

7. *Lastly*, Maintenance. This by divine right is due from people to their ministers, 1 Cor. ix. 14.

*Secondly*, I shall shew the duty of ministers to their people,

1. They owe tender love to the souls of their people.—They should be full of bowels towards them, 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8. which should appear in their preaching, and all parts of their work.

2. Diligent and faithful dispensing of all gospel-ordinances to them, word, sacraments, &c. It is a labour, and they must take it so, willing to spend and be spent in the service of their Lord, and of precious souls. And indeed they are as lighted candles, which while they shine waste, 2 Tim. iv. 2; 1 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

3. Behaving so as they may be examples of holiness and tenderness, Tit. ii. 7. for precept, without example, will have little influence.

4. Watching over their flocks, that being ready to be acquainted with their state and case, they may be in capacity to instruct, comfort, and admonish them, &c. as the case requires, Heb. xiii. 7.

5. *Lastly*, Praying for them, Eph. i. 15, 16.

SECONDLY, I come to shew the duties of ruling elders and the people over whom they are appointed overseers. And as we are this day to ordain some to that office, I shall discourse of this subject a little more fully than I would otherwise have done in a catechetical exercise. I propose to discourse on this occasion, from that text,

1 TIM. v. 17.—*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*

THE church is the kingdom of Christ, and the holy scriptures are the book of the manner of the kingdom. There the institution of church officers, their work, and the duties owing them by others, are only to be found. And whatever officers of the church men pretend to be, if their office be not found there, they have no due call to their work, but are usurpers and intruders.

In the words read, the apostle gives us the work assigned by Jesus Christ to elders of the church, and what is due for it unto them from the church: *Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour.* Here he distinguishes two sorts of elders of the church.

1. Ruling elders. The word *elder* originally is a name of age; but here, and in many other places of scripture, it is evident, that it is the name of an office, being the name of ruling church-officers, because usually taken out of the elder sort, or that, though of the

younger, yet they ought to be men of gravity and authority. Here consider,

(1.) The work of these elders, from whence their designation is taken. It is *to rule*, and govern the church, as those who are set over it by the Lord. For the Lord has not left his church in a state of anarchy and confusion, but appointed some to rule, and others to be ruled.

(2.) How they ought to manage their work, *well*; *i. e.* rightly, worthily, according to the rules prescribed them by Christ, the chief bishop.

(3.) What is due from the church to those who so manage it *double, i. e.* abundant *honour*. This honour implies two things, *viz.*

(1.) Maintenance. This is evident from ver. 18. (2.) Esteem and reputation, Phil. ii. 29.

Episcopalians, as they have given us the prelate, an officer whom Christ never appointed, so they rob us of the ruling elder, which the text so plainly discovers to be a church-officer of divine institution. To evite the force of which, they turn this elder into various shapes; but in vain. For by the elders that rule well, cannot be understood superannuated ministers, as some say; for it is evident that the preaching elder is to have more honour than this elder. But it is shocking to the common sense of the people of God, to honour and esteem a young laborious minister more than an old one, who has spent his strength in the work. Nor by them are to be understood magistrates as others say; for at this time they were not so much as members of the church. Nor are deacons meant hereby, as others say; for their work is not to rule the church, but to serve tables, Acts vi. 2. Nor are we to understand by them the fixed pastors of flocks, in opposition to those that travelled up and down to visit and confirm the churches, whom they understand by those that labour, namely, to weariness in the last part of the verse. For the work of the fixed pastor is such a labour too, 1 Thess. v. 12. Nor yet such as were unfit for preaching yet administered the sacraments, prayed with the church, and privately admonished the unruly. But such an officer, I am sure, is unknown to the Bible. It remains, then, that they are those whom we call ruling elders, whose work is, as in the text, to govern the church, but not to preach the word; and therefore they are distinguished from preaching elders, as is plain from the particle *especially*; as Phil. iv. 24. 'All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household.' Chiefly is the same word in the Greek that is here rendered especially; and it plainly implies, that there were some saints at Rome not of Cæsar's household. So here are described some elders that rule well, and do not labour in word and doctrine.

2. Preaching elders: Their work is to preach the gospel; to labour in the word and doctrine. To them in a special manner, by the text, *double honour* is due, *i. e.* maintenance and respect, forasmuch as their office is greater and more honourable, not only in ruling the church, as the others do, but preaching the gospel besides. Where, by the by we may see, that if Paul's doctrine had place in the world, the preaching parish-minister would have more honour than the non-preaching bishop, who contents himself with ruling but puts not his shoulders to the labour in the word and doctrine. Maintenance, we see, is due to both sort of elders, by divine right. But it is no sin for either to quit their right in certain circumstances. And with us the ruling elders are allowed no maintenance, but the preaching elders are. The reason of this is the poverty of the church that cannot bear it; and that our ruling elders are not taken off their secular employments, as ministers are.

The doctrine deducible from the text is,

Doct. 'Ruling elders rightly discharging their duty, are worthy of abundant honour.'

Having sufficiently cleared the divine institution of ruling elders from the text, which is clear also from Rom. xii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 28. I shall, in prosecution of the doctrine, shew,

- I. What is the duty of these officers.
- II. What it is to discharge the duties of that office well.
- III. What is the honour that people owe to their ruling elders.
- IV. Apply.

I. I am to shew what is the duty of these officers.

The apostle tells us in the general, that their work as ruling elders is to rule the church. The keys of jurisdiction and government are not given to one, but to the unity of church-officers acting together; so, together with the pastor, they are to rule the congregation. God setting a minister in a congregation, says to him, It is not meet the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him.—And a society of diligent and faithful elders are a meet help indeed. And without that the weight of a congregation is too heavy for the shoulders of one, as Exod. xviii. 18. But more particularly,

1. They are to be careful overseers of the manners of the people. Hence the apostle says to the elders of Ephesus, Acts xx. 28. 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God.' And as ministers are a mouth to the church, so they are to be instead of eyes. And therefore it is necessary, for the good of a congregation, that there be of them in every corner. For they are

truly watchmen, whom the Holy Ghost has set over the flock, as well as ministers are. And they ought to acquaint themselves with the way of the people, that so they may encourage those that do well, and warn those that do evil. And unless elders do so, and communicate their help in that matter to the pastor, he may be long in a congregation, and yet be a stranger to many under his charge; and so ministerial visitations may be very useless.

2. Though they are not to preach the word, yet they are to apply the word privately to people by virtue of their office. They are to have a mouth to speak, as well as eyes to take heed to the flock of God, 1 Tim. iii. 2.—‘Apt to teach.’ There is a word pat to this purpose, 1 Thess. v. 12.—‘Are over you, and admonish you.’ It is the same word in our text. The word *admonish* there used, is far from expressing the full meaning of the word the Holy Ghost useth here, used also, Eph. vi. 4. It properly signifies ‘to put into the mind.’ And so it implies a fivefold duty.

(1.) Exciting people to their duty. Observing negligence, they ought to stir up people to their duty; e. g. those that neglect family-prayer, secret prayer, attending regularly on ordinances, or are negligent of their soul’s state any way, they should drop a word to stir them up.

(2.) Rebuking sin. Reproofs of wisdom are as necessary for church-members as salt is to keep meat from corrupting. It is necessary to discourage sin and wickedness in the church, which should be a holy society. And there wants not occasion for this, in swearing, lying, profaning the Sabbath, drunkenness, strife, variance, and whatsoever is contrary to the rules of the gospel.

(3.) Warning such as they see in hazard of sin; to tell them of the snare, their hazard and danger, and so to prevent people’s falling in to it, as far as lies in their power. Sometimes people may be discerned staggering, and a word then duly put into their mind may, by the blessing of God, keep them from falling.

(4.) Comforting those that are cast down, and strengthening the weak. It was the practice of holy Job, chap. iv. 4. ‘Thy words have upheld him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.’ And church-rulers ought always to have a special eye upon those that are the weak and distressed in Christ’s flock, to labour to support them in the Lord.

(5.) Instructing and informing them privately. And indeed rule without instruction is dumb, and not agreeable to the way of our Lord’s governing his house; and excitations, rebukes, &c. can never be rightly managed without information of the mind. For if we would gain our end in dealing with people, we must not think it

enough to tell them their duty or their sin, but by reasoning with them to convince their consciences.

These things are the duty of all church-members, however little it is laid to heart. Only what others are bound to by the common band of Christianity, we are bound to by our office, Lev. xix. 17: 1 Thess. v. 14.

3. They are to visit the sick, and should be sent for, for that end, James v. 14, 15. But otherwise discretion and christian love may engage them to go even when they are not sent for. They ought to pray with them and for them. And, by the same reason, they are to counsel, instruct, and comfort them, according to the grace bestowed on them, and as they see the party's case does require. This would be a means to render the office more esteemed than, alas! it is with many. And it needs not hinder the pastor's visits.

4. They are to concur with the pastor in the exercise of discipline, according to the word of God, and the constitutions of the church agreeable thereto. For ministers and elders make up that church, having the power of censures, Matth. xviii. 17. And thus they are to delate scandalous persons to the judicatory, either when their private admonitions will not do, or where the offence is in its own nature public, and cannot be passed with private admonition. And in the managing of matters in the judicatory, they are not only to give their opinion and vote according to their light, but to reason the matter calmly, for the finding out of the best expedient. Admission to, and debarring from, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is a weighty piece of this work, belonging to the kirk-session, wherein all tenderness, caution, and wisdom should be used, to separate as far as we can betwixt the precious and the vile, that holy things be not cast to dogs.

As for the collecting and distributing of the church's money, it is so far from being the main work of ruling elders, that it is no part of their work as elders at all, but belongs to the deacons, which is an inferior office. But the superior offices of the church including the inferior ones, the elders may do it, and must do it, where there are not deacons.

II. I come now to show, what it is to discharge the duties of that office well.

1. It is to discharge it faithfully, 1 Cor. iv. 2. It is a great trust the master puts us in, and we must act in it with that faithfulness to our own souls, and to the souls of those who are under our charge, as our conscience may not have wherewith to reproach us.

2. Diligently, Rom. xii. 8. The slothful servant that closeth his eyes, and gives up his watch, will never be approved of God. Be diligent in your duty, and it will not want its reward.

3. Zealously, Psal. lxxix. 9. Zeal for the master's honour, and advancing the kingdom of Christ in real holiness, and suppressing the devil's kingdom in sin and wickedness, in the congregation, and otherwise as we have access, is well becoming church-officers especially.

4. Prudently, Matth. xxiv. 45. Church-officers had need to join the wisdom of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove. And they will find it necessary many a time to sweeten with prudent management the bitter pills they must give, Gal. vi. 1.

III. I proceed to shew, what is that honour that people owe to their ruling elders.

1. They ought to esteem and respect them for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Their work is honourable, their Master whom they serve in that work is great, and the advantage of their work redounds to the church. People's esteem of them is but a necessary encouragement to them in the work they have undertaken, without any prospect of worldly advantage. And if people esteemed the Lord's work, they would even esteem the workers too.

2. Obedience and submission to them in their doing the work of their office, Heb. xiii. 17. If it be their duty to watch over you, excite and admonish you, &c. ye ought not to account them meddling in what belongs not to them, when they inquire into your way. Ye ought to fall in with the duties they excite you to; meekly to receive their rebukes, admonitions, and warnings; honourably to receive their consolations, as those that have a commission from the Lord; and heartily to receive their good admonition and counsel; and subjecting yourselves as Christ's subjects to the discipline of his house.

3. They ought to pray to God for them, 1 Thess. v. 15. It is a great work we have in hand, and your interest is concerned in our right discharge of it; which therefore should make you to give us a share in your prayers.

4. Shutting your ears against reproaches cast on them, and being backward to receive ill reports of them, staving them off, unless there be sufficient evidence, 1 Tim. v. 19. Church-officers are those whom Satan mainly aims to discredit, and therefore stirs up rotten-hearted hypocrites, false brethren, and a profane generation, to cast reproach upon them, that so their work may be marred in their hands, religion despised, and sinners hardened.

*Use 1.* As to you that are already in this honourable office, and you that are now to be ordained to it, I exhort you to labour rightly to discharge your duty. To press this exhortation, I offer the following motives.

*Mot.* 1. Consider it is a sacred office in the house of God, to which God has called you; and therefore let us together take that exhortation, Acts xx. 23. 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.' The office is honourable in itself, however the world may esteem it. David though a king, would have thought it no disparagement to him, when he said, 'A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness,' Psal. lxxxiv. 10. But it has work annexed to it; and being sacred, it is not to play with. Labour to approve yourselves to your Lord and Master.

*Mot.* 2. Ye have thereby a fair occasion to be serviceable to God and to advance Christ's kingdom, and suppress that of the devil, in the congregation. And O what should we not do to do good to souls? Jam. v. 20. 'Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' I think that now, of a considerable time, I and my brethren of the eldership might have said, 'The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall,' Neh. iv. 10; and it has gone near to the sinking of some of our spirits. But now that God has inclined the hearts of so many to come over and help us; if we take courage in our Master's work, to ply it faithfully, diligently, zealously, and prudently, and the Lord bless us with unity among ourselves, and real zeal for his honour, to put to our shoulders jointly to the work, we may hope, by the blessing of God, to see a more promising face on this congregation, sin more discouraged, and piety more increased.

*Mot.* ult. You and I must give an account to our great Master, how we have carried ourselves in this work, Heb. xiii. 17. If we be faithful we shall not want our reward from the chief Shepherd, who will give us a crown of life. If we be unfaithful, woe will be unto us for betraying our trust.

I give you a few advices.

1. Remember always that it is God whom ye have to do with. This will make you little to regard men's feud or favour, if ye do your work agreeable to God's will.

2. Study to act in dependence on the Lord; for he sends none a-warfare on his own charges. Eye his promised assistance, when ye set about your work.

3. Labour to believe, that the way of uprightness and faithfulness is the sure way. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh

even his enemies to be at peace with him,' Prov. xvi. 7. 'He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth him,' Prov. xxviii. 23. Let men's corruptions say what they will, their consciences will speak in favour of faithful dealing.

4. Watch over your own persons, that in your personal walk ye be blameless and exemplary, 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 3. If ye be untender in your walk, ye will do more hurt than ye can do good. Being honoured to be governors in the house of a holy God, ye must be holy as the master is holy; tender in your words, circumspect in your actions, and therefore watchful over your hearts.

5. Watch over your families. Every one that has a family is obliged to this, and you in a special manner, 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. The sinful practices of those of your family will reflect a peculiar dishonour on you, and by you on your Lord and Master. Therefore your families should be a church wherein God is to be duly worshipped morning and evening; and good discipline kept up by admonition, reproof, and watchfulness.

6. Ye must watch over one another, each over his fellow-elders, knowing, that any thing scandalous in one of the society reflects a dishonour on the whole, and by them on the Lord himself. And if ye be not careful on that side, there will be little good of your watching over the flock. And therefore strict discipline among yourselves is absolutely necessary.

USE II. As to you the people, I would exhort you to make conscience of your duty towards your officers. Alas! for the little conscience that is made of that among us. I am sure we may find matter of mourning this day in that matter.

Instead of honouring them, many despise and pour contempt on them, more than otherwise they would do; thus vilely treating their sacred office.

Instead of submission and obedience, what refractoriness and spurning of discipline for scandalous offences! Some cannot endure to be told of their faults; but if we admonish or reprove them, even privately, they are made worse instead of better; and rather than take a reproof, they will give up with ordinances.

Instead of being careful of their reputation, some will bawl out upon them, and abuse them on every occasion. And there is nothing with many more readily received, than the vomit of malicious and spiteful spirits against ministers and elders, which is greedily licked up, 1 Cor. iv. 13.

Hence it is, that men's hands are weakened, and they are discouraged in their work, while they see the people of that temper, Hos. iv. 4. And hence it is, that it is so very hard to get men to under-

take the office of elders ; for they see that if they engage therein, they must be the very butt of the malice and spite of bitter spirits ; and that if they will be faithful, they engage themselves in a fighting life, and that the stream will go against them. But allow me to put you in mind of three things.

1. Whose part you act in that matter. It is the part of Satan against these men and yourselves too. Can you fall upon a more expedite way to advance the kingdom of the devil in the congregation, than to discourage and weaken the hands of those that are set over you in the Lord ? Is there a fairer way to rout the army, than to make their leaders useless ?

2. Whose servants they are. They are clothed with a commission from the King of the church ; and the contempt poured on them reaches to their Master ; ‘ He that despiseth you (says he), despiseth me,’ Luke x. 16. Will the laws of the land avenge the affronts done to a petty officer, who comes to execute the sentence of a civil court ? did David severely avenge on the Ammonites the maltreating of his servants, whom he sent on a congratulatory message to them as ye find in 2 Sam. x. ? and will not the Lord Jesus resent in his wrath the maltreatment of those that are clothed with his commission ?

3. *Lastly*, Are ye not the professed subjects of the kingdom of Christ ? Why then will ye not submit yourselves to the laws of his house ? Why will ye not be obedient in the Lord to those whom he sets over you, complying with their exhortations, admonitions, and rebukes ? Luke xix. 27. Why do not ye strengthen their hands in the Lord’s work ? If ye have any interest in Zion’s King, it is the work of our common Lord, which you are obliged to in a private way, as well as they by virtue of their office ; and therefore ye are bound to co-operate with them in what serves to promote the interest of that King, whose servants ye profess to be.

I proceed now to consider the relation between political fathers and their children ; that is, magistrates and subjects.

*First*, I shall shew the duty of subjects to magistrates.

1. They owe them singular respect and honour, 1 Pet. ii. 17. They are to be honoured by us in our hearts, thinking of and esteeming them reverently and carrying a reverent fear and awe of them within our breasts, 1 Sam. xxvi. 16, 17. Prov. xxiv. 21. And this is to be expressed in a respectable behaviour towards them in word and deed.

The grounds of this are specially two. (1.) The ordinance of God, whereby they are set above us in the way of power and authority, Rom. xiii : and subjects ought to walk in a conscientious re-

gard to the superiority that God has given their rulers over them. (2.) The image of God that shines in their dominion and eminency above their subjects, Psal. lxxxii. 6. They are God's vicegerents on earth, whose office bears a representation of God's dominion.

2. Subjects owe them the charity to construct the best of their actions that they will bear, and to beware of passing a rash judgment of their administrations. Notable is the instance of it in David, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. 'Now therefore, I pray thee, let my Lord the king hear the words of his servant: if the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods.' The liberty that many take in speaking of magistrates, and wresting their actions still to the worst side, is what proceeds not from the spirit of the gospel, but is contrary to the word, an effect of their own pride and presumption, Exod. xxii. 28. Eccl. x. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 10. Jude, 8. This is also highly reasonable, and hath these grounds. (1.) That candour and charity we owe to all men, but in a special manner to our superiors, requires it, 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7. (2.) Our unacquaintedness with the springs of public business, secrets of government, and reasons of state, Prov. xxv. 3. And natural modesty, as well as religion, teaches men not to answer a matter before they hear it, Prov. xviii. 13. This dutiful children will allow to their parents, wives to their husbands, servants to their masters, and inferiors to their superiors; and why should not magistrates have it too?

3. Subjection, loyalty, and obedience to their just laws and commands. It is bad religion where loyalty to the magistrate must stand in place of all religion towards God, but it is also bad religion where people's pretended religion towards God justles out their loyalty to the magistrate, Rom. xiii. 5. This duty Papists exempt churchmen from; and no wonder, for it is a part of the character of Antichrist, 2 Thess. ii. 4; but the scripture subjects ministers to the magistrates, as having souls as well as others, Rom. xiii. 1. 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.'

4. The payment of their tribute, Rom. xiii. 6, 7. This is a debt of thankfulness, and justice too, for the benefits of government which the subjects enjoy, without which the government cannot be supported, but all would go into confusion.

5. Defending them in danger, each one according to his station, 2 Sam. xviii. 3. 1 Sam. xxvi. 15.

6. *Lastly*, Prayer to God for them; supplications for supply of wants, prayers for good things to them, intercessions for turning

away of evil from them, and thanksgivings for mercies bestowed on them, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. There is a reason for it too; for the welfare of subjects is wrapt up in theirs, *ib.* Much depends on their management, God's honour, our own good; and their high place has many dangers, difficulties, snares, and temptations.

USE. Let me therefore exhort you in the words of the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.' Let us honour and dutifully subject ourselves, according to the will of God, to our gracious Sovereign King George, our rightful and lawful King by virtue of the laws of Scotland, pointed at in the claim of right, and upon which was founded the late happy Revolution. Let us adore that bountiful providence, by which his grandfather [Frederick Elector Palatine of the Rhine], having lost one kingdom [that of Bohemia], besides his private estate, in the cause of the Protestant religion, three kingdoms are now conferred on the grandson. Let us thank our God, who did so seasonably bring him to the throne, and that in peace, to the surprise of all parties, so as we were like men that dreamed. Let us suppose that the Popish Pretender had effectuated his purpose, what a case had we been in this day! Yet rejoice with trembling; it is hard to say that Heaven and these sinful nations are become friends yet. Let us be dutiful to subordinate magistrates under him, and honour those whom God has honoured by their office, saying to them, *Ye are gods.* Let us not stumble at heathens, Jacobites, and malignants, against our holy religion, by contempt of the magistrate. We read the Bible, where subjection is commanded to subjects oft and again, even to magistrates that were enemies to Christianity. We are the followers of that Jesus who paid his tribute, and taught the people of the Jews, who were more solemnly covenanted with God, and more strictly bound up in the choice of their kings, than any nation under heaven, yet not to deny their tribute to Cæsar, the Heathen Roman emperor, who then was their chief magistrate, Matth. xxii. 19,—21.

*Secondly*, I shall shew the duty of magistrates to their subjects, which I shall only name.

1. They ought to establish good laws among their subjects, and to see them duly executed, Zech. viii. 16. 2 Chron. xix. 5, 6, 7.

2. To govern them with wisdom, justice, and clemency, 2 Chron. i. 10.

3. To punish evil-doers, and encourage them that do well, Rom. xiii. 3.

4. To protect them, and provide for their common safety, 1 Tim. ii. 2; to see to their prosperity, and not to oppress them, Prov. xxviii. 16.

5. *Lastly*, They ought to promote true religion, and advance the interest of Christ's kingdom among their subjects, Isa. xlix. 23. Some will have the magistrate to be the fountain of church-power. Others leave him nothing to do in religion but to defend the church, and execute her acts. Thus go the Papists. Truth goes the middle way, allowing the magistrate a cumulative, though not a primitive, power in church-matters; and though he ought not to exercise a spiritual function, yet he can command and obligé ministers and other church-officers to do their duty, authoritatively call them to do it. And this is no more to usurp church-power, than a minister's charging magistrates from the word, is to usurp civil power. See Confession of Faith.

There are other relations that import a mere preference; as, betwixt the aged and the younger, the weaker in gifts and the stronger, and between equals.

*First*, As to the relation betwixt the aged and the younger,

1. I shall consider very briefly the duties of the younger to the aged, for these are fathers and mothers in scripture-language, 1 Tim. v. 1.

(1.) They ought to submit to them, so as to follow their wise advice, and not to stand upon points with them, but be ready to yield to them, where lawfully it may be done, 1 Pet. v. 5.

(2.) They ought to honour them, and carry respectfully to them. The Ancient of days, commands us to honour old age, Lev. xix. 32.

2. The aged ought, (1.) To be ready to profit the younger sort by their good advice, to tutor them, as Eli did young Samuel, 1 Sam. iii. 9. (2.) To give them the example of a virtuous and holy life, Tit. ii. 2.

*Secondly*, The duties of the weaker in gifts to the stronger are,

(1.) To reverence and respect them for the gifts of God in them, Gen. xlv. 8. (2.) To be willing and ready to learn of them. (3.) To beware of judging harshly of them in things wherein they have a greater liberty than they, Rev. xiv. 3.

The duties of the stronger in gifts are, (1.) To communicate cheerfully to them what God has given them, and so to help them by their gifts. (2.) To encourage them, and bear with their infirmities, Rom. xv. 1.

*Lastly*, The duties of equals are, (1.) To regard the dignity and worth of each other, and carry respectfully to them, 1 Pet. ii. 17. (2.) To carry modestly towards one another, preferring in honour

each other, Rom. xii. 10. (3.) To endeavour after and rejoice in one another's welfare as their own, ver. 15, 16.

II. I proceed now to shew, what is forbidden in the fifth commandment. According to our Catechism, it forbids 'the neglecting of, or doing any thing against the honour and duty which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations.

This question is a field as large, or rather larger than the former, in so far as to one duty several sins are opposed: but fearing that ye cannot bear enlargement, having heard so much already on these relations, I shall contract my discourse on this into a very narrow compass.

This command is broken, (1.) By neglect of the duties we owe to our relations, which ye have heard. (2.) By doing any thing against and contrary to these duties.

*First*, Husbands and wives break this command, and sin against one another, many ways. As particularly,

1. Against that tender conjugal love they owe to one another, is all unkindness, whereby, laying aside, and divesting themselves of natural affection, they are surly to, careless of, and unconcerned for their relatives, or their comfort. Of this sort are their bitter speeches, reproaching and reviling one another. That selfishness, whereby they are at no pains to please one another in lawful things, and void of sympathy in one another's joys and griefs; unreasonable suspicions and jealousies, whatever be done to please them; blazing abroad their own shame, in speaking to the discredit of their relatives; contempt of and despising one another. All these are quite opposite to conjugal love.

2. Against that faithfulness they owe to one another, in respect of their bodies, is infidelity in the gross breach of the marriage-contract, deserting and leaving one another, and defrauding one another. In respect of their means, is all idleness, mismanagement, and wastery; and in respect of their souls, is unconcernedness about them, being at no pains to instruct, admonish, and watch over one another; and if at any time they tell them of their faults, it is to their reproach, being before others, or in their passion, so that it can do no good. And much more when they become snares and hinderances to one another, instead of meet helps, leading and provoking their relatives to sin against God, and ruin their own souls.

Wives particularly sin against their husbands, by casting off all reverence to them, carrying themselves imperiously towards them, being disobedient, wilful, and untractable, and, like Vashti, Esth. i. 10, 11, 12. who would not come to the king, when sent for by him, will not go an inch by their own will to please them. It is

not their honour to command, whose province God has made it to obey, Ezek. xvi. 30. Eph. v. ult.

Husbands sin against their wives in dealing untenderly with them, tyrannizing and domineering over them in a masterful way, not protecting them from the insults of others, nor providing for them; giving them that are their wives no trust, but making them, like Nabal, accountable to the utmost farthing; nor encouraging and praising them when they do well; most of all in beating them, a thing in use only with furions or mad men, Eph. v. 25, 29.

*Secondly,* As to parents and children:

1. Children sin against their parents by disobedience to them. Such are in the midst of the black roll, Rom. i. 30. and are in a near way to ruin, Prov. xxx. 17. So do they by all irreverence to them, and slighting and dishonouring them in word and deed, Deut. xxvii. 16. and much more by cursing them, Exod. xxi. 17. Many, again, sin against God and their parents, being unteachable, and will not hearken to their instruction, Prov. v. 7. they will not take a sharp word from them, but their hearts rise against them and it too, Prov. xiii. 18. and others, though they will bear with words, yet they are stubborn, and will not submit to correction, Deut. xxi. 18, 19. And what will we say of those that, like cursed Ham, make a jest of their parents' infirmities, waste their substance, and prove unnatural and hard-hearted to them when they are old and in distress? Prov. xix. 26. Finally, they sin by disposing of themselves to callings, or in marriage, without consent of their parents, Gen. xxvi. 34, 35.

2. Parents sin against their children many ways, while they are not concerned for them while infants; but many are careless as to the bringing up of their children to some honest employment, but, by encouraging them in idleness, prove a snare to them. Most men, if they bring their children to be able to shift for a livelihood to themselves, think they have done enough, while they have not been at pains to bring them up for God. Many will learn them to work that will not learn them to read, pray, &c. What shall we say of those that will learn them to ban, swear, lie, pick, and steal, and encourage them in such things? Some kill their children by coddling them; they indulge them fondly to their ruin. And how indiscreetly will parents dote on one child by another, where it is not grace but mere fancy, that makes the difference? Gen. xxv. 28. Some, on the other hand, are woefully harsh to their children, and break their spirits, by holding them so short by the head that they are driven to extremities, using them as drudges rather than as children, immoderately beating them when they are in a fault, and

inveighing against them with bitter words, Col. iii. 21. indiscreet and untender dealing with them with respect to their callings or marriages.

*Thirdly,* As to masters and servants ;

1. Servants sin against their masters by irreverent, disrespectful, and saucy carriage towards them, without any respect to the honour which God calls them to give to their masters. Many are disobedient, and will plainly tell, that they will not do what they are bidden ; or if they do it, they will do it in such a manner, as shall vent their pride and passion. Though the scripture commands not to answer again, they will answer, and have the last word too, and by no means will submit to reproofs. Many are unfaithful to their masters, their service is eye-service, unfaithful service, either by their negligence and sloth bringing their master to loss, or by dishonesty in that which is under their hands. Some professing servants are by their way a scandal to religion in families where they are. Others are a plague to the family by the aversion they shew to every good thing or religious duty, as if their masters were no more concerned in them, if they work their work, Eph. v. 5, 6.

2. Masters sin against their servants, not allowing them sufficient maintenance, but niggardly pinching them, keeping back their wages from them in whole or in part, and so oppressing the hireling ; rigorously keeping them at work, not allowing them convenient time for rest, nor worshipping of God in secret, or attending on public ordinances. And so they sin against them by continual chiding, and uneasiness to them, and carelessness with respect to their soul's good, Eph. vi. 9.

*Fourthly,* As to ministers and people :

1. People sin against their ministers by their slighting and despising them, and nowise treating them as the messengers of Christ ; going on in their evil ways over the belly of all warnings and reproofs, being stubborn, and refusing subjection to discipline ; slandering them, creating them trouble, by forsaking ordinances, &c. or any wise making their work burdensome, or them to drive heavily in it ; and restraining prayer for them.

Ministers sin against people by an unconcernedness about their souls' case, laziness, and unfaithfulness in discharge of their duty, proving stumbling-blocks to their people by a loose walk, and not being earnest in prayer for them, for the blessing of God on them and their message.

As to ruling elders and people, I have nothing to add to what I said before.

*Fifthly,* As to magistrates and subjects :

1. Subjects sin against magistrates by carrying disrespectfully to them, rebelling against them, and disobeying their just laws, reviling and speaking despitefully of them, denying them subjection and their just dues, and not praying for them.

2. Magistrates sin against subjects by using their power to satisfy their lusts, and giving bad example to others, by tyranny and oppression, unjust laws, and discountenancing piety and virtue, and opposing themselves to the kingdom of Christ.

*Sixthly*, As to the aged and younger: How little respect do the younger shew to the aged! Instead of that honour due to age, people are ready to befool them, if not to count them witches or wizards, forgetting that either they must come to their age themselves, or die by the way. On the other hand, few old people carry so to the younger, as to command respect by their exemplary piety and holiness; but, on the contrary, grey hairs are often found in the way of wickedness.

*Seventhly*, As to the weaker and stronger in gifts: It is often the sin of the weaker to envy the stronger, and if they can to misrepresent them. The weak judge the strong, and the strong despise and stumble the weak.

*Lastly*, Equals sin against one another, undervaluing the worth, envying and grieving at the good of one another, and usurping pre-eminence over one another.

The spring and source of all this is, (1.) Want of love to and fear of God; for while people are not in their duty to God, how should they be in their duty to man? (2.) Pride and selfishness, while every one seeks himself, and not the good of others.

These things may be very humbling to all of us. Who can say his life is clean in any of these relations? But even those who are very dutiful in their several relations as to the matter, may be guilty of the breach of this command, in so far as what they do in these things does not proceed from gracious principles; for indeed the first command must be carried along in all the rest.

III. We come now to the reason annexed to this command; which is, 'A promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.'

This is a promise to encourage the conscientious performance of the duties here required. The apostle tells us, that it is 'the first command with promise,' Eph. v. 2.

*Quest.* 1. How is this command the first with promise, seeing the second is a promise also?

*Ans.* It is the first command of the second table: for it is the

most weighty of them all, as comprehending all the rest in it; so that we cannot sin against the rest, but we must first break over the hedge of this, which encompasseth all the rest. For one cannot violate another's life, chastity, &c. but he first violates the honour due to him by this command. And it is the only command that has a special promise of a particular mercy annexed to it. The promise annexed to the second command is but a promise of mercy in the general, and that not particularly to those that keep that command, but all the commandments.

*Quest. 2.* But does the law promise any thing but to perfect keeping of its commands? and if so, what are we the better?

*Ans.* We must distinguish betwixt the law as a covenant of works, and the law as in the hand of Christ for a rule of life to believers. As it is a covenant of works, nothing less than perfect obedience can interest men in the promise; for the least failure knocks off the man's fingers from the promise, by virtue of the curse, Gal. iii. 10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' So that we can be nothing the better of this promise. But Christ being the Surety of the better covenant, having made a new covenant of grace in his blood, he takes the same law in his hands, and gives out the commands of it as a rule of life to his covenanted people, and renews the promises of it to their sincere obedience of them, 1 Tim. iv. 8. 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' As for the curse of it they hear of it no more, he having borne it away himself. And so he crowns the fruits of his own grace in them with blessed rewards. And as all these promises are yea and amen in him; so for his sake, through faith in his blood, they are obtained.

In the words we may consider these three things; the blessing promised, the place where it is to be enjoyed, and the regard the Lord allows his people to have to that blessing to further them in obedience.

*FIRST,* The blessing promised; that is, long life, *that thy days may be long.* It is a temporal mercy, a mercy much desired ordinarily by all men, and promised to them that keep this commandment. There are four things here to be considered.

*First,* What is meant by men's days being long. It denotes two things.

1. Long life, Prov. iv. 10. 'The years of thy life shall be many.' Death in its best colours has something frightful about it. It is a dissolution of soul and body, which nature shivers at. But there is no eviting of it; all must die; they must go through that dark

valley to their eternal state. But the best that can be made of it is promised here, viz. that such shall be full of days, and not be taken away till they be ripe for the sickle.

2. Prosperity to accompany that life; for *non vivere, sed valere, vita est*. Long life in miseries is a continued death, rather than life. So that the nature of the thing teaches us, that a prosperous long life is here promised. It is a good old age, Gen. xv. 15. And thus the apostle explains it, Eph. vi. 3. 'That it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth.'

*Secondly*, That long life is in itself a mercy, and therefore is promised. There are many things that may mortify men's desires of long life. Old age is ordinarily accompanied with a train of miseries; and the longer the godly live, they are the longer kept out of heaven. Yet there are four things that make this long and prosperous life here promised to the godly's keeping of this commandment, a great mercy.

1. A good old age is an honourable thing, Prov. vi. 31. 'The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.' God commands a particular reverence to be given to old men, Lev. xix. 32. 'Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.' It is true, sin and wickedness spoils the greatest glory, and no man is more like the devil than a wicked old man, Isa. lxv. 20. 'The sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed. But it is an honourable character which the Spirit of God puts on Mnason, Acts xxi. 16. 'An old disciple.' And old godly men are most like God, Dan. vii. 9. Rev. i. 14.

2. It is profitable for the exercise of godliness, in so far as it makes them proof against many temptations which youth often carries men headlong unto, 2 Tim. ii. 22. The frothiness and fire of youth dying out through time, their grace is the better it wants them. Young people's grace may be more bulky, but old people's grace, though of less bulk, is more worth, because it is more solid. Though new liquor may work and swell up more, the old is better. John was the oldest of the apostles, and last of them who wrote. In his younger years he could have burnt whole towns for Christ, Luke ix. 54. but if ye will look to his epistles written in his older days, they breathe nothing but love, meekness, and solid godliness.

3. Long life makes way for the more proofs and experiences of the goodness of God on the earth, 1 John ii. 13. The young soldier may be more mettled and venturous; but the old soldier is more to be trusted, because of his experience and skill. It is no small advantage to have been an eye-witness of the several appearances God has made for his church, and of several storms that have gone over her head.

4. *Lastly*, They have the better opportunity of glorifying God here, and being serviceable in their generation, the longer they live on the earth; and therefore shall have a larger measure of glory hereafter, as they have been more serviceable for God than others, 2 Cor. ix. 6; How many are cut off in their early days, while they were just budding for the honour of God and the service of the church! It is better for themselves that they are soon taken away; but the church is less the better of them, Phil. i. 23, 24. The Spirit of God takes notice of this in the old men that outlived Joshua, how useful their age was for God and his church, Josh. xxiv. 31. 'And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel.' And though glory is not the merit of good works, yet according to the sowing, so shall the harvest be.

*Thirdly*, A holy walk, particularly in the conscientious performance of relative duties, is the way to a long and prosperous life. Holiness, and particularly relative holiness, is the way to a long and happy life in the world.

1. As to holiness in general, it is clear from two things.

(1.) From the promise of God in his life-giving word. 'Man lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' The unbelieving world may think a scripture-promise but a poor fence for a man's life. Give them good entertainment, ease, medicine, they will lay more weight on these than on a cluster of promises; but yet a promise from the Lord is better than all these, Dan. i. 15; for 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' Matth. iv. 4. Now, it has the promise, 1 Tim. iv. 8. It has the promise of health, wealth, and long life, Prov. iii. 7.—10, and 16.

(2.) From the nature of the thing. A holy walk keeps us back from those things that hurt and ruin the body. And no man's body is so little abused to its hurt as his whose soul has respect to walk within the hedge of God's precepts. Drunkenness and gluttony devours more than the sword doth. Covetous care and anxiety wastes the body. Inordinate affections are the consuming of the constitution. Holiness, that represses these things, must then be as health to the flesh, Prov. iv. 22.

2. As for dutifulness to our relatives: Consider,

(1.) It hath God's promise for it in the text, which hath been made out to many in their sweet experience, as in the case of Ruth, and that of the Recabites, Jer. xxxv. 19. And so the contrary is threatened, Prov. xxx. 17. 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and

despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it;’ and has been fulfilled in many to the full extent.

(2.) Dutifulness of that sort procures the blessing of relatives; it natively draws out their hearts in thankfulness to God for them, and in prayers to God for them, which under God is a mean to bring down a blessing upon them. The blessing of them that were ready to perish was not in vain to Job; it sprung up in a liberal increase.

(3.) Such persons are of a meek disposition, and such have a peculiar promise to inherit the earth, Matth. v. 6. It is the want of the spirit of meekness, and pride and selfishness in the room of it, that mars relative dutifulness.

4. *Lastly*, The nature of the thing leads to it; for that is the ready way to make relations comfortable; and the comfort that people find in their relatives does good like a medicine, while the contrary is as rottenness in the bones.

There are two objections that lie against this doctrine.

*Object.* 1. Have not wicked men, that cast off all personal and relative holiness, oft-times a long and prosperous life?

*Ans.* It is so indeed. Job observed it long ago, ch. xxi. 7. ‘Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?’ But there is one thing that makes the difference wide enough; i. e. they have it not by promise. What of that? will ye say. There is very much in it. (1.) He cannot have the comfort of it as a godly man can have, no more than he can have the comfort of a well-furnished house, that knows not but every day he may be turned out of it, while he knows no where else to go, in comparison of one that has a tack of it, and is to move to a better when the tack expires. (2.) There is a secret curse in it that destroys and ruins him; so that the morsel may be fair, but there is a bone in it that will stick in his throat, Prov. i. 32, 33. (3.) *Lastly*, The last dish spoils the feast. No man can be said to live a long and happy life, that dies a miserable unhappy death, as all wicked men do. Can that life be prosperous and happy that has such a black hinder end? Does not death soon catch that man, that catches him ere his salvation be secured.

*Object.* 2. Are there not many godly people whose life in the world is neither long nor prosperous, and have neither much health, wealth, nor long life? The answer to this brings us,

*Fourthly*, To shew how this promise is to be understood. It is to be understood, as all other temporal promises are, not absolutely, as if in no case it could be otherwise; but with these two limitations:

(1.) As far as it shall serve for God's glory; and God may be more glorified in their early death than their long life. The honour of God is the immoveable rule by which these things must be all measured. (2.) As far as it shall serve for their good; and so it may be a greater mercy to them to be hid in the grave, than to be left on earth; and surely it is no breach of promise to give one what is better than what was promised. And these two are not to be separated, but joined together; for whatever is most for God's honour, is most for the godly man's good. Now, upon this we may lay down these conclusions.

1. Upon this promise the godly, walking in the way of personal and relative holiness, may confidently expect from God as much long life and prosperity in the world as shall be for the honour of God, and their good to enjoy. And to have any more would be no favour.

2. A short and afflicted life would be more for their good than a long and prosperous one, Psal. cxix. 71. Isa. lvii. 1. And why should men quarrel with their blessings, or cast at their mercies? Good Josiah was soon taken away, because the Lord would not have him to see the evil that was coming on.

3. Many of the children of God may be guilty of such breaches of this command in the mismanagement of their relative duties, that they may, by their own fault, fall short of the mercy promised here in the latter, Psal. xcix. 8; and so need not wonder if they reap that correction which themselves have sowed. And though others, that have managed worse than they, may escape, no wonder either; for God will let that pass in another, because of an after-reckoning, when he will correct his own children for less, because, that is to put an end to the quarrel.

4. *Lastly*, Whatever they want of this, it shall be made up by what is better. The afflictions of the body shall be health to their souls; their crosses shall not be curses, but blessings; and if they be deprived of the residue of their years here, they shall get them made up in heaven.

SECONDLY, The place where that blessing is to be enjoyed; *in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*; that is, the land of Canaan. So it respects the Jews. But as it respects Christians, it refers to any place of God's earth; and so the apostle turns it, Eph. vi. 3. 'That thou mayst live long on the earth.'

LASTLY, That regard which the Lord allows his people to have to that blessing, to further them in obedience: *Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*. Though the chief motive to duty should be the ho-

nour and command of God, yet God allows us to eye the promised reward, even in temporal things, as a secondary motive and encouragement to duty.

USE. Let this recommend to us the living in dutifulness to our relatives. This is physic of God's appointment for the sick ; it is the way to wealth of God's appointment for them that have little ; it is the prolonger of life appointed by the Lord of life to those that would see many days, and these good. And there is no sure way to these where the appointment of God lies cross. Religion is the way to make the world happy. God has linked our duty and our interest together, so as there is no separating them. Relations are the joints of society ; sin has disjoined the world, and so no wonder it be miserable ; a relative holiness would set the disjoined world right again.

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OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. XX. 13.—*Thou shalt not kill.*

THE scope of this command is the preservation of that life which God hath given unto man, which is man's greatest concern. No man is lord of his own or his neighbour's life ; it belongs to him alone who gave it, to take it away. It is observable, that this and the three following commands are proposed in a word, not because they are of small moment, but because there is more light of nature for them than those proposed at greater length.

This command respects both our own life and the life of our neighbour. That it respects our neighbour, there can be no doubt ; and as little needs there to be of its respecting our own. The words are general, agreeing to both ; and so the sense of them is, *Thou shalt not kill thyself, nor any other.* He that said to the jailor, 'Do thyself no harm,' taught no other thing than what Moses and the prophets did say. Man is no more lord of his own life than his neighbour's ; and he is in hazard of encroaching upon it, as well as that of another ; and it is no where guarded, if not here. Nay, the sum of the second table being, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' whereby love to our neighbour is made the measure of love to ourselves, it is evident that it respects our own life in the first place.

As every positive command implies a negative, so every negative implies a positive. Therefore, in so far as God says *Thou shalt not kill*, viz. thyself or others, he thereby obliges men to preserve their own life and that of others. And seeing all the commands agree to-