one speech better deserves a twelve-month's study, than most things that young students spend their time on. O brothers! Write it on your study doors – make a copy for yourselves in capital letters, so that it may be ever before your eyes. If we could only learn two or three lines of it well, what preachers we would be!

[a] Our general business – Serving the lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears. [b] Our special work – Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock.

[c] Our doctrine – Repentance toward God, and faith toward our lord Jesus Christ.

[d] The place and manner of teaching – I have taught you publicly, and from house to house.

[e] His diligence, earnestness, and affection – I have not ceased to warn everyone night and day, with tears. This is what must win souls, and preserve them.

[f] His faithfulness – I kept back nothing that was profitable to you, and I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

[g] His disinterestedness and self-denial for the sake of the gospel – I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel: indeed, these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me, remembering the words of the lord Jesus, how he said "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

[h] His patience and perseverance – None of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received from the lord Jesus.

[i] His prayerfulness – I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

[j] His purity of conscience – For which I ask you to note this day that I am free of the blood of all men.

Write all this on your hearts, and it will do yourselves and the Church more good than twenty years' study of those lesser things which, though they may get you greater applause in the world, yet if separated from these other things, they will make you a "sounding brass and a clanging cymbal." The great advantage of ministers having a sincere heart is this: that the glory of God and the salvation of souls are their very end; and where that end is truly intended, no labor or suffering will stop them or turn them back; for a man must have his end, whatever it costs him. Whatever else he forgets, he will still retain this lesson: One thing is

needful; seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Hence he says, “Necessity is laid upon me, indeed, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.” This is what will most effectually make all our labors easy, and make all our burdens light, and make all our sufferings tolerable, and cause us to venture any risk: if we may only win souls to Christ. What I once made the motto of my colors in another war, I desire to keep before my eyes in this one (which is not entirely another war, based on my intentions). On one side, “He that saves his life will lose it.” On the other, “Do not ruin the cause for the sake of keeping one’s life.” The one who knows that he serves a God who will never allow any man to be a loser by him, need not fear whatever hazards he runs in his cause. And one who knows that he seeks a prize which, if obtained, will infinitely overbalance his cost, may boldly enlist his whole estate in it, and sell all he has to purchase so rich a pearl.104

Well, brothers, I will spend no more words in exhorting wise merchants to purchase such a bargain, nor in telling teachers such common truths; and if I have already said more than is necessary, I will be glad. I hope I may now take it for granted that you are resolved to keep the utmost diligence and fidelity in the work. On this supposition, I will now proceed to give you some directions to rightly manage it.

PART III - DIRECTIONS FOR THIS DUTY

It is so great a work which we have before us, that it would be a thousand pities if it were to be destroyed in its birth, and perish in our hands. And though I know we have a knotty generation to deal with, and that it is beyond the power of any of us to change a carnal heart without the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost, yet it is usual with God to work by means, and to bless the right endeavors of his servants. And so I cannot fear, but great things will be accomplished, and a wonderful blow will be dealt to the kingdom of darkness by this work, if it does not miscarry through the fault of the ministers themselves. The main danger arises from the lack of either diligence or skill. I have already spoken much about the former. As for the latter, I am so conscious of my own lack of skill, that I am far from imagining that I am fit to give directions to anyone except the younger and more inexperienced in the ministry. Therefore, I expect so much fairness in your interpretation of what I say, that you will think that I am now speaking only to such younger ministers. Yet I will say something, and not pass over it in silence, because the number of such ministers is so great. And I am apprehensive that the welfare of the Church, and of the nation, depends so much on the right management of this work.

The points about which you need to be concerned are these two:

1. To bring your people to submit to this course of private catechizing or instruction; for if they will not come to you, or allow you to come to them, then what good can they receive?

2. To do the work in such a way that will most tend toward its success.

ARTICLE 1 – Bringing People to submit to Instruction

I am first to give you some directions for bringing your people to submit to this course of catechizing and instruction.

1. The primary means of all is this: for a minister to so conduct himself in the general course of his life and ministry, that he may convince his people of his ability, sincerity, and unfeigned love for them. For if they see him as ignorant, they will despise his teaching, and think themselves as wise as he; and if they think he is self-seeking, or hypocritical, and someone who does not mean what he says, they will suspect all he says and does for them, and they will not regard him. On the other hand, if they are convinced that he understands what he is doing, and they think highly of his abilities, they will revere him, and more easily submit to his advice; and when they are persuaded of his uprightness, they will less suspect his motives; and when they perceive that he intends no private gain of his own, but merely their good, they will more readily be persuaded by him. Because those to whom I write are not supposed to be the ablest ministers, they may therefore despair of being revered for their abilities. I would say to them, you therefore have more need to study, and to labor to increase them; what you lack in ability must be made up for in other qualifications. Then your advice may be as successful as others.

If ministers were content to purchase an interest in the affections of their people at the highest cost to their own flesh, and if they would condescend to meet with them, and be familiar and affectionate with them, and prudent in their carriage, and abound in good works according to their ability, then they might do much more with their people than they ordinarily do. It is not that we seek an interest in them for our own sakes, but that we might be more able to promote the interest of Christ, and further their salvation. If it were not for their own sakes, it would be no great matter whether they love us or hate us; but what commander can do any great service with an army that hates him? And how can we think they will regard our counsel much, while they abhor or disregard the person giving it to them? Labor, therefore, to grow in the estimation and affection of your people. Then you may prevail better with them. But perhaps some will say, “What should a minister do if he finds he has lost the affections of his people?” To this I answer, “If they are so vile a people, that they do not hate him for any weakness or misconduct of his own, but merely for endeavoring for their good, and they would hate anyone who did his duty, then with patience and meekness he must continue to “instruct those who oppose themselves; God may perhaps give them repentance to acknowledge the truth.”105 But if it is because of any weakness on his part, or a difference of opinion about minor things, or bias against him, let him first try to remove the bias by all lawful means. If he cannot, then let him say to them, “It is not for myself, but for you that I labor; and therefore, seeing that you will not obey the Word from me, I want you to agree to accept someone else who may do you that good which I cannot do,” and leave them there. See whether another man may be found who is a better fit for them, and this man perhaps a better fit for another. For an ingenuous man can hardly stay with a people against their wills; and for his own benefit, a sincere man cannot remain in a place where he is likely to be unprofitable, and where he hinders the good which the people might receive from another man, one who might elicit greater affection and esteem from them.

2. Assuming this general preparation is finished, the next thing to be done is to use the most effectual means to convince them of the benefit and necessity of this course for their own souls. The way to win the consent of people to anything that you propose is to prove that it is good and profitable for them. You must therefore preach to them some powerful and convincing sermons to this purpose beforehand. Show them the benefit and necessity of knowing divine truths in general, and of knowing the first principles

in particular; and show that the aged have the same duty and need to know as others, and in some respects much more: e. g. from Hebrews 5:12: "For when you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again which are the first principles of the oracles of God; you have become like those who need milk, and not strong meat." This provides us with a number of observations that are suitable for our present purpose, such as:

(1) God's oracles must be a man's lessons.

(2) Ministers must teach these, and people must learn them from the ministers.

(3) The oracles of God have some fundamental principles, which all who wish to be saved must know.

(4) These principles must be learned first, that is, in the right order.

(5) It may be reasonably expected that people would thrive in knowledge according to the means of instruction which they possess; and if they do not thrive, it is their great sin.

(6) If any have lived in the church long, under the means of knowledge,108 and yet are ignorant of these first principles, they need to be taught them again, however old they may be

All this is plain from the text of this Hebrews passage. Using it, we have a fair opportunity to show them, by many clear and convincing reasons:

First, the necessity of knowing God's oracles.

Secondly, more especially knowing the fundamental principles.

Thirdly, how impossible it is to go the way to heaven without knowing it.

This is particularly true for the aged, who have sinfully lost so much time already, and have for so long promised to repent when they were old. These are the ones who should now be teachers of the young, and whose ignorance is therefore a double sin and shame. Now they have so little time in which to learn, and they are so near to death and judgment; they have souls to save or lose as well as others do. Convince them how impossible it is to go the way to heaven without knowing these things, when there are so many difficulties and enemies in the way. Men cannot do their worldly business without knowledge, nor learn a trade without an apprenticeship.

Convince them what a contradiction it is to be a Christian, and yet to refuse to learn; for what is a Christian but a disciple of Christ? How can he be a disciple of Christ, if he refuses to be taught by him? And if he refuses to be taught by his ministers, then refuses to be taught by Christ; for Christ will not come down from heaven again to teach them by his own mouth. He has appointed his ministers to keep school, and to teach them under Christ. To say, therefore, that they will not be taught by his ministers is to say they will not be taught by Christ; and that is to say they will not be his disciples, nor Christians.

Make them understand that it is not an arbitrary business of our own devising and imposing; but that the necessity is laid upon us; if we do not see after every member of the flock according to our ability, they may perish in their iniquity; and their blood will be required at our hand. Show them that it is God, and not we, who contrives and imposes the work; and therefore they blame God more than us in accusing [that it is unnecessary]. Ask them if they would be so cruel to their minister as to wish him to throw away his own soul, knowingly and willfully, for fear of troubling them by trying to hinder their damnation? Fully acquaint them with the nature of the ministerial office and the Church's need of it; how it consists in teaching and guiding all the flock. Just as they must come to the congregation, as students come to school, so they must be content to give an account of what they have learned, and to be further instructed, man by man. Let them know how this tends toward their salvation, how it profitably benefits their time, and how much vanity and evil it will prevent. Once they find it is for their own good, they will more easily yield to it.

3. When this is done, it will be necessary to give one of the catechisms to every family in the parish, whether rich or poor, so that they may be without excuse. For if you leave it up to them to buy them, perhaps half of them will not get them. But if we put copies into their hands, receiving them will be a kind of enlistment to learn them; and if they only read the exhortation (as likely they will), it will perhaps convince them and incite them to submit to it. As for delivering them, the best way is for the minister to first give notice in the assembly that they will be brought to their houses. Then he should go from house to house himself and deliver them, and take the opportunity to persuade them to do the work. And as he goes round, he should take a list of all the persons who have come to the age of discretion in the various families,109 so that he may know who to take care of and instruct, and who to expect when it comes to their turn. In distributing other books among my people, I formerly had every family call for them; but I found there was more confusion and uncertainty that way; and so I now adopt this as the better method. But in small congregations, either way may do.

As to the expense of the catechisms, if the minister is able, it would be well for him to bear the cost. If not, then the best financially situated of his people should bear the cost among them. Or, on a day of humiliation, in preparation for the work, let the collection that is made for the poor be employed to buy catechisms, and the people be encouraged to be more liberal than ordinary; and what is lacking, those with a heart for the work may make it up.

As to proceeding in an orderly manner, it will be necessary that we take the people in order, family by family, beginning a month or six weeks after the delivery of the catechisms, so that they may have time to learn them. And thus, taking them together in common, they will be more willing to come, and the hesitant will be more ashamed to hold off.

4. Be sure you deal gently with them, and remove all discouragements as effectually as you can. (1) Tell them publicly that if they have already learned any other catechism, then you will not urge them to learn this one, unless they desire it themselves: for the substance of all orthodox catechisms is the same; your only reason for offering them this one was its brevity and fullness so that you might give them as much as possible in a few words, and thus make their work easier. Or if any of them would rather learn some other catechism, then let them have their choice. (2) As for the old people who have weak memories, and are not likely to live long in the world, and who complain that they cannot remember the words, tell them that you do not expect them to fret too much about it, but to hear it read to them often, and to see that they understand it, and get the material into their minds and hearts; then they may be borne with, even though they do not remember the words. (3) Deal with those you begin with very gently, convincing and winning them, so that the report of it may be an encouragement to the others you come to later.

5. Lastly, if all this has not served to bring someone to submit, do not despise them; instead, go to them and reason with them. Learn what their reasons are, and convince them of the sinfulness and danger they invite by neglecting the help that is offered to them. A soul is so precious that we should not lose even one of them for lack of labor; but we should follow after them while there is any hope left, and not give up on them as a lost cause, until there is no remedy left. Before we abandon them, let us try our utmost, so we may experience their obstinate contempt, to warrant our forsaking them. Charity bears and waits long.

ARTICLE 2 – How to Deal Most Effectually with Them in the Work

Having used these means to procure them to come and submit to your instructions, we next consider how to deal most effectually with them in the work. Again I must say that I think it is a far easier matter to compose and preach a good sermon, than to rightly deal with an ignorant man for his instruction in the more essential principles of religion. As much as this work is disdained by some, I have no doubt it will try the gifts and spirit of ministers; and it will more fully reveal the difference between one man and another than preaching will do. Here I will, as fits my purpose, transcribe the words of a most learned, orthodox, and godly man: Archbishop Ussher. In his sermon on Ephesians 4.13 given before King James at Wanstead:"Your Majesty's care can never be sufficiently commended, in ordering that the main topics of the catechism should, in the ordinary ministry, be diligently propounded and explained to the people throughout the land; which I wish were as duly executed everywhere as it was piously intended by you."

Great scholars may possibly think it does not stand too well with their credit to stoop this low, and spend so much time teaching these rudiments and first principles of the doctrine of Christ; but they should consider that skillfully laying the foundation is a matter of greatest importance in the construction of the whole building; it is the masterpiece of the wisest building. "According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation," says the great apostle. Let the most learned of us try this whenever we please, and we will find that to lay this groundwork rightly (that is, to intentionally consider the average man's capacity to hear, and to make an ignorant man understand these mysteries in some good measure) will put us to the test of our skill, and it will trouble us a great deal more than if we were to discuss a controversy, or handle a subtle point of learning in the schools. Yet Christ gave it to his apostles, prophets, and evangelists, as his ordinary pastors and teachers, to bring all of us to the unity of this faith and knowledge,115 both learned and unlearned; neglecting this will frustrate the whole work of the ministry. For, however many sermons we preach to the people, our labor is lost as long as the foundation is unlaid, and the first principles upon which all other doctrine must be built are untaught.

The directions I think necessary to rightly manage the work are the following:

When your people come to you, one family or more, begin with a brief preface to soothe their minds and remove all offense, unwillingness, or discouragement, and to prepare them to receive your instructions. "My friends," you might say, "it may perhaps seem to some of you an unusual and troublesome business that I have placed on you; but I hope you will not think it unnecessary. For if I had thought so, I would have spared both you and myself this labor. But my conscience has told me – indeed, God has so solemnly told me in his Word – what it means to have charge of souls, and how the blood of those who perish will be charged to a minister who neglects them. So I dare not be guilty of it, as I have been up to now. Alas! All of our business in this world is to get well to heaven; and God has appointed ministers to be guides to his people, to help them safely there. If this is well done, all is done; and if this is not done, we are forever undone. The Lord knows how short a time you and I may be together; and therefore it concerns us to do what we can for our salvation and yours before we leave you, or before you leave the world. All other business in the world is like toys and dreams compared to this. The labors of your calling are just to prop up a cottage of clay, while your souls are hastening to death and judgment, which may even now be near at hand. I hope, therefore, you will be glad to have help in

such a necessary work, and will not think it too much that I put you to this trouble, when the trifles of the world cannot be had without much greater trouble." This, or something to this effect, may tend to make them more willing to hear you, and to receive instruction from you; and it may give you some indication of their knowledge and practice.

When you have spoken to them all this way, take them one by one, and deal with them as much as possible in private, out of the hearing of the rest. For some people cannot speak freely in front of others; and some will not endure being questioned in front of others – because they fear being embarrassed if others hear their answers. Some persons who can provide better answers, will be ready, when the previous person has left, to talk about what they heard, and to disgrace those who did not speak as well as they are able to. And so people will be discouraged, and persons who are reluctant to do the exercise will have an excuse to refrain from it, or to abandon it, saying they "will not come to be made a fool and a laughingstock." You must therefore be very careful to avoid all these pitfalls. But I have found by experience that the main reason we want to get them alone is that people will better accept plain and frank dealing with their sin, and misery, and duty, than they will accept it in front of others. If you do not have an opportunity to drive home the truth, and deal freely with their consciences, then you will frustrate everything. If you therefore have a convenient place to meet separately, let the rest stay in one room while you confer with each person privately in another. Only, to avoid scandal, we must speak to the women only in the presence of others; if we lose some advantage by this, there is no remedy. It is better to do that than to give the malicious an opportunity for reproach, and thus undermine all the work. Yet we may work it in such a way that, though some others are in the room, whatever things are less fit for them to know may be spoken in a low voice, so that they may not hear it. For example, they may be placed at the furthest part of the room; or at least, do not let anyone be present except the members of the same family who are more familiar with each other, and are not as likely to reproach one another. And then leave your most rousing examinations and reproofs for the ignorant, self-secure, and vicious, so that you may have clearer ground for your frank dealing, and so that hearing it may awaken the bystanders, to whom you do not seem to directly apply it. These small things deserve attention, because they fit the objectives of a work that is not small; and small errors may hinder a great deal of good.

Begin your work by reviewing what they have learned of the words of the catechism, and by listening to their answer to each question; if they are able to repeat only a little or none of it, then see whether they can recite the Creed and the Decalogue with you.

Then choose some of the weightiest points, and by asking further questions, test how far they understand them. In doing so, be careful of the following things:

(1) Do not begin with less necessary points, but with those which they themselves might think concern them most. For example: "What do you think becomes of men when they die? What will become of us after the end of the world? Do you believe that you have any sin; or that you were born with sin? What does every sin deserve? What remedy has God provided to save sinful, miserable souls? Has anyone suffered for our sins in our stead; or must we suffer for them ourselves? Who are those whom God will pardon; and who will be saved by the blood of Christ? What change must be made in all who will be saved; and how is this change effected? In what lies our principal happiness? And what is it that our hearts must be most set upon?" and other similar questions.

(2) Beware asking nice, unnecessary, doubtful, or very difficult questions, even though these are matters of greatest weight in themselves. Some conceited persons will be as busy with such questions, which they cannot answer themselves, and as critical of the poor people who cannot answer them, as they would if life and death depended on them.

You may perhaps ask them, "What is God?" Think how defective your own answer must be! You may be able to tell what he is not, sooner than what he is. If you ask, "What is repentance, what is faith, or what is forgiveness of sin?" Consider how many ministers you might ask before you get a right answer, or how many might disagree about it! Likewise you could ask them what regeneration is, or what sanctification is. You might think to yourself, "If men do not know what God is, or what repentance is, or what faith, conversion, justification, and sanctification are, then how can they be true Christians and be saved?" My answer is that it is one thing to know exactly what they are, and another thing to know their nature and effects, for such knowledge is more general and indistinct. And it is one thing to know, and another thing to express it. The very name, as commonly used, means something to them, and it is expressed by them, but without a definition; they partly understand what that name means, but they cannot define it with other words. For example, they know what it means to repent, to believe, and to be forgiven. By custom of speech they know what these mean, and yet they cannot define them except perhaps with a typical rural response: "To repent is to repent; and to be forgiven is to be forgiven." If they can say, "It means to be pardoned," it is a fair response. Yet do I not absolutely dissuade you from asking such questions; but do it cautiously, as when you suspect some gross ignorance in the point; especially about God himself.

(3) Contrive your questions in such a way that they may perceive what you mean, and that you are not expecting a nice definition, but a simple solution. Do not look for words, but ideas; and so do not let their answer be a bare "Yes", or "No", or merely selecting one of two descriptions you yourself provided. For example:

"What is God? Is he made of flesh and blood, as we are; or is he an invisible Spirit? Is he a man, or is he not? Did he have any

beginning? Can he die? What is faith? Is it believing the whole Word of God? What is it to believe in Christ? Is it becoming a true Christian the same thing as believing that Christ is the Savior of sinners, and trusting in him as your Savior to pardon, sanctify, govern, and glorify you? What is repentance? Is it only being sorry for sin, or is it changing the mind from sin to God, and forsaking it? Or does it include both?"

(4) When you perceive that they do not understand the meaning of your question, you must draw out their answer by an equivalent or expository question. If that will not do, then you must frame the answer into your question, and require only "Yes" or "No" in reply. I have often asked some very ignorant people, "How do you think that your sins, which are so many and so great, can be pardoned?" And they tell me, "By repenting and amending my life," and never mention Jesus Christ. I ask them further, "But do you think that your amendment can make amends to God or satisfy him for the sin that is past?" They will answer, "We hope so, or else we do not know what will." One would now think that these men had no knowledge of Christ at all, since they make no mention of him. I find some who indeed have no knowledge of him; and when I tell them the history of Christ, and what he is, and did, and suffered for them, they stand wondering at it like something strange. Some say they never heard this before, nor knew of it, even though they came to church every Lord's Day. But some, I perceive, give such answers because they do not understand the scope of my question; they assume that I take Christ's death for granted, and that I am only asking them, "What will satisfy God as your part under
Christ?" – though in this, too, they reveal sad ignorance. And when I ask them, "Can your good deeds merit anything from God?" they answer, "No; but I hope God will accept them." If I ask further, "Can you be saved without the death of Christ?" they say, "No." And if I ask still further, "What has he done or suffered for you?" they say, "He died for us"; or "He shed his blood for us"; and they profess that they place their confidence in that for salvation.

Many men have in their minds what is not ripe for utterance. Through an imperfect education and disuse, they are strangers to expressing things of which they nonetheless have some conception. And, by the way, you may see here the reason why you should deal very tenderly with the common people, for the matter of knowledge and defect in expression, as long as they are teachable and amenable, and willing to use the means afforded them. For many, even ancient godly persons, cannot express themselves with any tolerable propriety, nor learn even when expressions are put into their mouths. Some of the most pious, experienced, approved Christians I know (aged people), complain to me with tears that they cannot learn the words of the catechism; and when I consider their advantages – that they have enjoyed the most excellent helps, and have been in constant duty and in the best company for forty, fifty, or sixty years together – it teaches me what to expect from poor ignorant people, who never had that kind of company and discourse for even one year or a week. And so I do not reject them as hastily as some hot-headed and too lofty believers would have us do.

(5) If you find them at a loss, and unable to answer your questions, do not drive them too hard or too long with question after question, lest they think you intend only to puzzle and disgrace them. Instead, when you perceive that they cannot answer, step in yourself and take the burden off them, and answer the question yourselves. Do it thoroughly and plainly, and give a full explanation of the whole truth to them, so that by your teaching they may be brought to understand it before you leave them. And in this, it is usually necessary to take up the matter from the beginning, and take it in order, until you come to the point in question.

5. When you have finished with the trial of their knowledge, proceed next to instruct them yourselves, and this must be according to their varying capacities. If it is a believer who understands the fundamental principles of religion, move to something which you perceive he most needs, either explaining further some of the mysteries of the gospel, or laying the grounds of some duty which he may doubt, or showing the necessity of what he neglects, or pointing out his sins or mistakes, whichever may be most convincing and edifying to him.

If, on the other hand, it is someone who is grossly ignorant, then give him a plain, familiar recital of the sum of the Christian religion in a few words. For although it is already in the catechism, a more familiar way of expressing it may better help him to understand. For example:

"You must know that from everlasting there was one God, who had no beginning and will have no end, who is not a body as we are, but a most pure, spiritual Being. He knows all things, and can do all things, and has all goodness and blessedness in himself. This God is one God, yet Three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in a way that is above our understanding. And you must know, that this one God made all the world by his Word; he made the heavens the place of his glory, and he made a multitude of holy angels to serve him. But some of these, by pride or some other sin, fell from their high estate and have become devils, and will be miserable forever.

"After he had created the earth, he made man as his noblest creature here below, even one man and one woman, Adam and Eve. He made them perfect, without any sin, and put them into the Garden of Eden. He forbid them to eat of one tree in the garden, and told them that if they ate of it they should die. But the devil, who had first fallen himself, tempted them to sin. They yielded to his temptation, and thus fell under the curse of
God's law. But God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to be their Redeemer. In the fullness of time, he was made man, being born of a virgin, by the power of the Holy Ghost. He lived on earth among the Jews, about thirty-three years, during which time he preached the gospel, and worked many miracles to prove his doctrine. He healed the lame, the blind,

and the sick, and he raised the dead by his Divine power. In the end, he was offered upon the cross as a sacrifice for our sins to bear that curse which we should have borne.

"And now, if sinners will only believe in him, and repent of their sins, he will freely pardon all that is past, and will sanctify their corrupted nature, and at length he will bring them to his heavenly kingdom and glory. But if they make light of their sins and of his mercy, he will condemn them to everlasting misery in hell. Christ, having risen from the dead on the third day, appointed his ministers to preach this gospel to all the world. And when he had given this charge to all his apostles, he ascended into heaven before their eyes, where he is now in glory with God the Father, in our nature. At the end of this world, he will come again in our nature, and he will raise the dead to life again, and bring them all before him, so that they may 'give an account of all the deeds done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil.'117 Therefore, if you are to be saved, you must believe in Christ as the only Savior from the wrath to come; you must repent of your sins; you must, in short, be a wholly new creature, or there will be no salvation for you."

Some such short recitation of the principles of religion, in the most familiar way you can devise, with a brief touch of application in the end, will be necessary when you deal with the grossly ignorant. And if you see that they do not understand you, then go over it again, and ask them whether they now understand it, and try to fix it in their memories.

6. Whether they are grossly ignorant or not, if you suspect they are unconverted, endeavor next to make some prudent inquiry into their state. The best and least offensive way of doing this will be to prepare them for the inquiry by saying something that may soothe their minds, and might convince them of the need for the inquiry. Then use some article in the catechism to touch their consciences. For example:

"You see that the Holy Ghost, by the Word, enlightens men's minds, softens and opens their hearts, and turns them away from the power of Satan to God through faith in Christ, and that he 'purifies for himself a special people;'118 and you see that only these will be made partakers of everlasting life. Now, though I have no desire to needlessly pry into any man's secrets, yet, because it is the office of ministers to give advice to their people in matters of salvation, and because it is so dangerous to be mistaken about points which involve everlasting life or everlasting death, I entreat you to deal honestly with me, and tell me whether or not you ever found this great change in your own heart? Did you ever find the Spirit of God, by the Word, come in upon your understanding, with a new and heavenly life, which has made you a new creature? The Lord, who sees your heart, knows whether it is so or not; I pray you, therefore, see that you speak the truth."

If he tells you that he hopes he is converted (for all are sinners) but he is sorry for his sins, or something similar, then tell him more particularly, in a few words, of some of the plainest marks of true conversion. Renew and enforce the inquiry like this:

"Because your salvation or damnation is involved in this, I want to quickly help you a little in regard to it, so that you will not be mistaken in a matter of such importance, but so that you may find out the truth before it is too late. For just as God will judge us impartially, so we have his Word before us by which we may judge ourselves. This Word tells us most certainly who will go to heaven, and who will go to hell. Now the Scripture tells us that the state of an unconverted man is this: he sees no great comfort in the love and communion of God in the life to come, which may draw his heart there and away from this present world; but he lives to satisfy his carnal self, or the flesh; and the main bent of his life is that it may go well with him on earth. Whatever religion he has is just incidental, to keep him from being damned when he can no longer keep the world; so that the world and the flesh are highest in his esteem, and nearest to his heart. God and glory stand below them; all his service to God is just giving him what the world and flesh can spare. This is the case of every unconverted man. All who are in this condition are in a state of misery.

"But someone who is truly converted, has had a light shining into his soul from God, which has shown him the greatness of his sin and misery, and made it a heavy load on his soul; it showed him what Christ is, and what he has done for sinners, and it made him admire the riches of God's grace in Christ. Oh, what glad news it is to him: that there is still hope for such lost sinners as him; that so many and such great sins may be pardoned; and that pardon is offered to all who will accept it! He gladly entertains this message and offer! And for the time to come, he relinquishes himself and all that he has to Christ, to be wholly his, and to be disposed of by him, in accord with the everlasting glory which he has promised. He now has such a sight of the blessed state of the saints in glory that he despises everything this world has as dross and dung by comparison. There he lays up his happiness and his hopes, and he considers all the affairs of this life as just so many helps or hindrances in the way to that glory; so that the main care and business of his life is to be happy in the life to come. This is the case of everyone who is truly converted and who will be saved. Now, is this the case with you, or is it not? Have you experienced such a change as this upon your soul?"

If he says that he hopes he has, then get down to some particulars this way: "I ask you then to answer me these two or three questions:

(1) Can you truly say, that all the known sins of your past life are the grief of your heart, and that you feel everlasting misery is due you for them; and that, under a sense of this heavy burden, you have felt yourself a lost man, and have gladly entertained the news of a Savior, and thrown your soul upon Christ alone, for pardon by his blood?

(2) Can you truly say, that your heart is so far turned from sin, that you hate the sins which you once loved, and love that holy life which you once had no mind for; and that you do not still live in the willful practice of any known sin? Is there no sin which you are not heartily willing to forsake, whatever it may cost you; and no duty which you are not willing to perform?

(3) Can you truly say that you have so far taken the everlasting enjoyment of God for your happiness, that it has most of your heart, your love, desire, and care; and that you are resolved, by the strength of Divine grace, to let go of all that you have in the world, rather than risk it; and that it is your daily and your principal business to seek it? Can you truly say, that though you have your failings and sins, yet your main care, and the bent of your whole life, is to please God, and to enjoy him forever; and that you give the world God's leftovers, as it were, and not God the world's leftovers; and that your worldly business is like a traveller seeking provision for his journey, and heaven is the place that you take for your home?"
If he answers in the affirmative to these questions, tell him how great a thing it is for a man's heart to abhor his sin, and to sincerely store up his happiness in another world; and to live in this world for another that is out of sight. Therefore, express your desire to see that it is so indeed. Then turn to some of the articles in the catechism which address those duties which you most suspect him of omitting, and ask him whether he performs that duty; for instance, prayer in his family, or prayer in private, and spending the Lord's day in consecrated fashion.

I would, however, advise you to be very cautious about passing too hasty or final a judgment on those you deal with; it is not as easy as many imagine, to discern whether a man is certainly lost; you may do this work just as well without such an absolute conclusion, as you can with it.

7. If, however, you have discerned an apparent probability that the person is still unconverted, either by prior discovery of gross ignorance, or by these later inquiries into his spiritual state, your next business is to employ all your skill to bring his heart to a sense of his condition. For example:
"Truly, my friend, the Lord knows I have no intention to make your condition worse than it is, nor to bring you any fear or trouble without cause. But I assume you would consider me a treacherous enemy, and not a faithful minister, if I were to flatter you, and not tell you the truth. If you were to seek a physician in your sickness, you would want him to tell you the truth, even if it were the worst kind. Much more so here! For the knowledge of your physical disease may, by your fears, increase it; but here you must know it, or else you can never recover from it. I greatly fear that you are still a stranger to the Christian life. For if you were indeed a Christian, and truly converted, your heart would be set on God and the life to come, and you would make it your main business to prepare for everlasting happiness; and you dare not, you would not, live in any willful sin, nor in the neglect of any known duty.

"Alas! What have you done? How have you spent your time until now? Did you not know that you had a soul to be saved or lost; and that you must live in heaven or in hell forever; and that you had your life and your time in this world mainly for the purpose of preparing for another world? Alas! What have you been doing all your days that you are still so ignorant, or so unprepared for death, if it should find you now? If you had only
minded heaven as much as you did earth, you would have known more of it, and done more for it, and inquired more diligently after it, than you have up to now. You can learn how to do your business in the world; and why could you not learn more of the will of God, if you had just attended to it? You have neighbors who could learn more, who have had as much to do in the world as you, and who have had just as little time. Do you think that heaven is not worth your labor? Or that it can be had without any care or pains, when you know you cannot have the trifles of this world without them, and when God has bid you to seek first his kingdom and its righteousness? Alas! My friend, what if you had died before this hour in an unconverted state? What then would have become of you, and where would you now be? Alas! That you were so cruel to yourself as to risk your everlasting state as wantonly as you have! What were you thinking? Did you not know all this while that you must die shortly, and be judged as you were found? Did you have any greater work to do, or any greater business to tend to, than your everlasting salvation? Do you think that anything you can get in this world will comfort you in your dying hour, or purchase your salvation, or ease the pains of hell?"

Drive these things home with particular earnestness; for if you do not get to the heart, then you can do little or nothing; what affects the heart not is soon forgotten.

8. Conclude the whole thing with a practical exhortation, which must contain two parts: first, the duty to believe in Christ; and secondly, using the external means of grace for the time to come, and avoiding former sins. For example:

"My friend, I am heartily sorry to find you in so sad a condition, but I would be more sorry to leave you in it. Therefore let me entreat you, for the Lord's sake, and for your own sake, to regard what I will say to you concerning the time to come. It is of the Lord's great mercy that he did not cut you off in your unconverted state, that you still have life and time, that there is a remedy provided for you in the blood of Christ, and that pardon and sanctification and everlasting life are offered to you as well as to others. God has not left sinful man to utter destruction as he has the devils; nor has he made an exception in the offer of pardon and eternal life to you any more than to any other.

"If only you had a bleeding heart for sin, and could come believingly to Christ for recovery, and resign yourself to him as your Savior and Lord, and would be a new man for the time to come, then the Lord would have mercy on you in the pardon of your sins,

and the everlasting salvation of your soul. And I must tell you that, just as it must be the great work of God's grace to give you such a heart, so if ever he means to pardon and save you, he will make this change upon you: he will make you feel your sin as the heaviest burden in the world, as the most odious thing in itself, and he has rendered you liable to his wrath and curse; he will make you see that you are a lost man, and that there is nothing for you but everlasting damnation, unless you are pardoned by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit; he will make you see the need you have of Christ, and how all your hope and life is in him; he will make you see the vanity of this world and all that it can afford you, and that all your happiness is with God, in that everlasting life in heaven where you may, with the saints and angels, behold his glory and live in his love, and be employed in his praises. Let me tell you that, until this work is done upon you, you are a miserable man; and if you die before it is done, you are lost forever. For now, you have hope and help before you, but then there will be none.

"Let me therefore entreat you, as you love your soul, first, that you will not rest in the condition you are presently in. Do not be quiet in your mind until a saving change is worked in your heart. When you rise in the morning, think, 'Oh, what if this day were my last, and death were to find me in an unrenewed state?' When you are about your labor, think, 'Oh, how much greater a work have I yet to do to get my soul reconciled to God, and sanctified by his Spirit!' When you are eating, or drinking, or looking at anything that you possess in the world, think, 'What good will all this do me, if I live and die an enemy to God, and a stranger to Christ and his Spirit, and so perish forever?' Let these thoughts be upon your mind day and night until your soul is changed. Secondly, I entreat you to think to yourself seriously what a vain world this is, and how shortly it will leave you to a cold grave, and to everlasting misery, if you do not have a better treasure than that. Consider what it means to live in the presence of God, and to reign with Christ, and be like the angels. This is the life that Christ has procured for you, and is preparing for you, and offers you, if you will only accept it. Think whether it is not madness to slight such an endless glory, and to prefer these fleshly dreams and earthly shadows above it. Accustom yourself to considerations such as these when you are alone, and let them dwell on your mind. Thirdly, I beg you to accept this happiness, and this Savior, now, without any more delay. Draw near to the Lord Jesus who offers you this eternal life:

joyfully and thankfully accept his offer as the only way to make you happy; and then you may believe all your sins will be extinguished by him. Fourthly, resolve now to put away your former sins; find out what has defiled your heart and life, and cast it from you, as you would cast poison out of your stomach, and abhor the thought of taking it again.

My last request to you is that you will apply yourself to the diligent use of the means of grace until this change is worked in you, and then continue the use of these means until you are confirmed, and at last perfected.

(1) Because you cannot effect this change on your heart and life yourself, take yourself to God in prayer daily, and beg earnestly, as you would for your life, that he will pardon all your sins, and change your heart, and show you the riches of his grace in Christ, and the glory of his kingdom. Follow after God day and night with these requests.

(2) Fly from temptations and opportunities for sin, and forsake your former evil company; take yourself to the company of those who fear God, and will help you in the way to heaven.

(3) Be especially careful to spend the Lord's day in holy exercises, both public and private, and do not lose even one quarter of an hour of your time; but especially do not lose that most precious time which God has purposely given you so that you may set your mind on him, and be instructed by him, and prepare yourself for your latter end.

What do you say to these things? Will you do this now – or at least as much of it as you can? Will you give me a promise to this effect, and be studious to keep that promise from now on?"

And here be sure, if you can, to get their promise, and obligate them to their amendment, especially to use the means of grace, and to change their company, and to forsake their sins, because these are more within their reach. In this way they may wait for the accomplishment of the change that has not yet been worked in them. And do this solemnly, reminding them of the presence of God who hears their promises, and who will expect their performance. Afterward, when you have an opportunity, you may remind them of their promise.

9. As you dismiss them, do these two things:

(1) Soothe their minds again by a few words, diminishing anything like an offense. For example: "I pray you, do not take it badly that I have put you to this trouble, or dealt freely with you in this way. It is as little pleasure to me as it is to you. If I did not know these things to be true and necessary, I would have spared you this labor and myself; but I know that we will be here together only a little while. We are almost at the world to come already. Therefore it is time for all of us to look around us, and see to it that we are ready when God calls us."

(2) Because soon you may not have an opportunity to speak with the same persons, set them on their way toward finishing what you have begun. Engage the head of each family to call all his family to repeat, every Lord's day, what they have learned of the catechism; and to continue this practice until they have all learned it perfectly: and when they have done so, to continue to hear

them recite it regularly, so that they may not forget it; for even to the most judicious, it will be an excellent help to have in memory a Sum of the Christian Religion, as to its matter, method, and words.

As for the rulers of families themselves, or for those who are under heads who will not help them, if they have learned only some portion of the catechism, then engage them either to come to you again when they have learned the rest (though before their course of instruction), or else to go to some able experienced neighbor, and repeat it to him. And take the assistance of such persons when you cannot have time to do it yourself.

10. Have the names of all your parishioners by you in a book; when they come to repeat the catechism, note in your book who came, and who did not; and which are so grossly ignorant as to be unfit for the Lord's Supper and other holy communion, and which are not. And as you perceive the needs of each, deal with them appropriately for the future. But for those who are utterly obstinate and will not come to you, nor be instructed by you, deal with them as obstinate despisers of instruction should be dealt with in regard to sealing and confirming ordinances. That is, avoid them, and do not hold holy or familiar communion with them in the Lord's Supper or in other ordinances. Though some reverend brothers are in favor of admitting their children to baptism (and offended with me for contradicting it), yet I cannot, nor will I dare to do it upon any reason of their ancestors' faith, or of the dogmatic faith of these rebellious parents.

11. Through the whole course of your conference with them, see that the manner as well as the matter is suited to the desired end. Concerning the manner, observe these particulars:

(1) Make distinctions based the character of the persons with whom you have to deal. To the youthful, you must lay greater shame on sexuality, and show them the nature and need of mortification. To the aged, you must do more to disgrace this present world, and make them apprehensive of the nearness of their change, and the aggravations of their sin if they want to live and die in ignorance or impenitence. To inferiors and the young, you must be more free; to superiors and elders, more reverend. To the rich, you must show the vanity of this world; the nature and necessity of self-denial; the damnableness of preferring the present state to the next; together with the necessity of improving their talents in doing good to others. To the poor, you must show the great riches of glory which are offered to them in the gospel, and how well present comfort may be spared when everlasting joy may be had. You must also emphasize those sins which each one's age, or sex, or temperament, or calling and employment in the world, most inclines them to; as in females, loquacity,121 evil speech, passion, malice, pride; in males, drunkenness, ambition, etc.

(2) Be as affable, familiar, and plain as possible, with those who are of weaker capacity.

(3) Give them Scripture proof of everything you say, so that they may see that it is not just you, but God who speaks to them by you.

(4) Be as serious as you can in the whole exercise, but especially in the application part. I scarcely fear anything more than that some careless ministers will do the work sloppily, and do it all superficially and without life, and destroy this as they do all their other duties, by turning it into a mere formality: putting a few cold questions to their people, and giving them two or three cold words of advice, without any life and feeling in them, which is not likely to produce any feeling in the hearers. But surely one who values souls, and knows what an opportunity is before him, will go through the exercise with deep seriousness, and will be as earnest with them as for life or death.

(5) To this end, I think it necessary that, both before and during the work, we take special pains with our own hearts, to excite and strengthen our belief in the truth of the gospel, and in the invisible glory and misery that are to come. I am confident this work will test the strength of our belief exceedingly. Someone who is only a Christian superficially, and who is not sound at the bottom of his faith, will likely feel his zeal failing him, especially when the duty has grown commonplace; for he lacks belief concerning the very things he must address. A pretended and hypocritical fervency will not hold out long in duties of this kind. A pulpit will permit more of it than a conference with poor ignorant souls. For the pulpit is the hypocrite's stage: there, and in the press, and in other public acts, where there is room for ostentation,122 you have the minister's best, perhaps his all. Another kind of man must effectually do the work which we now have in hand.

(6) It is, therefore, very fitting that we prepare ourselves for it by private prayer; and if time permits, and there are many together, it would be good to begin and end with a short prayer with our people.

(7) Carry on everything, even the most serious passages, with a clear demonstration of your love for their souls; make them feel through the whole of it, that you aim at nothing but their salvation. Avoid all harsh and discouraging language.

(8) If you do not have time to deal so fully with each individual as is here directed, then do not omit the most necessary parts. Take several of them together who are friends, and who will not seek to divulge each other's weaknesses, and speak to them in common of those things which concern all. Only the examinations of their knowledge and state, and of their convictions of sin and misery, and special directions to them, must be used with regard to individuals; but take heed of slopping it over with an unfaithful

laziness, or by being too brief, without a real necessity.

12. Lastly, if God enables you, extend your charity to the poorest sort, before they leave. Give them something for their relief, and for the time that has been taken from their labors, especially to encourage those who do best. To the rest, promise them something when they have learned the catechism. I know you cannot give what you do not have, but I speak to those who can. And now, brothers, I am done with my advice, and I leave you to the practice. Though the proud may receive it with scorn, and the selfish and slothful with distaste, or even indignation, I have no doubt that God will use it to awaken many of his servants to their duty, and to promote the work of right reformation. He will do so in spite of the opposition by sin and Satan. And his blessing will accompany the present undertaking to save many a soul, to the peace of you who undertake it, to excite his servants throughout the nation to get behind you, and to increase the purity and unity of his churches.

Amen.

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