

THE GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST,

SET DOWN BY WAY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, WITH AN EXPLANATION AND
APPLICATION OF THEM.

Quest. What is the church of the New Testament?

Ans. The church of God is a mystical body, whereof Christ is the head.

Explicat. The church is here described by four arguments: 1st, By the *genus* or kind; it is a mystical body. 2dly, By the subject of it; that is, the head, the members, saints. 3dly, A form and essence by which it is a church; there may be a company of saints which have Christ for their head, and yet want fellowship. Now that which makes them a church, and distinguishes them from other churches, is this uniting into one congregation by holy covenant; the form giveth essence and distinction. All churches* have Christ for their head, and are saints by calling; but that which makes us differ and makes us to be this church, is this covenant which we have made with God, to submit ourselves to God's ordinance in this company. This giveth the life and being to a particular church. 4thly, The end why we are thus united and knit together; and that is, to worship God, and that concerneth God; another concerneth us, that he may bless us, and we may edify one another in all his holy ordinances. This is the nature of a church.

I. For the first, the church is a body; that is the proper kind of the church. To say a company or number, is too general a word; but it is a body that we are in, knit together to one kind of employment, which every company is not fit to do. The church is a body, Eph. i. 22, the church is Christ's body, Eph. v. 23; Christ is the head of his church, the Saviour of his body, Rom. xii. 4, 1 Cor. xii. 27, 28. Now this word *body* doth imply in it three things, which concur to the nature of a body.

1st. A body consists of variety of members, of several offices and uses, but sufficient to serve to the subsistence of the whole person. There is no living body but consists of variety of members; so it is with the church, 1 Cor. xii. 14-20, the members have several offices, Rom. xii. 5, 6, every member hath his different gift, and by the use of them they are able to minister supply to the whole body.

2dly. A body doth not imply only this, but a fit communion and combina-

* Qu. 'Christians'?—ED.

tion of these members together; they are joined together in order, Eph. iv. 15, 16. Therefore a church is of such members that can fitly join and be joined, whose spirits can well close and make sweet concert; yea, can better suit with those of their own body than of another, Col. ii. 19. The body is knit by joints and bands, for so the church is compacted together in a proportionable frame with joints and bands.

Quest. What are those joints and bands that make members so knit together and firmly joined, that you may as well break a bone in the midst, as break them?

Ans. The body is great, Christ is the head, therefore the bands must be such as knit us to him, and one to another. Eph. iv. 4, 5, there the apostle tells you what they be.

First, One body, one spirit with Christ, and one spirit one with another; not only that we have all a spirit of grace, of faith and love, for so have all the true members of every church, but a natural disposition of heart, that may fitly join together as much as may be; and this makes them one body.

Secondly, One faith, by which we all look to Christ for grace to perform our duties, and for acceptance of them. This faith knits to Christ, and also knits us together.

Thirdly, One love, which is the bond of perfection, Col. ii. 14; some more love which God calleth me to bear to the members of my own body than the members of another.

Fourthly, One covenant, and the seals confirming that covenant. 1 Cor. x. 17, we are one bread; one bread combines us more to one body, and so doth baptism, 1 Cor. xii. 13. As for that covenant which made a Gentile when he came on to grace to partake with the Israelites in the ordinance of God, it was entering into covenant, and having a place in God's house, Isa. lvi. 4, 6, 7. But now I speak only of the covenant, as that which makes them one body; but more of them when I come to the formal part of the church.

But this is not all, for the apostle saith we are knit *by* joints, not *in* joints. The Spirit knits, and faith knits, but what makes them fall into joints? This is done by mutual submission. What makes the thigh fall into the knee? There is an hollow in the knee, into which the thigh shoots itself, and is there joined. That which joins us together in a church is submission, Eph. v. 31. They that cannot well submit to one another are not well joined; so the bands of the church must be whole, of one spirit, of one faith, &c. Thus you see a body must be joined together by bands and joints that they may close one with another, and can fall down and yield one to another, either in admonition or reproof.

3dly. The third thing in a body is the ministering of mutual help and supply from one member to another, for the health and growth of the body, so that we cannot be without one, 1 Cor. xii. 21-23. You will say, Hath Christ need of us? Yea, for he is the head of the body; and if he will be a king, he must have his subjects, for this is the glory of a king, and serveth much to his supply. Though Christ would be happy without us, yet if he will be the head of the church, as every member receiveth something from him, so it adds something to him, to the beauty of the body, Eph. i. 23. The church is 'the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' Christ were empty were it not for the church, as the head without the body. When you have a church, then you have a full Saviour and advocate; the church fills up his mystical body. His divine and human nature need it not, but the mystical body needs it; therefore the apostle calleth the church *Christ*, because Christ and the church are one body, 1 Cor. xii. 12. Christ is pleased to say he stands in need of us, yea, of his poorest servants, to receive grace from him,

and that he might pour it out upon them. As a woman with full breasts stands in need of a child to suck them, so Christ is so full of grace and comfort, that if he have not his weak ones to suck grace from him, his bowels ache within him ; therefore he called to the weak and thirsty, Mat. xi. 28 ; Isa. lv. 1, 2. ‘Of his fulness we receive grace for grace.’ As the head thus communicates to the body, and the body adds to the head, so every member adds supply one toward another. We can want no kindly member of the body, but the body will be sensible of it, Eph. iv. 16 ; every part hath some measure of spiritual life, and so they can be helpful and useful one to another, and thereby they grow up according to the increase of God, Col. ii. 19. One member of the body derives nourishment from another, till it comes to the lowest member of all ; so the members of Christ draw grace from him, till it stretcheth to the lowest, the lowest servant, the lowest skirt of his garment. This is the third thing in a body ; the members of it safeguard and preserve that body. And thus you see why the church is called a body. The church is not only a body, but a mystical body, Eph. v. 32. It is not the natural but mystical body of Christ ; Christ is such a body as is secretly knit to him by one Spirit. This is a great mystery, saith the apostle : first, that the church should be framed out of the side of Christ, as Eve out of Adam’s bone ; for such is the church. So is his comparison. All that have been brought home to Christ, have been brought home by the preaching of Christ and his death. 2dly, The desertion of a man’s father and mother, and all outward comforts, to cleave to Christ, this is a great mystery. 3dly, They should be one flesh ; and union with Christ is a great mystery. There is a shadow of it in civil marriage, but it is a great mystery ; for this body is a spiritual body.

✧ II. Now to the subject of this church, first, Christ is the head of it, Eph. v. 23, and i. 22. Reasons.

1. In regard of eminency of place therein. He is above all the members in place and power.

2. As the body receives from the head motion, sense, and reasonable life, so have we all our spiritual life and motion, all our grace, from Christ as our head.

3. As the head guides the body which way it pleaseth, and the body is ready at its command, so every member of the body of Christ is ready to move or go at his appointment and command.

Secondly, The members be saints, 1 Cor. i. 2, Col. i. 2 ; Acts ii. 47, ‘such as shall be saved.’ And the reason is, because it is meet the head and the body should be proportionable. What proportion is there between a leaden heel and golden head ?

Use 1. If the church of Christ be a body, then it is necessary that in the body of the church the members should be of different gifts and growth. ‘If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?’ An hundred apostles could not make a church standing as apostles, 1 Cor. xii. 24, 29. The church must be a body ; there must be some distinction, as much as is requisite to the being of a body. An hundred hands will not make a body, therefore conceive this necessary to a church, as also how unwieldy a work the fabric of a church is.

Use 2. If a church be a body, then you see what we ought to be : to be of one spirit, of one love, to be willing to submit the one to the other in the Lord, that we be careful to grow up in all things to the mutual helpfulness of one another. The name of a *body* is of strong instruction, to teach us what we ought to be. When saw you one member of the body fall out with

another? but they are sensible of the joy and grief of each other. Therefore be of one spirit, and build up one another in love.

Use 3. The name of a *body* binds us from easily starting one from another. If a member hang by a loose skin, it is no trouble to cut it off; but if it be fast on, it will be a great grief to the body; therefore there should be weighty reasons for disjoining one from another. May not a man then remove himself, or may the church keep a man in the body, or let him go at their pleasure? I answer, Neither of both, 1 Cor. xii. 18. If they be members, they must see that Christ dismiss them; but if they will fall off, it is a sign they did hang but by a loose skin, and then the church will be no great losers by the departure of such from them.

Use 4. Is Christ the head of the church? Then the pope is not the head of the church. An headship is applied to Christ; for if the pope be the head of the church, then the church is the body of the pope, which no papist durst ever say to this day. Now these two stand relative. Princes are said to be the head of the church, as Saul to be head of the tribes, that is, only in regard of eminency or place, that they be to see all the members of the church do their duty.

Use 5. Is Christ the head of the church? Then if any man want wisdom, direction, or comfort, where should he have it but in our head? The head must supply all to the members.

Use 6. Also it teacheth us to be subject unto Christ, as the church is to Christ her head. When the head calleth for anything, make no difficulty of it, be willing to be led and guided by him.

Use 7. It is comfort to every poor member of Christ, that surely Christ cannot but be sensible of my estate. If Christ be our head, then the least toe cannot be trodden on but the head feels it. Acts ix. 4, Saul cannot persecute a member of Christ but he persecutes Christ; Isa. lxiii. 9, He is merciful to us, and his soul is grieved for the miseries that befall us, Judges x. 16.

Use 8. If the members of the church be saints, then you see what manner of persons they ought to be that offer themselves to the church, and whom the church receiveth. They must be faithful brethren, such as shall be saved, such as are knit to Christ by one spirit; and when they have given themselves to Christ, then let them give themselves to the church. To have a golden head and wooden leg is a dishonour to the head.

Use 9. If members be saints, then you see what God calleth us to be. A *saint* implies to be set apart from all unclean uses; they are devoted to God's ways, to the building up of his kingdom. This God calleth us to be, as to be members of Christ, so to be saints.

And now to the form and essence of the church, to which also belongs the end, as the subject-matter doth to the kind. The form is that which distinguisheth it from all other assemblies and churches; for when it is said, *united into one congregation*, it distinguisheth it from the church of the Jews, which was a national church; from the catholic church, which never in this world meets in one congregation; as also from the diocesan church and family church. That they are knit into covenant distinguisheth one congregation from another; that they meet to worship God in all his holy ordinances, this distinguisheth them from all other assemblies that may be. Godly men may meet in one place for civil ends; the church therefore to which God hath given pastors and teachers is united into one congregation that meets in one place, 1 Cor. xiv. 23, and xi. 18, 20. When they come together in one place, then they make up a church assembly; it must be a place of no bigger compass and latitude than that all may hear and be

edified, 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 31. To this church Paul commendeth the excommunication of the incestuous Corinthian, 1 Cor. vii. 4. To a church that may meet in one place, Christ biddeth us 'tell the church,' that is, one congregation. The apostle never calls the Christians of a whole nation one church, but when there are many congregations in a nation or country, then he terms them many churches, Gal. i. 22, 1 Cor. xvi. 19, Gal. i. 2; therefore he styles them churches because they meet not all in one place, Rom. xvi. 4, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. He doth not call them the *church* of the saints, but the *churches*, and there is a double reason of it.

1. It is taken from the duty that lieth upon the church in the New Testament to take up offences amongst brethren: Mat. xviii. 17, 18, 'Tell the church,' saith Christ. Now that is not a family church; for what hath one family to do to judge another? It is not the catholic church, for they never meet but representatively, and they cannot hear all the offences of private brethren; neither can it be a national, diocesan, or provincial church, for a whole nation or province cannot meet for one brother's offence; therefore by the *church* is meant the congregation that meets every Lord's day, and it is easy for them to hear and heal all the offences that fall out in a week. To that church Christ speaks, 'Whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.'

2. And from the silence of God in the New Testament touching all national meetings and provincial and diocesan meetings; for if God had appointed such a church, he would have appointed national and provincial meetings. In the church of the Jews, which was a national church, they were at the least three times in the year to meet all together, and there were national offices and sacrifices to be offered only at those times. The high priest had a peculiar place, therefore Christ would have appointed national officers and meetings, and national and provincial worship, if he had appointed such a church. Some will say he hath left primates and metropolitans, &c., but he hath not set down the offices and duties of such men, there is a deep silence of all these things; therefore the church of the New Testament is a congregational church, that may meet in one place.

Use 1. A just refutation of all that platform of churches that antichrist brought into the church, and with the church came in to make way for him; for if the church be a congregation, it may meet in one place. Then national, provincial, and diocesan churches are such that the apostles never heard of in the New Testament; they are therefore the inventions of men's brains, and so an image set up, and contrary to the second commandment. If it should be said to us, You are a few scattered churches, were it not fit to have transcendent officers for unity's sake, to prevent schism and factions? I answer, It was intended for that end, but that which was intended for the benefit of the church hath brought contentions into the church, hath made way for ambition and secular pomp, for shouldering out of God's ordinances and godly men. Hath God therefore appointed no such things as national churches, national meetings, and worship? Then let us entertain no thoughts of them.

Use 2. From hence take the limits of the power of church officers, how they may proceed as far as the congregation reacheth, for the church is a congregation, therefore from hence will fall to the ground non-residence, that one man should have many churches under him, one in one country, another in another country. Such walk beside the rule; for if God hath ordained more officers to one church than one, and not more churches to one officer, then one man may have no more but one church under him. The apostle left more officers in one church than one: Philip. i. 1, 'With the

bishops;’ that is, the pastors, teachers, and elders. No pastor or teacher but he is the pastor or teacher of one congregation, and no more, Acts xx. 7, 28. God hath many overseers to one flock, not committed many flocks to one overseer; therefore non-residency is against the rule of Christ.

Use 3. Hence see the irregular proceedings of such as take upon them ecclesiastical jurisdiction over many churches, over a thousand congregations, over a whole province or nation, or the whole world, as the pope doth: for Christ left every church his own officers to rule the same.

Use 4. Also this is for refutation of those that think parishes are distinguished, not by divine institution, but human. Indeed, that the circuit of so much land shall maintain the minister, and all that live within such a compass of ground shall be of such a congregation, this is of human invention, against the commandment of God: but this is of divine institution, that the church exceedeth not the bounds of one congregation, of such a latitude that all may hear, and all may be edified. And as for those that are admitted into the church, this is divine; for the Lord admitteth all into the church, 1 Cor. xii. 18, that willingly offer themselves to subject themselves to the ordinances of God. Therefore the church is of divine institution.

III. Now the next thing is, that they are joined together in one congregation by holy covenant. First, to prove this by grounds out of Scripture, and then by reasons.

1. The first direction and institution of a church was by a covenant. The Israelites made a covenant with the Lord, and he with them, Deut. v. 2, and from that time they were called a church, Acts vii. 38; there they promised they would do all the Lord had said, and be obedient, Exod. xxiv. 3, 7. There was another covenant made with them, Deut. xxix. 12, &c.; this was a covenant of grace, as the other was of works, vers. 10–12. The Lord entered into covenant with them that day, and with their children. By a covenant he takes them to be his people, and to be their God. Some of them were in covenant with God before, as Moses, Joshua, &c., but when they became a national church, then they made a popular covenant with God and their own selves; and there is the same reason of a national and congregational church. The stranger that would be of that church must lay hold of the covenant with them, Isa. lvi. 47. Therefore, when Abraham took strangers into fellowship with his family, in which the church was, they did it by confederacy with him, which is a covenant, Gen. xiv. 23. He would not have done it if they had been idolaters; that was the sin of Asa and Jehoshaphat with Ahab. Therefore, when he took them to war with him, they were confederate in religion with him, they must come in by covenant; and then ‘my horses are thy horses, thy friends my friends,’ and thus all one. Thus all in the church of Israel came in by way of covenant.

2. The second ground of Scripture is taken from the restitution of a church when it is fallen, and there is the same reason of restitution as institution, by the same means it is restituted as instituted. Now, when they had ever fallen from God, or had decayed, they entered into a new covenant with God, so did they in the days of Asa, 2 Chron. xxiii. 16; so did also Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxix. 9, 10; so in the days of Joash, when it had been broken by Joram and Athaliah, 2 Chron. xiii. 16; so did Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31, 32. Thus a church is restored to its purity, by renewing of its covenant, Ezra x. 3, 5, 12, 19, and Neh. x. 29. They all clave to the Lord and to their brethren, with their nobles; and therefore there was a register

kept of them that entered into covenant, Isa. iv. 3, they were written, &c., Ps. lxxxvii. 6; therefore they that could not shew their father's house in the genealogies were put out, unless they would make a new covenant, Ezra ii. 59.

3. The third ground from Scripture is taken from the apostle's preface in the New Testament: Acts ii. 42, 'They continued,' &c. The word signifies, they joined and cleaved together; and this you see more plain in Acts v. 13; none durst join themselves, that is, glue themselves to the church; and it is the same word which Christ useth about man and wife, Mat. xix. 6. Now, how doth a man cleave to his wife but by mutual covenant? No other ways. That being wanting or broken, breaks and dissolves; that being maintained and kept, keeps a church; but the covenant being wanting or broken, breaks a church; therefore the covenant being made and kept, makes and keeps a church in its institution. Ezek. x. 10, 14, there is a description of the breaking of the church of Israel. Christ had two staves, and when he had broken the first, that was his covenant he had made with his people, and they with him, and that was the presence of Christ in his ordinances, which is his *beauty*. When you may go and hear the scribes and pharisees, and be never the better, then Christ is gone; their souls loathed him, and his soul loathed them; but the other staff was afterwards broken *bands*, and that was the covenant between God's people and the scribes and pharisees; and those that had a name to be of Israel, and were not true Israelites, God broke brotherhood between them. He broke it in the death of Stephen, and the persecution following, and thereby severed his faithful people from amongst them, so that they were forced for to leave the temple and the worship, and then they turned to the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 46, and then they ceased to be a church. Now, then, if the breaking of the covenant break the church, then the making of it constitutes a church; break the covenant with Christ, and you shake the foundation of the church. The poor of the fold began to perceive that Christ had left them, when he spake not in the scribes and pharisees, but when he breaks the brotherhood, then the church is quite broken; therefore, this being held, held and maintained a church together. If this held in the Old Testament, it will in the New. These things were so plain to the Jews in the Old Testament, that they made no question but that in the New Testament the children should be admitted as the parents were. Therefore you read little of the baptism of the infants; but it was clear, that if the fathers and their seed were then received into the covenant by the seal of circumcision, then in the New Testament they were to be received by the seal of baptism, Col. ii. 11, 12. So that in the New Testament you read of nothing but of the joining and gluing to the church; and as man and wife were joined by marriage covenant, so were they joined together by covenant in church fellowship. These be the grounds from Scripture: now for the reasons.

Reason 1. First, it is taken from the nature of a church. As God styles it in Scripture, it is called the spouse and queen of Christ, Eph. v. 23, 31, 32, Cant. vi. 8. Now, wherein doth a queen differ from a concubine? A queen enters into the bed by covenant, but a concubine is taken in by power, as Jacob took his maid. Prov. ii. 17, the wife is said to forsake the covenant; therefore, if the church be a spouse, she must enter in by covenant. Two things go to a queen-like state: 1, she enters in by covenant; 2, she hath the keys of the family, and rules the affairs in it; but a concubine hath neither; so a true church hath both these. She is called 'the city of the living God,' Heb. xii. 22, Eph. ii. 19; the members of the church are citizens. Now citizens enter into a covenant together to keep the laws and maintain

the liberty of the city, therefore the church is a city, must enter in by covenant.

2. From the power of the church to call her own officers. Acts i. 26, the church called Matthias, he was numbered; the word signified by common voice and suffrage they accepted him, *συγκατεψηφίσθη*. So were the deacons chosen by lifting up of hands, Acts vi. 5; the word *καὶ ἐξελέξαντο*, signifies they are chosen by lifting up of hands. Now the church doth not call her officers to an annual place, but constant, Zech. xi. 17, Deut. xii. 19, they must not forsake the Levite, nor the Levite them; the very calling of a minister to the employment of the ministry is an essential covenant, though something more implicit. An officer should not thrust himself upon a body, for then he maketh her a concubine, not a queen. Now, then, if he must be chosen by full consent, then he hath no authority over them that will not submit themselves to him, and therefore cannot do any act of power, as administer the sacraments and church censures, to those that do not call him to the work; therefore there must be a covenant.

3. From the power of the church over her members. She hath power to admonish them; and if they hear her not, then to exclude them. Now she hath nothing to do to judge those that are without the church, but those that are joined to the church, 1 Cor. v. 11, 12.

4. From the end and use of the sacraments. One end is to seal up church-fellowship, 1 Cor. xii. 13, and x. 18; therefore church fellowship standeth by church covenant, because they are the seal of the covenant.

Use 1. Reproof of those spirits that look at church covenants as a human invention. Abraham will not admit any to fellowship with him but by covenant. The church of Israel enters by covenant, and is by covenant restored; by covenant the church of the New Testament is the city and spouse of Christ, therefore there must be a covenant.

Use 2. You see how we have cause to be humbled if we sit down anywhere, and enjoy the church privileges without church-fellowship by a covenant.

Use 3. Learn we a true estimation of churches, and discretion in judging of them. By how much any church is more faithful in the covenant, the truer and more pure the church is. Hath any church power to choose her own officers, and the power to govern the church? Then such are pure churches, but else they are defiled, and are but concubines. How should we, therefore, be humbled for our brethren, that are forced like concubines, enter not into covenant before the Lord and one with another, according to his will!

Use 4. A just apology for such ministers and others that dare not administer any ordinance of God to such as offer not themselves to enter into covenant with the church. A minister may not obtrude himself upon any; if they call him not to be their minister, he may not dispense any censure or act of power to them; therefore it is not an act of schism in the church or minister, but in those that so withdraw themselves; they thereby make themselves incapable to have any ordinance of power to be dispensed to them. Ministers have no power but where they are called, and they are not but where there is a willing people. If men will not have the church to rule over them, God compels none, though he commands it; and therefore neither may the church. 2 Cor. ix. 13, they thank God for their professed subjection.

Use 5. Hence see the essential difference of one congregation from another, the difference of the covenant; they enter into covenant with officers and members, and this distinguisheth them.

Use 6. This may teach the necessity of constancy in church fellowship. It is a covenant of God, and God hath a part in all covenants, between man and wife, prince and people, but especially in all holy covenants; therefore they may not depart the one from the other, but God must part them. God hath set us in the church by virtue of a covenant, therefore we must have God's leave and the church's leave to depart, if we will depart in God's fear. Unless God dispose of it, a member may not depart, nor the church dismiss him; there is a tripartite covenant: God is one party, the member another, the church the third. Now, as I have God's leave to come in, so I must have his leave to go out.

Use 7. To such as desire fellowship with the church, to exhort them, first to enter into covenant with the Lord, and then to make a covenant with the congregation. If any man offer himself to the church, and the church defer his entertainment, his very looking towards God's temple is an ordinance, and God will accordingly bless him: the desire of an ordinance before God is accepted as well as the enjoyment. Every stone was hewn before they came to be laid in Solomon's temple. The chiefest work, the work of regeneration, should be wrought before he enters into the church; the conversion of men is not proper to the members of the church, but to children.

Use 8. Comfort to us that are knit together in holy covenant, therefore stand fast in his liberty, Gal. v. 1. It is an unspeakable mercy, and for ever to be acknowledged to God's praise; therefore, though they do abandon us, we should have a care of them that are entered into covenant with us.

IV. Now the end of this uniting together in covenant is to worship the Lord, and to edify one another in all his holy ordinances, 1 Cor. v. 4; 'When you are met together in the name of the Lord,' 1 Cor. xiv. 26, all must be done to edification. This is the end of all church meetings; but of this more hereafter.

Obj. But then, where doth contribution take place? It is neither the worship of God, nor edification.

Ans. It is both God's worship, and an act of edification; it is not only a Christian duty, but it tends to edify. Philip. iv. 18, the succour of our brethren is an acceptable sacrifice to God, and that was edification to Paul, for 'by this,' saith he, 'I am full, and abound,' and so he was quickened to his work; Heb. xiii. 16, 'With such sacrifices God is well pleased,' and hereby the bowels of the saints are refreshed, which is one part of edification; Philem. 7, 'And,' saith he, 'we have great joy and consolation,' which is also edification; therefore it is not only a carnal affection that is helped by contribution, but spiritual edification.

Reas. Herein the church differs from other assemblies, that may be godly men, and may meet in one place and be in covenant; for so may a commonwealth, but a church always meets for spiritual works.

Use 1. To teach us to do all our outward works in a spiritual manner, to give to our brethren to refresh their bowels, to increase their joy, to quicken them in the work of the Lord.

Use 2. Learn what is the end of all our meeting and all our confederacy; all is to worship the Lord, and to edify one another in God's holy ways. Some think the assembly of God's people to be factious, but, saith Tertullian, *Congressus piorum non factio dicendus est, sed curia*; let there therefore nothing be done in the church but that which tendeth to the honour of God and the edification of the church.

Use 3. Comfort to us, that God affords us such liberties as these be, wherein we may meet to worship, and edify one another in God's ways. It is an honourable assembly wherein Christ is the head, and every member, if he be not an hypocrite, is a younger brother or sister to the Lord Jesus Christ; and they meet not for the good of the commonwealth directly, though that be honourable, yet it is nothing to the salvation of souls, and the edifying of one another in God's fear. How, therefore, should all matters be carried? There should nothing appear but the presence of Christ, the love of Christ, the power of his grace; and then they are the most honourable meetings in the world.

Use 4. This is also comfort to us, that Christ will be our provision, protection; he is our head, and he will care for us. If we meet together and worship God, and edify one another, will he let us want and starve? Do you think Christ is so ill an husband? Would you leave your wives naked, and without provision, if you had it for them? Now Christ hath it for us, and he will not leave us without supply. Philip. iv. 19, when they had supplied him, then saith he, 'God shall supply all your wants.' And now this church of Philippi was one of the poorest churches of all; it was one of the churches of Macedonia that was in deep poverty, 2 Cor. viii. 2; yet Paul bears those record, that they only had communicated unto him; therefore, saith he, God shall do you good. Walk as becometh the spouse of Christ, and he will care for us; God will not be wanting to pour out blessings upon us, those that enter into covenant with him, and walk according to the power of it. Now you see what a church is.

Quest. What sort of members hath God set in his church?

Ans. Some of them are ministers and officers of the church, others of them are called commonly by the general name of the members, brethren, and saints; so that here are two sorts of members and two sorts of names: the name of the first, ministers and officers, the other, brethren and saints. Ministers and officers are all one, brethren and saints are all one. To prove all of them: first, for ministers, 1 Cor. iv. 1, 1 Tim. i. 12, Col. iv. 12, 2 Cor. iii. 6, Rom. xii. 7; by ministers he means elders, and deacons for officers, 1 Tim. iii. 1, 10, Rom. xi. 14, Acts i. 20, Ps. cix. 8. These two titles express one part of the church's body. The brethren and saints are distinguished from the ministers and officers; Acts xv. 22, 23, those he calls the church, ver. 22, he calls them brethren, ver. 23. All the members of the church are usually styled brethren, Rom. xvi. 23, Philip. i. 10. Those Christians that had no public offices in the church he styleth saints, Col. i. 2. Now, because God would have us give our children significant names, therefore it is likely for good reason the Holy Ghost gave these names to the members of the church, some officers and ministers, others brethren and saints. In their very names you may read the idea and platform of the church government; their very name should put them in mind of their duties, that as readily as you know your names when you are called, so you may hereby see the duties that God calls for in our several places.

1st, For ministers. This is expressed by two words in Scripture: the first is *ἐπισκοπος*, 1 Cor. iv. 1; let men esteem of us as under-rowers, the ministers carry an-end the ship of the church. Now, what doth this hold forth unto us? It holds forth thus much, that ministers are called to be rowers and under-rowers to Christ. This text will lead ministers by the hand to see what God requires of them, that they should labour one way and look another way, and yet both without hypocrisy. A rower, which way soever he rows, he looks contrary: if he be for to row westward, he looks eastward. And did you ever hear a minister preach damnation in his words,

and see him look as though he would carry all his hearers to hell? It is true, it may be he looks so, but now he rows a clean contrary way to that. And you would think he did respect the way to everlasting happiness, that he would advance you to them when he delivers you all delicacies and comfort; you would think his intent were to advance you to the highest heavens, and so it is; but withal he labours a quite contrary thing, his course is quite contrary to that he looks. When he doth most exalt you, then he doth but abase you; it is to make you the more humble, James i. 9, 10. You will sometimes think a minister speaks with much authority and sternness, and yet doth he serve you in all meekness of Christian wisdom and humility of mind. Paul saith he did, Acts xx. 18, 19, when yet he charged them with all authority, and when he beseeches you to receive grace; when he moves and persuades to avoid any evil, then doth he come with all authority and rule over you with power. These are compact together, and that without sin; and what is said of one minister is said of all, that is, pastors and teachers. This is the first thing implied in the word minister, that is, an under-rower.

2dly, The word minister signifies a servant. Joshua was Moses's minister, his servant that waited on him; so are all the apostles, elders, and deacons. The word deacon signifies a minister.

First, They are ministers to Christ, Rom. xv. 16. Now, they are his servants, 1, because they deliver nothing, nor speak nothing to the church, but the commands of Christ; they do nothing nor speak nothing but what they have received from Christ, Mat. xxviii. 20. 2. They work for his end and for his glory, and make it a transgression of their ministry to do otherwise, Philip. ii. 21, 22, Gal. i. 10; then they are ministers to Christ indeed.

Secondly, They are ministers and servants of the church: Rom. xvi. 1, 'Phebe, a servant of the church;' 1 Cor. iv. 5, 'We preach ourselves your servants;' and 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Wherein are the ministers the church's servants? Are they not called rulers? *Ans.* Not in the same respect they are ministers. The calling of a minister is a mystery; they look one way and work another, and yet dissemble neither way. But as they are servants, their service to the church stands in these things: 1. They come at the church's call; this is one part of their service to the church: Acts xvi. 9, 10, 'Come into Macedonia and help us,' whence they gathered the Lord called them. Hence God hath ordained the church to call her own officers, for the man came in the church's name: 'Come and help us.' It is a point of service to come when a man is called. 2. They go upon the church's errand; that is a point of service, Mat. viii. 9. It is our Saviour's rule, 'He that is sent is not greater than he that sends.' So then herein lies their service, they come when the church calls them, and go when the church sends them, John xiii. 16. Paul saith he was sent by the church, and the church chose another to go with him. 3. They submit themselves to the church's censure, Col. iv. 17; and if they will not hear an admonition, they may deal further with them. Peter himself must not judge others, but the church, and they must also judge him; this is the service of ministers to the church.

Thirdly, The third thing wrapped up in the name of minister is, that he is a dispenser, Gal. iii. 5, 11. Rom. xv. 16, 'He hath made us able ministers of the gospel,' that is, dispensers of it by the Spirit.

1. Therefore it lieth strongly upon their consciences to know and practise that which is a main part of their calling: never to think they have done this ministry till they have dispensed the Spirit with the New Testament and the gospel, 2 Cor. iii. 6. This makes the work too heavy for men and angels,

that they must minister the Spirit ; not only the word, but the Spirit, saving knowledge. This is the main weight of duty that lies upon a minister, not to dispense ceremonies, shadows, rule, and pomp ; but if we run without the Spirit, we run without our errand, and we have not fulfilled it except we leave the Spirit behind us in the hearts of the people. ‘I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace,’ Isa. lvii. 19, speaking of the ministers of the New Testament. This is therefore their principal work, to be dispensing a spirit of peace, a spirit of power, a spirit of love, a spirit of meekness, and of zeal, and of humility, and whatsoever savours of life. Thus they are called to the work, therefore they are called stewards, 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

2. This therefore teacheth us ministers to be faithful, for so must dispensers be. They must tell all their errand ; and not only fill them with words, but with the characters of the Spirit also, if it be possible. 2 Cor. ii. 16, ‘Who therefore is sufficient for these things?’ to be a savour of life ; therefore it is not all the learning in the world that will make a man sufficient to dispense a spirit of life and darkness. ‘Who is sufficient?’ Are not you, Paul? No, not Paul ; for for him to give the Holy Ghost is far from him, but he keeps his heart in frame, and is faithful, that Christ may breathe in his ministry.

3. This will carry some respect back again from the people to the minister, in regard he is a dispenser to them, 1 Cor. ix. 11. Now, for this word *officer*, it signifies two things, and that God styles them : 1. It signifies a charge, Acts i. 20, Ps. cix. 8. The word in the original is properly charge, and so it is translated Isa. lx. 17. ‘Necessity is laid upon me to preach,’ 1 Cor. ix. 16 ; ‘Thou shalt give Joshua a charge,’ Num. xxvii. 23. It implies authority, Ps. cix. 8. That word implies authority, therefore the officers are called rulers, 1 Tim. v. 17. God hath left governors in his church, 1 Cor. xii. 28 ; ‘Obey them that have the rule over you,’ Heb. xiii. 17. But if they be servants, how then can they be rulers? This is the mystery. The rulers of the church are the church’s servants, and the servants of the church are the church’s rulers. *Ans.* There are three things in which lies the authority of their office : 1. In dispensing of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, Titus ii. 15, either in exhortation, doctrine, or admonition, they do it with all authority : 1 Tim. vi. 17, ‘Charge them that are rich,’ &c. 2. Though they come not on to the ministry till they are called, yet being called they have authority to call church assemblies and to dismiss them : Acts vi. 2, the apostles called the church together ; Joel i. 13, 14, ‘Call a solemn assembly.’ They moderate matters in the assembly, give leave to others to speak, Acts xiii. 9 ; and they dismiss the assembly, Num. vi. 23–27. 3. These are the mouth and hands of the church, by which they execute the power of the censures ; and therefore he saith he hath somewhat against the angel of the church of Ephesus, and against the angel of Pergamos and Thyatira, Rev. ii. 4, 14, 20. By the angel is meant the presbytery, and they are taxed for lack of good discipline in the church ; because the church having called rulers, it lies upon them if there be any abuse in it, for they have the power to act and moderate all in it, and the church only consents to and approves what they do. If you ask, then, What is the power of the church? it is this : 1st, she calls her own officers and members ; and, 2dly, she sends forth both for her service ; and if any fail, she may call them to account, and censure their failings by the hand of her mouth, which are her ministers. The ministers have another power, to call the church together, to charge her there with all authority, to moderate things in it, and to dismiss it, and to execute her censures, according to God’s word. The deacons also being officers, have the charge of the church’s treasure, and they have power and authority

to dispense it according to the rule of Christ; and except they go besides the rule, the church breaks not in upon their office.

Now, for the word *brethren*, it argues three things: 1. That they are subject to officers, which is not service, but brotherhood: Rom. xiv. 23, 'Quartus, a brother.' 2. It is a rule over brethren; it implies a continuance in brotherly love, Heb. xiii. 1; break them, and you break the covenant. 3. A continuance of brotherly communion and fellowship, that it be not broken; except Christ break it, we may not break it, Zech. xi. 14.

That word *saints* implies two things: 1. A separation from all unclean and common use; as bread and wine, when they are set apart from common use, are said to be holy, so men, when they are set apart from lusts and passions, are then sanctified. 2. A devotion or dedication of them to God's service; as a Sabbath is said to be sanctified when it is dedicated to God.

Then let the mentioning of these names keep this whole work of discipline fresh in your hearts and thoughts; as often as you are called officers, ministers, brethren, and saints, then read your duty, and they will be a commentary whereby to know what God requires of you, your duty to himself, to his church, and one to another.

Quest. What sorts of ministers or officers hath God set in his church?

Ans. They are some of them extraordinary, as apostles, prophets, and evangelists; some ordinary, as bishops and deacons.

First, For the extraordinary officers, they are apostles, prophets, and evangelists; and these God set in his church, Eph. iv. 11, 1 Cor. xi. 28. To open these; and,

1. For apostles, they are first set in the church, 1 Cor. xi. 28. An apostle signifies as much as an angel or messenger, four benefits or privileges accompanying their calling: 1. They were messengers sent immediately by Jesus Christ; they had their calling by lively voice from him, John xx. 21. So also saith Paul of himself, that he was not 'of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ.' 2. They had an immediate charge: Mat. xxviii. 19, 'Go, teach all nations;' Mark xvi. 15, 16, 1 Cor. xi. 28. The care of all the churches lay upon him; yet where God blessed his ministry, there he stayed longer, and departed from them that would not receive his doctrine. Gal. ii. 7, 8, Peter was more mighty among the Jews, and Paul among the Gentiles. Though their power were illimited in regard of the charge, yet there was a limitation in respect of effects and spiritual directions by them. Paul would have gone to Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not. 3. They were guided by infallible assistance of the Spirit; the Spirit led them into all truth, Gal. i. 11, 12. Paul doubts not to say that he had laid the foundation, therefore good reason it was that they should be kept from errors, 1 Cor. iii. 10. Peter erred indeed, but his error was not in doctrine, but only in matters of fact. 4. They were endued with the power of working miracles, to confirm their doctrine, Mark xvi. 20; these things made their places extraordinary. Other ministers of the church have not the same call, the same charge, the same assistance, nor the like power. When Judas the apostle hanged himself, they had a church meeting to elect another apostle into his office, Acts i. 15, 16; but when Herod had slain James the apostle, chap. xii. 2, you read not of any other meeting to constitute another. When they slept, their calling slept with them, and were not to continue in succession; for no man was substituted in the room of James as there was in the room of Judas, but instead thereof the apostles constituted elders in every church, Acts xiv. 23. As in the Old Testament there were twelve patriarchs, and of Joseph that was cut off from his brethren there came two tribes, and so they were thirteen

in all, so when Judas fell from his office, God ordained another in his room. And, lastly, was Paul, as one born out of due time, sent by Christ himself, for to make up the number of the thirteen patriarchs of the New Testament. This was the work of the apostles, even to plant churches; the church could not call them, for they were to bring in the Gentiles, which were no churches.

2. A second sort of officers is prophets, Eph. iv. 11, 1 Cor. xii. 28; this is the second office. There were three sorts of prophets in the New Testament: 1. Those that were endued with an extraordinary gift of foretelling things to come, needful to prevent the churches' dangers, and give direction for the churches' safety; such an one was Agabus, Acts xi. 28, 29. If that danger had not been foretold, the churches would not have been ready for to send relief to the saints in Judea, and so many poor saints might have perished; but by that prophecy it was prevented, Acts xxi. 9-11. Agabus prophesied what should betide Paul at Jerusalem; this was of excellent use in those times, that so the churches might by their prayers prevent such like calamities; or else if Paul could not prevent bonds or death, then he might be prepared for such desperate discouragements, as he saith himself, I am ready to die. These gifts ordinarily now are ceased; all is written in the Scriptures, whereof we stand in need for help and direction. 2. Prophets are taken for the preaching elders of the church, so it is taken, Rom. xii. 6, 7. The ordinary preachers of the gospel are pastors and teachers, and they are called prophets. 3. Sometimes prophets are taken to mean those who have the gift of teaching and prophecy, which may be found in any member of the church; and this is not an office, 1 Cor. xiv. 31; these are not ceased in the church, but still continue in the same.

3. For the evangelists, Eph. iv. 11, who they were, is much sought after; but they were such as had not their call immediately from Christ, yet they had an immediate call from the apostles, who were extraordinary men, and had extraordinary gifts. They had their calling from the apostles, as the apostles had theirs from Christ: 2 Tim. iv. 5, 'Do the work of an evangelist;' and it is said of him that Paul would have him go forth with him, Acts xvi. 13. Another evangelist was Mark, whom Paul would not accept of to go with him, Acts xv. 37, 38; and these were called to perfect the work of the apostles, that which the apostles had begun. When they had begun to plant churches, they left the finishing and perfecting of them to the evangelists. These were extraordinary in their call: 1. That they were immediately called by the apostles, though the church sometimes joined with them, as in ordaining Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2. They were not limited to any one charge, but had many, and executed authority in divers places; and herein they differed from pastors and teachers, for the pastors are to look to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers; but evangelists stayed no longer in a place than they were entreated, which pastors needed not to be. 1 Tim. i. 3, He would not have besought Timothy to have tarried, if he might not have gone away when he pleased. Tit. i. 5, He left him for to ordain elders in every city, therefore they were not limited to one charge, or bound to stay in any one place, 2 Tim. iv. 11, 12. Thus he leaves some in one place, and some in another, and disposeth of them; for they were to perfect the work of the apostles, and not limited to any charge. 3. Some of the evangelists wrote the Gospel, as Mark and Luke, but this was peculiar to some of them; the rest of the evangelists that wrote the Gospel were apostles also. But since the apostles and evangelists went to heaven, you never heard the Holy Ghost took care to substitute any evangelists in their room; as they died, so their places died with them. Further, you read that Philip, one of the deacons, Acts vi. 5, was an evangelist, Acts xxi.

8; and then the Holy Ghost sets him apart too, for he went down to Samaria, and preached there, and the people gave heed unto his ministry, Acts viii. 5, 6; also he baptized the eunuch, which, as a deacon, he would not have done, but as an evangelist called to preach the gospel. Some, therefore, of the evangelists were immediately called by the Holy Ghost, some immediately by the apostles, some by the apostles with the church, 1 Tim. iv. 14. This office is ceased, as the callings of the apostles and prophets are. God hath of latter days given to some extraordinary gifts for the settling of churches, as Luther, Calvin, &c., having great wisdom and knowledge; but they did it not so much by virtue of office as by gifts. These are the extraordinary, apostles, prophets, evangelists.

Two sorts of officers in the church are ordinary, and they are bishops and deacons, Philip. i. 1. That these are ordinary, and that these are all, may appear by the direction of the apostle to Timothy, how to carry himself in the church of God in constituting of officers. He nameth these two, 1 Tim. iii. 1, 8, bishops and deacons. Whom doth he mean by the bishops? You may see, Acts xx. 17, with 28, 'the flock over which God hath made you ἐπισκόπους, overseers'; those he calleth elders, ver. 17, he calleth bishops, ver. 28, Tit. i. 5, 7; and the same he calleth elders, ver. 5, are called bishops, ver. 7. For deacons, see Acts vi. 2-4, the deacons for the church at Jerusalem; and Paul giveth directions to Timothy about them, and it is a perpetual charge to the church. Compare 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15, with 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. Bishops and deacons must be kept to the coming of Christ in the church; not so apostles, prophets, evangelists.

Quest. What manner of persons hath God appointed to be called to the office of bishops, or (which is all one) elders in the church?

Ans. A bishop or elder in the church must be in himself blameless for holiness and righteousness, and for freedom from passions and lust, also a vigilant man, and of good behaviour. Moreover, in his family, a man of government, and good hospitality; in his name, of good report, yea, even of those that are without; and in profession he may not be a young plant, but holding fast the word of truth, apt to teach it, and able to maintain it, 1 Tim. iii. 2-7, 11; Titus i. 6-9. To open all these particulars from those texts. An elder is all one with a bishop, and a bishop with an elder: Titus i. 5, 7, 'I left thee to ordain elders, if any be blameless. For a bishop must,' &c., Acts xx. 17, 28. Therefore a bishop, in the first place, must be blameless, 1 Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 6; for what is it to be blameless? He must be holy, and, Titus i. 8, he must be known to be holy in his service of God, just in his dealings with men, and not justly taxed for any profaneness or unrighteousness. He must give God his own, man his own, and not be blamed for the least offence; so also he must be blameless from passion and lust; he must not be self-willed, Titus i. 7; he must not be self-conceited, self-pleasing, that pleaseth himself in his fancy, and will not be drawn from it; he must not be soon angry, he must not be a striker, he must not be a brawler, 1 Tim. iii. 3. He must be free from readiness to be angry in his speeches, nor must he be ready to strike, a thought and a word, a word and a blow; thus must he not be, but blameless from them. He may not lust after wine, for that is a lust of intemperance; nor greedy of filthy lucre, for that is a lust of covetousness, 1 Tim. iii. 3, Titus i. 7, 8; he must be a sober man, and of temperate behaviour. All those vain, worthless things are reckoned under these heads, 1 John ii. 6, 7, 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' Now when he is forbidden to be self-willed, to be angry, to be a brawler, then he is no proud person; take away self-will, and down falleth pride; through pride men make contention, Prov.

xiii. 10. He may not be blamed for covetousness, the lust of the eye, nor the lust of the flesh, intemperance and incontinency. A bishop must also be a vigilant man, and of good behaviour, 1 Tim. iii. 2; 'vigilant,' that is, watchful; a double watchfulness is required of him. 1. In respect of his own estate, that he may not put upon the church unnecessary burdens; he must be prudent, not unthrifty. 2. In a diligent observance of the state of the flock committed to him, that he may be able to apply a fit word to them in season. Also, he must be 'of good behaviour,' comely; he must not be slovenly nor rude, nor neglective to others; such a man will bring his calling into contempt, especially amongst carnal men. This would make his people neglect his counsel, therefore he must not be rude whether it be through ill-nature or ill-nurture. They should be comely-carriaged men, that they expose not their callings to contempt through rudeness or slovenliness, but that they may be fit for any company. God taketh no pleasure in compliments; for God would not have a man of a mimic behaviour, full of gesticulations and cringes, for they are not fit for men of gravity, as elders must be; they must not be like players and courtiers, but of grave and comely behaviour: this he must be in himself. Now in his family he must be, first, a man of good government; he must have his children and servants in good order; they must not be wild and unruly, nor pilferers, nor riotous, nor sturdy, nor prodigal, Titus i. 7, but faithful, but frugal, but teachable, and ingenious. He must be the husband of one wife; he must not have two, as the Jews had, nor have a second when he had put away the first for any other cause than adultery; he must have but one, and her lawfully married. 1 Tim. ii. 5, if a man cannot rule his own house, his own servants, his own children, how shall he rule other men's servants and children that are members of the church? He must also be of good hospitality, 1 Tim. iii. 2, Titus i. 8; he must be a 'lover of hospitality,' and given to it. The word in the original signifies both, that a man loveth he is given to; he taketh it for his comfort to have Christian friends in his house with him. It is his joy; he doth not harbour his brethren with grudging, 1 Peter iv. 9, he must do it freely, frequently, according to the measure of his estate God hath given him, Heb. xiii. 1, 2. Now for his good name, he must be a man of good report, even of those that are without, 1 Tim. iii. 7, that they that would slander him, and religion by him, may not be able, lest he fall into reproach, which is a dishonour to his name and to the church of God, and he falleth into the snare of the devil. While he may seek to clear himself, he may fall into passion, and brawling, and contention, or else may let a report lie upon him, and not seek to vindicate his name, and so the devil will have him on either side. He must have a good report even of those that are without, because this will first cut off occasion of slander from pagans, and also give them the better opportunity and greater encouragement to come into the church, and for that end to confer with the elders about it, for otherwise it would be a stumbling-block unto them; and if they should be well reported of by those that are without, how much more by those that are within! Finally, he may not be a new plant, a novice, one that is new come on to grace, or newly in the church, for such an one is but raw, and unsettled, and of no great experience. He must be a grave Christian, and of some standing and constancy. Titus i. 9, he must hold fast the faithful word of God, which a young plant cannot do; he must be a constant Christian and professor, that must hold fast the doctrine of truth and grace against his adversaries, Satan and his instruments; yea, he must be able to maintain that he saith, and persuade others to it: apt to teach; for though all elders teach not, yet they must be apt for it, apt to admonish, apt to teach, as they have occa-

sion. They must be able to give good reason of what they hold, and able to justify it against gainsayers. A good cause giveth a great strength to him that believeth what he saith, and practiseth what he believeth; such a man will be able to give a reason and account of his faith and government, which a gainsayer cannot resist. He must not be a young plant, for he is not a holdfast; the reason of this is given, 1 Tim. iii. 6, 'Lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' This holds forth thus much, that a young plant being called to the ministry, may be puffed up with the pride of his place, and respect done unto him from others, and so fall into the condemnation of the devil, which was pride upon the excellency of his ministry; that was the devil's fall, and the sin whereby he fell out of heaven and became a devil. God made him an angel of light; and when God had made his angels ministering spirits about his throne, they were proud of it, and thought it reflected some glory, not upon God, but upon themselves; and therefore God cast them out, and they are reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. The devil was not capable of the lust of the flesh, nor the 'lust of the eye,' therefore his sin was pride, or the fruits of it. Some have thought he offered to set his throne equal with his Maker, Isa. xiv. 12-14; but it is not spoken of him, but of the king of Babylon; and the text saith, 1 Tim. iii. 6, his pride was in his ministry; for pride may shew itself, as in envy of superiors, so in contempt of inferiors, or self-sufficiency and fulness in a man's self; for their envying of God we read not any footsteps of it in Scripture, but that they prided themselves in their ministry. Because they saw Adam and Eve not so glorious creatures as themselves, but that they were more remote from God, therefore they prided themselves in their ministry above Adam, and were full of themselves, and therefore would not serve and attend upon Adam; and this might be their ruin. Therefore, a man might not be a novice, lest he fall into the sin of the devil, who prided himself in his ministry about the throne, and despised Adam, to pride himself in his ministry.

Use 1. This serves to teach the church of God, when you come to choose your church-officers, whom they are to choose into the office of a bishop or elder, even men thus qualified, of such government in their families, of such a growth as hath been described; for if you walk besides the rule, you walk besides peace.

Use 2. It teacheth officers their duty, and what God calleth them to, even to be blameless, &c.; and this is your copy, this is that you are so to express, that you may not fail in any.

Use 3. To teach us what cause of due thankfulness to God we have, when God giveth us such as are in any measure conformable to this rule laid down unto us.

Use 4. To teach the children and servants of church elders to take heed of riot, of anger, of impatience, disobedience, for thereby you disable them from ruling the church. He that cannot keep in order his own family, how, then, shall he rule the church of God?

Use 5. To teach those whom God calleth to any public office, either in the church or commonwealth, to look to have their hearts not puffed up with their places; but be you humble in the ministry God calleth you to, not to be exalted above your brethren. A man is not to be self-full, but careful to receive supply from Christ, and so to go in and out amongst your people, that you may be exemplary patterns to them of blamelessness, of freedom from passions and lust, of good behaviour, of good government, that so God's work may prosper in your hands, and you may give God a comfortable account at the day of your appearance.

Quest. What sort of bishops hath God set in his church ?

Ans. Two ; some pastors and teachers, some ruling elders, under two heads ; some labour in word and doctrine, and of those some are pastors, some teachers, others rule only, and labour not in word and doctrine.

Quest. What is the work and office of the pastors and teachers ?

Ans. The work of the pastors is to attend to exhortation, and therein to dispense a word of wisdom ; but the teacher's office is to attend unto doctrine, and therein to dispense a word of knowledge : Eph. iv. 11, ' God hath given some pastors, some teachers.' Now there be two places which give clear light to the difference of their work and office. The first place is Rom. xii. 7, 8 : there is a teacher, which is to attend unto teaching ; and an exhorter, which is to wait upon exhortation. If the teacher be to attend unto teaching, and there is besides an exhorter, then that is left for the pastor's office and work to exhort ; for there are no other officers in the church now that labour in the word and doctrine but pastors and teachers. The apostle maketh them distinct officers, and they have their several works to attend unto ; the teacher is not to attend unto exhortation, nor the pastor unto doctrine. The second place is 1 Cor. xii. 8 : the apostle, speaking of the several gifts that God hath given to the members of the church, ' To one,' saith he, ' is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit ;' and these he maketh to be given to distinct and different persons. As the gifts are different, so the persons are different. Now to which is the word of knowledge given ? It is the proper object of the teacher. So he is to teach knowledge to the people, and then the pastor is with wisdom to dispense a word of exhortation. Consider what are the objects of knowledge and wisdom ; the object of knowledge is truth, and the difference between truth and falsehood, and contains in it all things that are to be known and believed by Christian men, though they are not to be practised, as the knowledge of God, the state of innocency, man's fall, of the state of glory, yea, of man's sins, which are not to be practised. The object of wisdom is godliness, for wisdom ever directeth to a good end, and the means to attain it. Matters of wisdom must not only be known, but we must be stirred up and exhorted to the same ; so that, when he saith, ' To one is given a word of wisdom ;' that is, to discern what is best for the people of God to do, and to stir them up accordingly to it by wise motives, and inducements, and helps, as may make a Christian wise unto salvation ; and for the matters of truth, and faith, and knowledge, they belong to the teacher to dispense unto God's children and people ; but there are four things which are both for knowledge and practice, as what is the nature of repentance and faith, matters to be known and practised also ; and so the nature of obedience, what is a virtue and what a vice ; and where both these concur together, there both is the teacher to deal in teaching, and the pastor to take them up in application. Now the reason why God is pleased thus to dispense himself is, first, taken from the necessity of supplying the defects of God's people. 1. Ignorance and error lieth upon them ; so God complains, ' My people perish for want of knowledge.' Now the teacher is to look that they be taught the knowledge of the Lord. 2. Folly and slowness of heart. Folly to see what is best to be done ; and when we know it, we are slow to put it into practice, Luke xxiv. 25. Now here comes in the pastor's work : he teacheth them what is best to be done, and stirs them up to it ; he cometh to heal their folly and slowness of heart, and that he doth by a wise and quick exhortation. Secondly, from the defect of officers themselves ; for a man may be abundant and rich in knowledge, and yet cold in exhorting ; and a man may be quick and lively in exhortation, and yet slow in know-

ledge ; and there is a reason in nature for it, for they require a several temper of body : a man of knowledge must be of a cold temper, and an exhorter of an hot spirit ; and therefore God, for the good of his church, hath provided both. There may be little light where there is much heat, and much light where there is little heat. So God's servants are some of them more full of light, and some of heat, and the church hath need of both. And thus the teacher may have need of the pastor, and the pastor of the teacher, and so like two hands they walk and help one another : 1 Tim. iv. 13, ' Give attendance to exhortation, and to doctrine ;' he chargeth them with both, all extraordinary officers of the church, as apostles, prophets, and evangelists, and a Timothy, that were to give attendance to both ; but he never saith so to any ordinary officer. An evangelist is as much worth as both pastor and teacher ; and therefore they that have spirits for both come nigh an extraordinary officer, an evangelist ; as God raised up some in the reformation of his church and people. But the apostle saith, Rom. xii. 7, ' Let the teacher wait on teaching,' &c., but the word *wait* is not in the original.

Quest. What is this the apostle would have them do, when he would have them attend and wait ?

Ans. He would have this to be all their work : there they set up, there rest, they are to dwell upon them, that if you would have them, there you must have them ; that though they may have to deal in sundry occasions, yet all the work of a teacher is about teaching, and of a pastor about exhortation. Now this word *applying* or *attending* implies four things :

1. They must attend to the raising of their doctrine and exhortation, and that will require their attendance to reading. For a man to raise a doctrine and not understand his text, he buildeth without a foundation ; therefore he must read the Scripture and learn the sense of it, and must withal attend to the state of the people which he is to teach and exhort. Prov. xxvii. 23, he would have them know the state of their flocks : how much more should a pastor and teacher the state of their people ? Ezek. iii. 17–19, therefore it is necessary for them to watch over them, Heb. xiii. 17, that they may apply a word to them according to their estates. This is the first thing : if a man either mistake the state of his text or of his flock, he will speak very impertinently to them ; they must not come off with a sudden doctrine or exhortation, for that which is seasonable at one time may be unseasonable at another.

2. They must attend unto applying of their doctrine for refutation of errors, for reproof of any corruption of manners, the teacher to the one of them, the pastor to the other, for there is a difference between these two, for, saith the apostle, 2 Tim. iii. 16, the word is ' profitable for reproof, for correction,' ἐλέγχος, that is, reproof of errors ; ἐπανόρθωσις, it is ' reformation ' of manners, and so they urge both. The teacher presseth his doctrine from manifold scriptures and reasons from Scripture, and the pastor presseth his exhortation from sundry matters, and dispenseth sundry means, by which the duties he persuadeth them to may be performed, as also it is the duty of both of them (in special manner of the pastor) to comfort when either doctrine is believed or duty performed.

3. They must attend to the ratifying and sealing of the doctrine they teach, partly by dispensing the seals of the covenant, in which are wrapped up the counsel of God. Mat. xxviii. 19, they must baptize and teach, and therefore they that attend unto doctrine must attend unto the sacraments, to seal unto the people the doctrine they teach, partly by dispensation of the church censures together with the church ; whatsoever is an act of rule, they must have a hand in it, though others join with them : 1 Tim. i. 20, ' Whom

I have delivered unto Satan ;' he had a principal stroke in it, to make the church to do it, and he did it ' that they might learn not to blaspheme,' and so he ratified his doctrine, and so for the incestuous Corinthian doth mind about him, and send to the church to excommunicate him when they were met together with his spirit, and as though he was present with them, 1 Cor. v. 3, 4. Both pastors and teachers have a power to join in the church censures.

4. They must attend to the perfecting of the work they have in hand ; for what is their exhortation, and doctrine, and sacraments, and censures, unless God's blessing be upon them ? Therefore they must attend unto that which will perfect their work, and that is prayer ; Acts vi. 4, they must attend to the ministry of the word and to prayer, that is their main work ; Philip. i. 3, he never prayed but he prayed for that church, Col. i. 3, 1 Thes. i. 2, 3, 1 Sam. xii. 23. Amongst these prayers you must put in your blessings, Num. vi. 23-25 ; this perfects the work, for prayer opens the treasures of heaven for a blessing. They also perfect their work by their exemplary conversation, 1 Tim. iv. 12. Attendance to their own rule perfects their work they have in hand ; nay, moreover, pastors and teachers must be willing to lay down their lives for the confirmation of the doctrine and exhortations they have given to their people ; Philip. ii. 17, if God call, they must be willing to seal it with blood. This perfects their work.

Use 1. It is an use of refutation of a double error. Some think that the offices of pastor and teacher are all one ; others think that the pastors and teachers may be distinct offices, yet not both of them needful in every congregation. Both of these are errors from that formerly delivered ; for if God hath given some pastors and some teachers, and hath commanded the teacher to attend unto teaching, and the exhorter unto exhortation, then they are different offices committed to several persons ; they must attend to their several works, the pastor to exhortation, the teacher to doctrine. I may have a gift for sundry matters, but I am not bound to attend to any but that which is the principal work of my calling. Some man hath a gift of prophecy : is he therefore bound to attend to that only ? But when a man is bound to attend to his teaching, then that is a thing that will take up his whole work, and is his peculiar office ; and so for the exhorter. But what need both these in every congregation ? Doth not the apostle say God hath set them in his church ? He means every particular church. It is a maimed body that wanteth an eye or some other member ; so is a church unless it hath all the officers ; it may be a church, but not a complete church. Hath not every church need of light and heat, and need to be taught and exhorted ? The pastor and teacher hath need both to be in the church.

Use 2. To teach the officers of the church, both pastors and teachers, what is required of them in their several places, to teach, and exhort, and comfort the people of God.

Use 3. To teach the people of God, 1, not to expect the like measure of gifts from all your officers. If God hath given different gifts, you should not then look that a pastor should be so ready and strong in doctrine, nor from teachers to be quick in exhortations. 2. To teach us to be sensible of our own defects. To what purpose should God give us different officers if we stood not in need of them ; what need teachers if we were not dark in our understandings ? If we were not slow to believe, what need we exhorters to quicken, to exhort, and comfort those that do well ? Therefore, when you see your officers, you may consider your own defects in them. 3. To consider the marvellous bounty of God to us, that hath sent officers according to all our necessities. 4. To teach you what use to make of your pastors

and teachers, whom you are to choose to those places and offices. Repair to them for the word of truth and goodness according to God, that they may direct and exhort you in the ways of his grace.

Quest. What is the office and work of the ruling elders?

Ans. Seeing the kingdom of God is not of this world, but heavenly and spiritual, and the government of his kingdom is not lordly, but stewardly and ministerial, and to labour in the ministry of exhortation and doctrine is the proper work of the pastors and teachers, it remaineth therefore to be the office and work of the ruling elders to assist the pastors and teachers in diligent attendance to all other aids of rule besides exhortation and doctrine, as becometh good stewards of the household of God; as, 1, to open and shut the doors of God's house by admission of members, by ordination of officers, by excommunication of notorious and obstinate offenders; 2, to see none live in the church inordinately without a calling, or idle in their calling; 3, to prevent and heal offences, whether in life or doctrine, that might corrupt their own church, or other churches also, if their counsel be required; 4, to prepare matters for the church's consideration, and to moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assemblies, as to propound matters in the church, and to order the seasons of speech and silence in the church; 5, finally, to feed the flock of God by a word of admonition, and, as they shall be called, to visit and pray for their sick brethren.

The ground of all this is laid down in Rom. xii. 8, where the apostle, besides him that exhorteth and teacheth, maketh mention of another officer that ruleth with diligence; and he is distinct from the pastors and teachers, and that is the sum of his work, to rule with diligence. Now, because this is a general word, to rule, and here it is not limited; and to bring in an illimited rule in the church might overthrow the estate of the church; it is therefore requisite to inquire what manner of rule this is. For opening of which, you hear, in answer to the question, that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, but heavenly and spiritual: from whence it will follow, that the rule commended to a ruling elder is not a worldly rule, not with state and pomp, nor a rule that doth inflict bodily punishment. This is the rule of worldly kingdoms. Now, as Christ's kingdom is not of this world, so is neither the rule of his kingdom. We say it is spiritual; is it then in such things as these men may dispense at their pleasure? Not so, for as his kingdom is spiritual, so is his government of his kingdom not lordly, but stewardly, Luke xii. 42. It is a stewardly office; and there the officers in the church are not said to carry the sword, as magistrates, Rom. xiii. 4: 'But to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom,' Mat. xvi. 19. The power of the sword is princely and lordly, but the power of the keys is only stewardly and ministerial; for so it was said, the keys of the house of David were committed to Eliakim, Isa. xxii. 22, and he was 'over the house,' ver. 15; which phrase of being 'over the house,' is translated properly, Gen. xliii. 19, 'steward of the house.' So we see ground laid for clearing of the office of the ruling elder; it is neither after a worldly manner, neither doth he rule with any illimited power, but he is to rule as becometh a steward in the house; not by the sword, nor by his own light and direction, but by the direction given him by the master of the house, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; they are to teach whatsoever Christ hath commanded them. Well, then, what kind of government is this? It is not worldly,* but ministerial, dispensing the will of Christ. Is it then to attend upon the ministry of the word? We hear that to labour in that work is commended to the pastors and teachers, Titus i. 5, 17; therefore it doth remain, that it belongeth unto the office of

* Qu. 'lordly'?—ED.

this ruling elder to assist the pastor and teacher in all other acts besides. Now the ruler's office being ministerial, look what things there be that Christ hath not made proper to the pastor and teacher, they are communicable to those ruling elders. It is with the ruling elders now as it was with the Levites, Num. viii. 19, they are given to the priests to assist them, but some things were reserved to the priests, and some things were communicated to the Levites; they had indeed the care of the doors of the tabernacle, but for offering sacrifice it was not communicated to them, but reserved to the priests only: so attendance on teaching and exhorting is the proper work of the pastor and teacher, but other acts of rule are as well communicated to ruling elders.

1. The first act of rule is, to open and shut the doors of God's house; and of them to whom the power of the keys is committed, it is generally inferred that they have power to open and shut, Mat. xvi. 19. All the members of the church have some interest in the power of keys, but it is specially delegated to them that are stewards by office, for admission of members into the church, that is, to open the doors of God's house. We read, that when Paul sent for the elders, he took his leave of them in a most heavenly sermon as ever he preached: Acts xx. 28, 29, 'Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock God hath made you overseers of,' &c. Wherein he doth lay a caveat to them to take heed to the doors of God's house; grievous wolves will be creeping in among you. This charge lies upon all the elders. And whereas it is said, 'Let him rule with diligence,' it implieth, 1, watchfulness, and then industry and fidelity to take heed; set not open the doors of the broad gates of the kingdom, to let in all that comes; as the Levites were to keep the doors of the tabernacle, that no unclean thing should come in, no unclean Israelite, no, not the king himself, if he were leprous and unclean. And this is the first part of the elders' office, to open and shut the doors of God's house, not to admit hand over head all comers whatsoever; but take heed no wolf, no hypocrite, no carnal person may come in, till they be able to give an account of their faith, to the edification of God's church. For this we shall read, that those are only members fitted for the church which are able to manifest their faith. The manifestation of the Spirit is given him to speak withal; so those that tender themselves to have fellowship with the church, though you find that they have grace, it is not sufficient presently to let them in, but tarry a while, and they will have a gift to manifest the work of grace in their souls, though such should not be too long delayed, lest they be too much damped and discouraged. 2. They have power to ordain church officers, 1 Tim. iv. 14. The hands of the presbytery are the hands of the company of elders, Acts xiv. 23; those elders are called the eldership, or presbytery, so that by the same hands that they admit some into church fellowship, others they admit into office in the church. 3. They do shut the doors of God's house, by excommunication of notorious and obstinate offenders: Mat. xviii. 17, 18, 'If he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as an heathen,' &c. They are to deliver them to Satan, as Paul determined concerning the incestuous Corinthian; now the care of the whole church is, and ought to be, to see that they do not suffer among them such venomous persons as would corrupt the whole body, but in special-wise this care belongeth to the elders, some singular accounts lie upon them. Christ Jesus, writing an epistle to the churches of Asia, he doth in special reprove the angels of the churches, and those doth he blame for tolerating such things as God hateth. Now, if they be principally and properly reprov'd by Christ for suffering scandalous offenders, 1 Rev. ii. 14-16, it is therefore their care to see that the church

be not scandalised with notoriously corrupted members, it lies principally upon them that are to be the guides and rulers in the congregation of the saints.

2. The power of the keys reacheth farther ; it doth belong to the stewards' care to see that none in the churches do live inordinately without a calling, or idle in their calling. It is the elder's office to see that no drone or unprofitable servant be in the church, which may live of other men's labours. 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11, there the apostle taxeth the Thessalonians for a double vice : some walked without callings, others were idle in their callings. And this belongeth to the elders to see to the amendment thereof ; it is an act of rule.

3. A third act of the elders' office is, to prevent and heal all offences in life or doctrine in their own or other churches, Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20. The angels, the officers of the church, are to see that no Balaamite, no Nicolaitane, no Jezebel, be in the church ; but such they are to heal, either by admonition, or else to cast them out of the church. 2 Thes. v. 13, 14. This is the proper character of the elder's office : if warning may heal a vice, that member ought not to be cut off ; but they are to be cut off if warning or rebuke heal not. The elders are to seek to heal it ; for if it be not removed or reformed, it lies upon their heads : and I put it in that they are to help other churches also, if their counsel be required. Churches may require the help of other congregations to heal and remove the offence that pesters the body, if they cannot do it themselves. When the church at Antioch was troubled about the necessity of circumcision to salvation, and they could not be satisfied in it, they sent to the church at Jerusalem apostles and elders. The apostles are not implied as extraordinary officers, but they carry all things in an ordinary course, and meet together with the church, to debate the matter with the church assembly, and there was such disputing amongst them ; if they had spoken by divine testimony, what needed their disputation ? The word of one apostle might have quelled all contradiction ; but they send to them as to a church, and it is a precedent for other churches ; and therefore, in that the elders are named, it is their care to look to such errors as arise in other churches if they be required, and it is also their duty, according to the rule of Christ, to go to other churches and deliver their minds. Acts xv. 22, there you may see that such ought to be the care of the elders, and of one church over another, as that if any church should send to them for their counsel, they are to do what they can for the redressing of errors amongst them, and they may set in order such things, and send chosen men from amongst themselves unto other congregations, as to answer by word of mouth what hath been agreed upon. This belongeth to the elder's office ; but in case other churches should be careless of inquiring after the counsel of other churches, it will be the part of one church to admonish another, out of the liberty that one church hath in another, and the necessity that lies upon all to neglect no good means to preserve the household of God unspotted. But how cometh it to pass that all the churches are called one church ? Mat. xviii. 18. Doth it not shew thus much, that all churches have a like power, and that all churches should have a like care over one another's good ? So this was prophesied of old of the churches of the New Testament : Cant. viii. 8, ' We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts,' &c. What if a church hath no breasts ? And what if she should use means, and not be able to procure breasts ? What if she should be content to live without breasts, should other churches let such a church alone ? The church doth complain, ' We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts ; what shall we do for her ? ' This is the mutual care that

one church should have of another ; whatever defects they see a church lie under, they might labour to supply them. It was Cain's profane spirit that said, ' Am I my brother's keeper ? ' and it savoureth of the rancour of Cain's spirit to say, What hath one church to do with another ? Is it nothing if one church want officers, breasts to give them suck ? If there be in you spirits of sisters, if the blood of Christ run in your veins, you may not put off the state of other churches, as impertinent to you. It is therefore the care of elders, that are officers in the churches, for to be ready to help other churches if they do require them ; and if they do not require them, yet by all means what they can to help them, and reform what is amiss amongst them.

4. That part of the officers is to prepare matters for the church's consideration, and to moderate matters in the church assembly. First, to prepare matters for the church's consideration, Acts xxi. 18. They knew Paul must come before the church, therefore they meet to prepare matters for it, that he might not raise an offensiveness in the church. When they meet together, the elders are to take care that things might be so carried that there might be no disturbance ; they must so fit them that there may be little noise, and that the church's answer may be without exaggeration, contention, and disturbance ; that things may be ordered with the most care, with the least offence to edification ; and they are to order the seasons of speech and silence in the church. Acts xiii. 15, ' The rulers of the synagogue sent, ' &c., so that they open the mouths of men, and by the same power do also shut them again. They who call for speech may call for silence ; he that shutteth, he may also open ; he that openeth, he may also shut. They also propound matters to the congregation, Acts vi. 3 ; and what the apostles did as elders, the same may also elders do. It is the elder's office to feed the flock of God with a word of admonition, for we heard before that all the elders were to be apt to teach and able to convince an adversary. Now what word doth remain for them ? Not a word of exhortation nor doctrine, for that belongs to pastors and teachers ; but the apostle expresseth it, 1 Thes. v. 12, ' Now we beseech you, brethren, ' &c., where he distinguisheth between them that labour and them that rule : ' know them that labour among you, ' that is, your pastors and teachers ; and ' know them that are over you, ' that is, your ruling elders. And what work do they ? They rule principally by a word of admonition ; that is, such a word that warneth every man in his place to take up some calling, and to be diligent in his calling, to be able to teach this or that to be lawful or unlawful. This is he both able and fit for to do, and this he ought to do according unto God, Acts xx. 31. Paul propounds his own example to them, how he ceased not to warn day nor night with tears ; and this warning is a principal part of rule, and therefore when good Lot did but sadly admonish those lewd persons, Gen. xviii. 19, they said, Shall he judge and rule ? So that this is the work of the elders, to admonish the church. Finally, when they are called for, they are to visit the sick brethren, and to pray over them, James v. 14, 15 ; being called for, they ought to speak some word of edification to the sick, and to pray over them, and God hath promised to heal them both in soul and body : ' The prayer of faith shall save the sick. ' As for anointment with oil, it is not ceased, as is the gift of miracles, but it is a marvellous strong promise that is given to the prayers of the elders of the church, for the Lord did know that this ordinance would be despised ; and to prevent it, the Lord doth marvellously encourage them to the use of it by the promise of this very blessing, that ' the prayer of faith shall save the sick ; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him ; ' so that it will be a wholesome medicine both to soul and body. Not that God doth promise that this shall ever be granted, for then men should

never die when they send for the elders to pray over them ; but they shall find it to be a usual blessing to the honour of the elder's office, that at their prayer for the sick the Lord will raise up their estate and strength again, though it seems desperate. Thus you see the whole duty of these ruling elders, and how they are to assist the pastors and teachers in all other acts of rule besides word and doctrine.

Use 1. From hence observe the great bounty of God unto pastors and teachers, that God hath not left them alone in the church, as Martha complains to Christ that Mary had left her alone to serve. The ministers of the church have no such cause to complain, for as he gave the Levites to the priests to help them in their service, so hath he given ruling elders to such as labour in the word and doctrine, that they might have assistance from them in ruling of the church of God.

Use 2. It may serve to answer a cavil that some have against this office, who say that if God hath given these officers to the church, he would have then set down the limits of their offices, and not have sent them forth with illimited power ; to which it is answered, that their power is strongly limited, as a stewardly or ministerial power and office. It is the power of the keys which Christ hath expressed in his word, and it consisteth in these things that have been spoken of God's house, to open and shut the doors of God's house by admission of members, &c. (*ut prius*). This is such a rule as is no small help to the spirits and hearts of those that labour in doctrine, and no small help it is also to the whole church of God ; and when they are wanting, many evils will grow, and those without possibility of redress and amendment, much idleness, much confusion, many offences. Though other ministers have been in the church, we may see how much in the want of these officers the churches have been corrupted.

Use 3. This serveth for instruction to the elders, to shew them what bounds God hath set them in their calling, as hath been said, that so they may walk according to God in them.

Use 4. It doth enforce a duty lying upon all the members of the church, to submit themselves to them in the Lord, as becometh saints. Members ought to submit to their trial ; it is no arrogancy for them to deal with those that are to be admitted into the church, to lay hands upon officers ; and think it not a hard matter that they should be thus careful of setting men into their callings. It is no transgression of their bounds to prepare matters for the church, to moderate the carriage of matters in the church assembly by their wise direction, and it will be then the part and duty of the people to submit to their elders in these things. From this ground it will appear to be a swerving from the rule for men to give way to their spirits and tongues to speak in the congregation, though their matters be good, before the door be opened by him that hath the keys, otherwise it is out of order. They ought not for to speak without the consent of the elder ; and if the elder see that it tends to confusion and disturbance, he may as reasonably put an end to it, as at first he opened a door for it.

Obj. But suppose that all the elders be in the same transgression, and they will not hear any admonition ; if then, before I can declare it to the church, I must crave leave of them to speak, they will not give it me, may not I then declare my grievance to the church without them ?

Ans. If all the officers be in an offence, and if they will not hear thy private admonitions, then tell the church of them. If Peter himself offend, and Peter will not hear thee, tell the church of Peter. Christ alone and his church is king and judge in such a case ; then doth their power return to the church from whence they first received it ; but if the elders be not

delinquent, nor possessed with any sinful prejudice, then must they moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assembly, otherwise there would be no end of speaking and confusion, if every man might open a floodgate of speech when he would. And when we see further what lieth as a duty upon sick persons, that they must not neglect to send for the elders of the church, for we see how strong the promise is when they are sent for in faith, with expectation of a blessing from an ordinance, and they pray over them in the name of the Lord. And lastly, as brethren ought to receive admonition from the hand of any brother, so surely they ought not to despise it from the hand of an elder. 1 Thes. v. 12-14, there the apostle shews them how willingly and surely they should submit to such, with due attention and reformation, according to God.

Quest. What manner of men hath God appointed to be called to the deacon's office?

Ans. Men of gravity and good report, not given to dissimulation nor to wine, nor to covetousness; men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, keeping their household in good rule, having such wives as may neither dishonour nor corrupt their calling; not slanderers, but grave, sober, and faithful in all things.

Explication. This full description of the state of the deacon's spirit is expressly laid down in two places of Scripture, 1 Tim. iii. 8-12 and Acts vi. 3. First, they must be men of gravity. This word, translated *grave*, doth imply three things: 1. It is opposed to lightness. A deacon must not be light in his gestures, in his speech and apparel, but be grave. 2. It is opposed to wantonness; they must be retired, and clean from all wanton dalliance. 3. Comeliness; the word signifies reverent and venerable. He must neither be light in his own carriage, nor in the hearts of other men. The word cometh from a word that signifies to worship. He must not be light in his own disposition, nor in other men's apprehensions. Him whom you would slight is not venerable (*σεμνός*), which is required of a deacon. Secondly, he must be 'of honest report,' Acts vi. 3; men gravely borne witness unto, so signifies the word (*μαρτυρουμένους*). They must carry a good report with them wherever they are known. Thirdly, they must not be given to dissimulation, not double-tongued. In churches of great multitudes, where many are to be maintained by their hands, he may promise something to some which he may forget or not be able to perform. His word must be as his oath or vow; if it be gone out of his mouth, it must stand inviolable. He must not pretend more care for the poor than there is need, nor promise that he is not able to perform. A man is double-tongued two ways: 1, when his heart differs from his tongue; 2, when his tongue differs from his tongue at several times, when the first thing was right and true. He must not be given to wine; for so he may come to waste, not only his own estate, but the stock of the church, and that is contrary to the spirit of a steward; nor to covetousness, for that will overwork his honest heart to divert the church's stock from the church's service, and to employ it for his own ends. Therefore this is carefully to be avoided, these are his moral virtues. Now, for his spiritual endowments, he must be 'full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom,' Acts vi. 3. He must be full of the Holy Ghost, which implies, 1, that a man must be empty of his own spirit, for else he cannot be full of the Spirit of God. A vessel cannot be full of wine and water too; therefore he must be empty of every lust, and of himself. 2. He must abound in all the gifts of God's grace; and not only be full of gifts, but of the Holy Ghost himself. For gifts will grow rusty, dead, powerless, and unprofitable, and we shall turn them to our own ends; but he must be full of the Holy Ghost, not full of faith, patience, &c., but of the Spirit of faith, and full of the Spirit of God,

to put life into all his graces: 1 John iv. 4, 'Greater is he,' &c. It is not his gifts, but his person, Rom. viii. 11. It is not gifts that raised Christ from the dead, but the eternal Spirit. Now, then, the eternal Spirit of God must rest in the heart of a deacon. A deacon may be put to sudden expressions; and if he be not full of the Holy Ghost, he will not well rule his own gifts. The more pure any grace is, the sooner it is wrecked, unless it be carefully handled and guided according to God. A man is then full of the Holy Ghost when he doth not content himself with gifts, that he hath a gift of prayer and of edification, and a spirit of diligence, but when he finds himself still empty for all this, but as he continually desires fresh supply from the Holy Ghost. If in abundance of gifts I find myself empty, and I am sensible of my own unprofitableness and inability to do any good, then am I not only full of the gifts of God, but of the Holy Ghost, to carry them an-end with strength. 3. And this implies such a strength of grace and spirit, that it carries him above the world, above all lusts, above all temptations, all credit and reputation, and whatsoever he meets withal, and he is carried with full sail steadily and strongly to God's heavenly kingdom; whatsoever is put into his hand, he is carried an-end with speed and strength above all difficulties. 4. A man is full of the Holy Ghost when he is ready to utter spiritual things upon all occasions; for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' When a man is full of the Holy Ghost, there is a law of grace in his lips. And there is reason that a deacon should be thus full of the Spirit, for many times the members may grow worldly with whom they are to deal, who then should speak a spiritual word of quickening to them; and also they are to deal with the poor and with the sick, and therefore had need to deal with their souls as well as with their bodies. Job xxxii. 18, Elihu, when he was full of the Holy Ghost, could not hold his peace, but must speak. 5. A man full of the Holy Ghost will not respect persons. A deacon will be apt to respect his kindred, or friends, or countrymen, if he be not full of the Holy Ghost. The Levites did not know their own fathers when they had sinned, and they were then full of the Holy Ghost. A man with his own stock may lawfully have respect to persons, to his kindred, &c., and ought so to do; but if it come to the stock of the church, that being in the hand of a man dedicated to God, now, his hands are the hands of God, and the hands of the church, and therefore he distributes them according to God, as if the Holy Ghost did it, not respecting persons.

And full of wisdom. There was in the apostles' time more need of wisdom, for they had the charge of all the members of the church. They had the common stock of all, and therefore were to provide for all they had charge of, and therefore had need to have the wisdom of the whole church, that they might distribute an equal proportion to all. But when the church was not so poor, but men might distribute to the ministers and poor, and yet not sell their whole estates, yet then also was there need of wisdom to administer the church's treasure; they must see the burdens of men, and relieve them accordingly. Nay, in this country, if the deacons have not a public providence, the poor company of the church may much want; for it is some men's sinful modesty that they will perish almost rather than ask. Therefore they being the church's stewards, must see that every one hath such a comfortable proportion of estate that he may attend to the things of God and to the edification of his own soul, and not be disquieted in his spirit. We must not serve tables, saith the apostle; but it is the deacon's office. The Holy Ghost speaketh more of the deacons than of the pastors and teachers, for they have not so much need of this kind of wisdom as the deacon hath; therefore they had need cast an eye to see what men's tables be, and so accordingly as

they may comfortably provide for them, that so they may bless God, and attend to God's ordinances (keeping the mystery of faith in a pure conscience). Must he be such now? will you say. The whole doctrine of religion is a mystery to flesh and blood. His conscience being a pure and precious vessel, the mystery of faith should be so kept that he may be as exemplary in his place for this as for wisdom. And the reason is this, because that in the persecution of the churches the deacons have been hunted after, partly to know what was the church's treasure, that they might confiscate it, and partly because they think them more excellent than other men, being called to public office; and therefore the deacons have been put to exquisite torment, as Lawrence the deacon, &c. Now, if a man be called to answer, he had need to be a man of knowledge and faith, and that in a pure conscience, for so he will dash his enemies and honour his profession. 2. He must hold the mystery of faith, that he may be able to speak a word of edification to his poor brethren, as well as minister to their bodies. Now, for his family gifts; first, he must keep his house well in order. If his children be riotous, his servants disorderly, it will weaken the deacon's fidelity; and besides, public persons must be exemplary both in public and private walking. For their wives, they must be such as may neither corrupt nor dishonour their calling, nor slanderers; grave, sober, and faithful in all things. And not *slanderers*; the word is not *devils*, not unjustly accusing any body, nor unseasonably doing of it. If one accuse another unjustly, or without due order, the deacon may grow more remiss in his office to such; and so a woman may corrupt and dishonour his calling. She must speak well of her brethren and sisters. *Grave*; they must not be light in themselves, nor in others' esteem, but reverend and grave. *Sober*; the word is the same with vigilant, 1 Tim. iii. 2. The deacon's wife therefore must be a good housewife, for else she may corrupt his calling. She must also be sober and moderate in meats and drinks, and humble and meek, not high above sobriety, above due proportion and measure. And *faithful in all things*; faithful to God, he trusts her; faithful to men, they dare trust her; faithful to her husband, faithful in speech, in carriage, not dealing unrighteously with anything committed to her hand, but helping forward her husband in the place God hath set him.

Use 1. It may serve to teach the church of God what manner of men they are to choose into this office; and,

2. It teacheth deacons how they are to behave themselves whom God calleth to this office, and what their qualifications ought to be, and what they are to grow up unto, that so they may faithfully discharge the trust that God and his church have committed unto them.

Quest. What is the office of a deacon?

Ans. To receive the offerings of the church which are brought unto them, and laid down before them, and therewith to serve tables, distributing with simplicity, not only to the ministers of the church, but to any other of the brethren, as their needs shall require, Acts vi. 3, 4. The occasion of their calling was this: the apostles being sent by Christ with fulness of power, being pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons, finding themselves burdened with the deacon's office, which was the lowest part of their spiritual work, they disburdened themselves of it, and said it was not meet they should go to serve tables; therefore to serve tables they laid down to the deacons. What the apostles did in that office they delegated to them, Acts vi. 34, 35. It seemeth they sat higher than the people, and every one brought his offering and laid it down at their feet, and they therefore received. They went not to call upon the people for such benevolence, nor seek it where it is not to be had, but the members freely offered it, and what they offered

they took. Such was the manner of the old temple: Luke xxi. 1-3, they cast money into the treasury, where it was received by the officers for that service. Neh. xiii. 12, 13, there they set down what officers they were the gifts were brought and disposed to, the treasurer, &c., and they faithfully distributed to their brethren. So David appointed men over the treasury, 1 Chron. xxvi. 20-26; and he gave Solomon the pattern of the treasury, 1 Chron. xxviii. 11. The people brought their offerings, and the Levites received and distributed them, 2 Chron. xxxi. 11-14; they were not exacted by the Levites, but brought and distributed as need required; so in the New Testament Christ first appointed his disciples the apostles for that office, who received the contributions of the church, and therewith served tables, but when necessity required, they laid down that office to others. To serve tables implies to minister to the necessity of all their brethren, for then they laid all upon the common stock, and they had nothing peculiar, because else they could not provide for the congregation, though a part had been received, as Peter told Ananias. This therefore was the care of the apostles, to see that every man's table in the congregation was spread. Now, lest it might be thought that the same course should be taken all ages in the church, therefore it fell out otherwise whilst the apostles themselves lived, that in the churches of the Gentiles which were rich, and men might keep a propriety in their estate and yet maintain the church, they were commanded to put it into a stock every Lord's day what they laid aside for the necessity of the church, 1 Cor. xvi. 2, and out of that they did prepare the Lord's table, the table of the officers and of their poor brethren of their own church and other churches, according to their necessity. Now the deacon in serving of tables must distribute in simplicity: Rom. xii. 8, 'He that distributes,' &c., which is the description of the deacon. There is this difference between distribution and contribution: he that contributes gives his private stock and offering into a common treasury, but to distribute is to turn a common stock into pieces and parcels, as every one hath need. This must be done with simplicity, which implies two things: (1.) It standeth in opposition to respect of persons; that a deacon should not respect any for country's sake, for kindred's sake, but distribute to every one as he hath need; (2.) 2 Cor. viii. 2, this word *simplicity* is there translated *liberality*, and, 2 Cor. ix. 11, the same word which is here translated *simplicity* is there translated *bountifulness*. A deacon therefore must not distribute with respect of persons, and also with a free and willing spirit, without any upbraiding of any brother or officer in the church, but freely distributing according to the will of Christ and of his church. The cheerfulness of the giver, and the readiness of his care in giving, may express much simplicity. Now the deacon is not only to distribute to the ministers, though he doth to them, 2 Cor. viii. 15; and so they did in the New Testament; for if all the church was supplied by the treasurers, then much more the apostles and officers of the church.

Object. Gal. vi. 6, 'Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth him in all good things.'

Ans. The word is not *distribute*, but *communicate*, that is, put it into a common treasury, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. There is difference between distributing and communicating: to communicate is to lay a parcel of the estate into a common stock, 'be ready to communicate;' but to distribute is another thing, which they may have occasion to do here and there as they see any have need of that which is put into the common stock; and therefore the apostle's meaning, Gal. vi. 6, is not to distribute, but to communicate according to a man's estate and the church's occasions. 1 Tim. v. 17, there

is a care to be had of the officers of the church ; that which is given must be given as an honour and due, not grudgingly, but freely and readily. Those that are officers must live off their labour. Besides, the officers are to distribute to every one according to his need and use, not only necessity, but according to his expedient use, Acts iv. 35. This was never counted alms in the church or mercy, but a matter of justice and equity, whether to their own church or the members of other churches in their need, with consent of the church, Rom. xv. 26, 27. The apostle giveth this contribution a name far off from alms or charity, for he calleth it a service and grace of God to be able to communicate to the necessities of the church, 2 Cor. ix. 12 and viii. 19.

Use 1. To teach you a true discerning of the corruptions that have been brought into the office in time of popery, wherein it hath been imposed upon them to teach and baptize, some to rule, yea, overrule the officers of the church and the church itself, so that very few of them have a hand in serving of tables, a burden which the apostles perceived they were not able to bear ; that is beyond the institution of Christ, and therefore an invention of man's brain, and will never do good to the church of God.

Object. Philip preached and baptized, Acts viii. 5, 12, 13, and if so, why might he not also be a ruler ?

Ans. He was not only a deacon, but when the office was laid aside by reason of the persecution, then God called him forth to be an evangelist, Acts xxi. 8, and therefore he may not be a pattern for deacons in other ages. It is a like abuse that in some churches they have instead of these collections* for the poor, who receive not the contributions, but gather them and distrain for them, and that not for the ministers, but for the poor only. This never doth good in the church ; but it falls out that all the collections made by the church will not maintain the poor of the church, but they are forced to beg abroad. God marvelously beareth witness to his own ordinance, that either there shall be no poor, or if there be, God so blesseth his ordinance that a little church hath well provided for all her poor, yea, sometimes to the relief of neighbour congregations.

Use 2. To teach deacons to cast about how all the tables of the congregation may be provided for, not only the Lord's table and the officer's table, but also the tables of the poor brethren, who, though they make not known their necessity, yet the deacon's care should be to see that they be provided for of things sufficient for this natural life, and therefore to provide that they may have gardens and planting grounds, &c., by which they might live.

Use 3. It behoves all the members of the body, that ought to have a care one of another, to see that there may never want provision in the deacon's hands to provide for all the tables in the churches, and to see that there never want bread in God's house ; and then God hath promised, Mal. iii. 9–11, that he will open the windows of heaven and pour in a blessing. It is for brethren of higher degree to see to the treasury of the churches, Gal. vi. 10, that so no member of the church may want convenient supply ; and where there is meat in God's house, there shall never want meat in any man's house. He is a faithful God, and he hath said it : ' Prove me now, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven,' &c.

Use 4. To provoke the deacons, when strangers come over from other churches, to see that none of them want convenient harbour among our congregations, especially when there is only care needful, no charges required.

Quest. But is it not the deacon's office to shew mercy with cheerfulness ?

Ans. Yes, verily, to their brethren in misery ; but that part of their office they chiefly perform by the hand of the widows chosen into the number, who

* Qu. ' collectors ' ?—Ed.

are therefore called the deacons or servants of the church. The deacon is to shew mercy with cheerfulness, Rom. xii. 8. He must not stay till his brethren be in extreme misery, but beforehand prevent them with some seasonable relief, as may save them out of the hand of such extremity. A small matter will strengthen a house when it is undershotted, but when it is down, then a great matter will not do it. So it is with a poor brother's estate; therefore, in ordinary course, distribution in time should prevent it; but the members will be sick, and sometimes sick of long diseases, and poor brethren will be sick as well as rich, and then there is room for shewing of mercy; but where there is no misery there is no need of mercy, but when danger, long sickness, danger of death, extreme wants fall upon brethren, then must the deacon shew mercy, and that with cheerfulness; that is, not grudgingly, nor of necessity. That word cheerfulness implies, that whereas the brother standeth in need of the church's love in way of mercy, this cheerfulness distributes it readily, freely, joyfully, and not rejoicing in his misery, but in that he hath to relieve him withal. This grace adorns a Christian much. Micah vii. 18, God describes himself by it, that he delights in mercy, when he hath occasion to shew mercy. That is the work he delights in. Though the sins of his people be many, and his anger is provoked against them for the same, yet he sheweth mercy, and that with delight in it. Luke xv. 20, the father was moved with compassion, and ran to meet his son, and kisses him. When the soul is very unfit to receive mercy, then he runs to his son, and kisses him; and that which God sheweth to his sons in misery, he calleth on us to shew the like, that so we may be like him; and the reason is great the church offers in shewing mercy, that they should do it with cheerfulness. 1. God's example requires it, as you see before. 2. The brotherly affection that should be between the members of the Lord Jesus requires the same. How busy is every member of the body to procure help and mercy to any member that standeth in need? Now God calleth us to be members of one body, and commendeth this work of mercy to the deacons; and they should come readily and cheerfully to this work, to shew mercy to those that are in misery. 3. From the great recompence that God poureth upon his church and the officers, when he seeth them doing of works of mercy with cheerfulness. Micah vi. 7, 8, God cared not so much for a thousand sacrifices, but that he loved that men should love mercy, and be diligent to shew it. But this part of the office, &c., 1 Tim. v. 9, and these widows are taken into the number of the deacons. The apostle speaketh not of widows to be relieved, for so a widow of thirty or forty may stand in need by sickness, or any other misery; but of such widows as are chosen into the number of those that are to shew mercy with cheerfulness, and these are the widows or servants of the church. Rom. xvi. 1, it is translated *servants*, but the word is *deacons*. There was a church at Cenchrea, an haven by Corinth, and Phebe was a deacon there; and the *servant of the church* implies the thing: for a woman may not teach nor rule in the church, and therefore she must be a deaconess; and the apostle giveth her this testimony, that she had been a succourer of him and of others also. Now this succouring is to those that are cast down by sickness or sores, to look to them, and to provide them tables; and none are so fit for this, as skilful, pitiful, and compassionate widows; they are fit to minister succour to poor brethren, to them that have none of their own kindred to provide for them and relieve them. Such are to be taken into the number of the deacons. This was the practice of the primitive church long after the apostles' times.

Quest. What manner of widows hath God allowed to be chosen into this number?

Ans. Ancient widows, of threescore years of age, well reported of for good works, for nursing of their children, for lodging of strangers, washing the saints' feet, for relieving the afflicted, for diligently following of every good work, 1 Tim. v. 9. First, they must be threescore years old, and the reason is, 1. Because they must be dedicated to the church's service; for in those hot countries many were sick of pestilential fevers; again, they were often in wars, and therefore many poor members might come maimed; as also many were called before judgment-seats, and there beaten and dismembered, and so need succour. Now, therefore, he would not have her that is chosen into the office to have an husband, for such have families of their own to look unto; and she must be one that is past marriage, for when they are called to an office, they should not easily lay it down again. And this reason the apostle giveth, for the younger women wax wanton against Christ, and will marry. They having many pagans about them, the young women taking affection to them, they would leave their faith and their office to marry them; therefore he would have them to be past marriage. 2. From the vanity that would befall younger women. If they had no employment of their own but only public, they would then be fit for the devil's work, they would go about from house to house, and be busy-bodies; but elder women would be graver than to talk of every thing they see, and therefore he would have them to be threescore years old. Now there are four things required of these widows: 1, diligence; 2, tenderness of affection; 3, lowliness in mind; 4, that she diligently follow every good work.

1. Diligence. She must be a painful woman, and take pains about a sick body, and therefore the apostle would know whether they had nursed their own children or no; for many women will not, though God gave them breasts. They will not have their sleeps broken, neither can they tarry long at home. But if a woman cannot endure to do servile offices to her own children, she will never endure to do service to elder bodies; therefore she must be one that hath nursed her own children.

2. Tenderness in affection to those that are in misery. She should be full of courtesy to all, of mercy to those that are poor and in misery; therefore the apostle would know whether she had lodged strangers or no. There is not the poorest woman but, be she loving, at one time or other she shall have strangers. And a deaconess must not be churlish nor covetous; for if so, they that are succoured by her will find but little mercy, and slender provision; she will divert the church's portion, and which the deacons commit to her, to herself; and therefore she must be one that hath entertained and lodged strangers. But the apostle would further know whether she relieved the afflicted also or no; for a man may lodge strangers for his own honour's sake, but to relieve the afflicted, argues not only courtesy but mercy also; and therefore, when such are in office, they will do it with more mercy. You will say, By this no poor woman shall be called to this office, for they can relieve but few. True, poverty is a great hindrance unto it; but the poor widow which cast more into the treasury than all the rich men did, she may have her poor mites. Suppose she hath no money, yet she can tend them, provide their diet, and do such like things for them; and is a woman ready to do this? Some may relieve with money, some with apparel, some with counsel, and that the poorest may do. Courtesy and mercy is the second property which is required in a widow, to be chosen into the number of the deacons.

3. Lowliness of mind. Therefore, saith the apostle, 'If she hath washed the saints' feet,' Gen. xix. 2, and xliii. 24, and xxiv. 32. And this Christ charges upon Simon, Luke vii. 44, that he had not done unto him. In

those countries they wore no stockings and shoes, but sandals tied about the bottom of their feet; and their first entertainment was when they came to any place, to wash their feet; therefore the widow must be such an one that hath washed the saints' feet, and must do any humble service to them. This is not useful in this country, but implies she must not skue at any poor service, or fulsome or mean office, that may concern the comfort of a weak or sick brother.

She must be diligently following every good work. This is not every good woman's care and practice. There is not any conference, but she will be one there; not any day of humiliation, but she will be one at it. This is the main thing he commendeth; she must be one of the foremost at every good work, and she follows it on till it comes to some perfection. This woman is fit for this service, this is a work of fruitfulness and godliness; nay, she must be well reported of for all these, for many an one is given to these things, but is not known so to be; therefore she must be known. That is required of all officers, of elders and deacons, and so of widows. Public officers of the church must be of good report, of a good name and fame, for that is the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. This good report is the cognisance and badge of a godly soul; so much faith as there is in the heart, so much good report there is of a man in the mouths of men. Heb. xi. 2, faith and the fruits of faith brought the elders unto a good report; and the ground of this is, no man liveth by faith, but he liveth by Christ, and honoureth him; and the more a man honoureth Christ, the more will Christ honour him; and therefore a faithful Christian never wants a good report, but he is a crown of glory wherever he doth come. He walks in a humble frame, for that is the life of faith, and fruitful unto men, and thus he cometh to have a good report, and then will Christ have no dishonour by administrations. They that speak evil of such a man, their own consciences bear witness against them, and therefore these widows that are to be chosen to this office are to be well reported of. They that speak ill of such men as are humble and fruitful in their course, and do all for the glory of Christ, they are either brutishly ignorant, or such as sin maliciously against the Holy Ghost. Humility and love never went without a good name from the beginning of the world, nor never will to the latter end of the world.

Use 1. This doth reprove the popish manner of their kind of cloisters, for this place of the apostle was the foundation of their nunneries. When the apostle said they must be of threescore years of age, a council afterwards decreed they should be forty years old; afterwards, because the apostle saith, she must be one that hath been the wife of one man, therefore they thought virgins would be better, for that state was more honourable than marriage, and they backed it with that of the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 38, 'He that giveth not his virgin in marriage doth better,' &c. But then these are not fit to tend sick persons. And then that flew in their consciences how to make that good, 'she must be threescore years old,' and therefore they ordained a prioress, an ancient woman, to be over all the rest; and because these could not tend to the sick persons, therefore they should help the church with their continual prayers. This is the order of their cloister virgins, and this is the delusion which the devil built upon this sacred ordinance. Instead of holiness, they have become sinks of all uncleanness and abominations.

Use 2. Observe what is the honour Christ reserveth for the best women. Suppose that she hath nursed her children and lodged strangers, &c., say she be well reported of for good works. This is the sum of her preferment. Christ calleth her, when she is threescore years old, to work and to minister to the church in the homeliest office, to be the right hand of the deacon in

shewing mercy with cheerfulness. Some that were high-spirited would think within themselves, that, should they that have done thus and thus now come to this, how would their spirits rise in indignation against God's ordinance; but God thinketh he doth us the greatest honour when he putteth us into any office, to be put into a spital to tend upon sick persons. Little do men think what honour God then putteth upon them. It is a great honour to be doing good. If you have been diligently following every good work, you are at the last the fitter to be put into this work, Lake xvii. 7-10. It is Christ that is to eat and drink in these poor Lazaruses; he is to be washed. She that is wearied in the field of Christianity for threescore years together, let her betake herself a little to God's work, and then she shall rest for ever in God's kingdom. And this trains up a woman to holiness of mind after many years' continuance in any employment, and God will reward it abundantly.

Use 3. To teach the church what kind of officers you yet want. You have yet none of these widows; the church hath sometimes need of such, and great need too, or else God would not have appointed the office. Many come from the ships sick, and have no servants, and we may have amongst us many of our own brethren sick to be looked unto; therefore we are to desire this of God, that he would supply us with such in due time, of such years and strength as may be fit for this employment. And also, you see whom and what manner of persons you are to choose unto this place in the church.

Use 4. To teach women what God calleth them to do. God looks whether a woman nurse her children or no: it helps you to preferment in God's eye; they must not put out their children if God give strength and ability themselves. Love hospitality, not only to poor and kindred, but to strangers also; help the afflicted, relieve them with your purses, counsel, apparel; think not scorn to do a work of love, live by faith, grow humble and diligent in good works; so you shall have a good report, and be called mothers in Israel: so was Deborah called. If the church have need of them, let them not scorn to be chosen in this office. The sister of Theodosius the emperor did not disdain it, and it was the fairest flower in her garden that in her old age she was fit to do the church service. This will add to their comfort in this world, and to their crown of glory in the world to come; and this also may teach you, that if the lowest officers of the church should be thus qualified, what should be the spirit of other officers whom God calleth to higher places in the church? And whatever their employments be, yet should their spirit be honourable. The definition of the church hath been laid open, and the distribution of it into the integral parts, which are the officers of the church and the members of it. Of the officers of the church, their qualifications and several duties hath been spoken hitherto.

Quest. *What manner of men are they whom God hath appointed for to be received as brethren and members of his church?*

Ans. Such as are called of God out of the world unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ, and do willingly offer and join themselves, first to the Lord and then to the church, by confession of their sins and profession of the faith, and laying hold of his covenant.

Here is a double qualification: 1. They are such as are called out of the world to the fellowship of Jesus Christ. 2. They that willingly offer and join themselves, first to the Lord, and then to his church. For the first, it appears from the ordinary notion of the word *ecclesia*, used for a church, which is a company of men called out. The church is a congregation as they are met together in a body, but *ecclesia* as they are a company called by God out of the world; so are they styled, Rom. i. 6, 7. And he tells you to

what you are called: 'to the fellowship of his Son,' 1 Cor. i 9. They are called out of the world, Acts ii. 40. When he calleth them to be members of the church, he saith, Save yourselves out of the ignorant or malignant world, for so all the world lieth either in ignorance or malignancy, 1 John v. 19; save yourselves from such; and they are called out by the ministry of the word and the Spirit of God, and they are knit into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, as he is the head of his church, 1 Cor. xii. 12. Christ, to whose fellowship we are knit, is not of one member, but of many, and they are called one Christ; they are joined to Christ, not as the hair to the head, but so as to be knit also to the rest of the members. That they are so called out before they are members, appears by this: Saul was circumcised, and an Hebrew, and was called out, though the church knew it not; and when he essayed to join himself to the church, they were afraid of him, not knowing that he was a disciple. A disciple is not one that heareth one lesson only, but a disciple is a constant hearer, and one that taketh himself bound to take out all the lessons that he heareth, and to submit to the discipline of the school. They doubted Paul was not such a disciple that was a constant hearer of God's word, or if he were, yet that he was not one that submitted himself to the discipline of the school of Christ; therefore they were afraid of him. The church may not receive any one that is circumcised, if he be ignorant, or hath not been joined in fellowship to Christ, and submitted himself unto him; he must be a disciple, a constant hearer, an obedient learner, and one that submits to the discipline of the school of Christ; such an one should be received. But it may fall out men may in hypocrisy hear constantly, and practise what they hear, and profess subjection to the discipline of the church; therefore, though this be enough for the church to receive, yet it is not enough for him to offer himself, unless he can say that Christ is his portion, or that he truly waits upon Christ for the revelation of his grace unto his soul. Such a soul is invested with Christ, and such should they be that offer themselves, Mat. xxii. 11, 12. If a man be not found clothed with the wedding-garment of Christ's righteousness, of justification, of sanctification, then saith Christ, 'Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having thy wedding-garment?' Though he fall not out with his servants for bringing him in, yet he saith to him, 'Friend, how camest thou in?' 2dly, They willingly join and offer themselves, first to the Lord, and then to the church. First to the Lord: Isa. lvi. 6, they must join to the Lord before he brings them to his holy mountain, and this they do willingly. Ps. cx. 2, 3, God's people are a willing people. Acts ii. 41, 'They that gladly received the word were baptized' unto Christ, and so received into the church. Barnabas tells the church how Paul had seen the Lord by the way, and then he is received, after he is joined to the Lord, and then to the church. Acts ii. 41, 47, though they were before of the church of Israel, yet they were not received into the Christian church before they repented and made a covenant with God, and received the seal of the covenant, and then they were added to it; Acts ix. 26, 27, though his sins were pardoned in his baptism, yet when he cometh to Jerusalem he essayed to join it, it was his own voluntary act; though you read, Mat. xxii. 9, that Christ said, 'Compel them to come in, that my house may be full,' Luke xiv. 23. Though there be a compulsion to be used for the filling of Christ's church, yet this is not the compulsion of the civil sword, for it is the compulsion of the servants that are sent to call, and they are the ministers of Christ. And how must they compel? By convincing them of their natural state, by driving them out of themselves, and driving them unto Christ, partly by the law, partly by the gospel. It is a compulsive persuasion, by terrors, by

threatenings, and by promises, &c. The magistrate may compel men to hear, but to compel them to come into the church is not compatible to the name of the church ; for they must be such as are called out of the world, and when they are called, they will readily desire it ; and it is a sign that they are not called, if, when they have opportunity, they do not desire it, Rom. i. 15. God commandeth, and requires it of them, and will charge it upon them for sin if they do it not ; but neither the church nor the civil magistrates may compel them ; for God's people are 'a willing people,' and it is no more but reason that no man should be compelled to subject himself to any government that he is not willing to submit unto.

Now to the manner how they must join. Three things they used in the primitive church, and long after. 1. Confession of their sins, Mat. iii. 6. They were members of the church of Israel before that, yet they were not admitted to baptism, and to be his disciples, unless they confessed their sins, and their subjection to take out such lessons as he should teach them ; therefore they said unto him, Luke iii. 10-12, 'What shall we do?' Acts xix. 18, they that believed, confessed their witchcraft and whoredoms before they were received into the fellowship of the church. 2. Profession of their faith. The eunuch was a proselyte and member of the Jewish church, yet he must profess his faith before he is baptized ; Acts viii. 37, 38, and thus he was made fit for church-fellowship. 3. By taking hold of the covenant. What covenant ? Read Isa. lvi. 6, 7 ; he requires that they be joined to the Lord, and love the Lord, and keep his Sabbaths, and then take hold of his covenant. And what is the covenant which God made with the house of Israel ? Deut. xxix. 10-13, you there see what it is ; they come to be established his people by entering into covenant with him. Ps. l. 5, they are not his people till they enter into covenant with him. It is God's covenant, because, as in marriage God is the third party in the covenant between man and woman, so in the church covenant it is tripartite, between God, and the church, and the member received. They may not receive into the church but those whom God receiveth in, nor dismiss those but whom God dismisseth ; therefore a man must take hold of the covenant, and then God bringeth him to be joyful in the house of his ordinances ; they shall then receive more joy and comfort than ever. God hath not promised any constant supply of comfort and blessing from his ordinances, but to those that not only join to the Lord, but also lay hold of his covenant, that is, the covenant he hath made with his church. And thus you see the meaning of the phrases in the New Testament, they did join, and they were added to the church ; that is, the Gentiles, who were before joined to the church of Israel, were joined to the Christian church by laying hold of this covenant.

Use 1. This serveth to confirm and justify the lawfulness, and in truth the necessity, of this course that is taken in admitting your church members. Look not at it as a work of supererogation, as a thing uncomely to be done, or as devised by men, but as an ordinance of God for preparation of men for the church, and admission of them into the church, that hath its institution from the Holy Ghost. What need we be admitted, will you say, when we are members of a church before ? Therefore consider, Paul was a member of a church of Christ, yet they were afraid of him. A man may not thrust himself upon a church whether they will or no, and they may also not receive him, unless they persuade themselves that he is a disciple, a learner, a constant hearer, and a submitter to the discipline of the church. Barnabas must make that plain to the church that he is a disciple, and then they receive him into the church. Those that are received, must either be such as approve themselves by their conversation, or by the testimony of some

whom the church dare trust; you also compel none to be members of the church. Compel them by conviction, by strength of argument, and bonds of conscience; but they must freely offer and join themselves when they have been called, and have obeyed the call. The Lord is the head of the church; and to be joined to the head, or joined to the members, and not to the head, will not make a man a living member, but he will be a dead member, that will rather be a burden than any help to the church. You see also evident practices of confession and profession. Where there is little notice of any man's sins, there is not that need of large confession; but notwithstanding, they must make profession of their faith in Christ.

Use 2. To direct such as desire church fellowship, to teach you what persons you must grow up to be, such as are called out of the world. You must confess your sins as you have been known to live in, and profess your faith, lay hold of the covenant, come not in till you be clothed with the garment of Christ's righteousness, to wait and trust upon him for his grace, or else God will ransack you, and say, 'How came you in hither?' All profaneness, all malignancy, all ignorance must be laid aside; give up yourselves to God, and then to the church.

Use 3. To comfort the people of God that do thus come into the church. God saith that he will make their souls 'joyful in the house of prayer,' and that he will accept their offerings, Isa. lvi. 6, 7. If we find our hearts uncomfortable, consider, have we not sat loose from God, or have we not sat loose from his covenant since we last received comfort from it? Our joying was but for a fit, and we sat loose from God, from his ordinances, from his Sabbaths, and from our brethren; then no wonder that we are uncomfortable. But come thus, as you have heard, into God's presence, and then we may comfortably expect that he will make us joyful in the house of prayer.

Quest. What is the office or duty which God calleth the brethren unto, the members of the church?

Ans. To brotherly love, and to the fruits thereof, brotherly unity, brotherly equality, and brotherly communion. First, brotherly love. This the Holy Ghost presseth upon the brethren of the church in divers places: 1 Peter iii. 8, 'Love as brethren,' if you be brethren. 1 Peter ii. 17, 'Love the brotherhood;' in that whole society in which God hath joined you, love them. 1 Thes. iv. 9, 'Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.' Heb. xiii. 1, love is such an affection of the soul, whereby we offer communion one with another, and communication of good one to another. On the other side, hatred is that whereby one cannot endure to have fellowship with another, nor communicate any good to him; but when we love the brethren, then are we in heart with them, and desire to do good unto them, and to receive good from them. Add to the fruits thereof brotherly unity: Eph. iv. 3, 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;' Ps. cxxxiii. 1, 'Behold how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity;' Col. iii. 15, 'Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which you are called in one body;' Acts vii. 26, 'Sirs, you are brethren, why do you wrong one another?' It is against the nature of brethren for to harm one another; and this Christ beggeth of his Father for those that should believe on his name, John xvii. 20, 21, that they may be one with the Father, and one with the Son, and one another. This is the main petition in which he desires the fruit of his suffering might break forth. There is no greater testimony of Christ's coming to save his people than this, that all the churches of God, and all brethren, are all of one mind, of one heart, and of one judgment. This is that convinces the world that Christ

came in the name of the Father, when brethren dwell together in unity. The second fruit of brotherly love is brotherly equality; and this God hath respect unto in all the members of the church. Though there be a difference in outward respects, yet in the church privileges, as they are all brethren, they are all equal. Deut. xvii. 19, 20, the king, the chief governor, must read in the book of the law all his days, 'that so his heart may not be lifted up above his brother.' And for the ministers of the word, Christ says unto them, 'Be ye not called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, as ye are all brethren;' and therefore, being all brethren, they must not take up masterly authority one over another. And the apostle hath great regard to this, that there might be an equality, so that the whole burden might not lie upon some, while other go eased. And this is the equality that God requires of the members of the church. The third fruit of brotherly love is brotherly communion or fellowship, which is also the fruit of both the other fruits of brotherly unity, and brotherly equality: Acts ii. 42, 'They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in prayers; and, ver. 46, 'They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house,' and they had constantly fellowship together; and this also God requireth of brethren that are knit in covenant together in church fellowship.

Quest. Wherein standeth that brotherly unity which members are to hold one with another?

Ans. To be perfectly joined together in one mind, and one judgment, and one speech, in one truth; and where we cannot be of one judgment, still to be of one heart; not provoking or envying one another, but forgiving and forbearing one another; not judging or despising one another in difference of weakness, but so far as we are come to walk by the same rule, and teach and learn one of another the way of God more perfectly, 'till we are grown up in the unity of the faith, unto a perfect man in Christ Jesus.' First, they must be perfectly joined together in one mind, one judgment, one speech, in one truth, 1 Cor. i. 10. He would have them to be of the same mind, and same judgment, and that not in a common error, but in one truth. You may see what is the difference betwixt mind and judgment, therefore the apostle doth exhort them to be of one mind, to be of the same judgment, for sometimes men are not of a contrary judgment because things are clear, yet they have a mind to conceive and judge otherwise, and so to express themselves; but he would have them have a mind to be all of one judgment. So should also their speech be the same, for he knew that difference of expression might breed diversity of mind. He would not have men express them otherwise than as things commonly received. He would have them avoid Babylonish confusion, and to be all of one speech. This also he earnestly desires of the Philippians, that they would mind, think, and speak one thing, Philip. i. 1, 2. He would have them willingly frame their hearts, and judgments, and speech like one to another; and see what weight he lays upon it, 'If there be any consolation in Christ,' &c. There is no consolation of Christ in their hearts, where there is a willingness to be of a contrary mind; there may be truth, but no consolation; this will darken their consolations, where there is not a mutual consolation in their words, speeches, and thoughts. He adds further, 'If any comfort of love,' &c. Hath not this comforted your hearts, the love of God, and the love of your brethren? If you ever had comfort from these, then be of one accord. *If any fellowship of the Spirit.* If you be all of one spirit, then let the spirit in all your words, minds, judgments, and speeches be all one. *If any bowels of mercy.* If you have any bowels to me, or yourselves, to your brethren, be of one

mind.] And this it was that fulfilled apostolical joy, to see them all of one mind. Eph. iv. 23, 'Be renewed in the spirit of your mind;' that is, the inclination and bent of their minds, that they may be willing to see the truth, and yield to the truth, and to be of one judgment. James iv. 5, there is a spirit in man that lusteth after error, there is a spirit that lusteth to be of a contrary mind to another man's mind; therefore, saith the apostle, 'Be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds;' this is a ground of much affliction to any humble soul, when he is forced to be of a contrary mind or judgment. It calls to mind the corruption of nature; if it be truth in me, then why should not he see it as well as I? And it is a great temptation, for it makes a man to call into question his own judgment, and the truth. But suppose we cannot be of one judgment, nor of one speech (for a man must speak as he judgeth; if he must judge, he must not prevaricate), yet still we must be of one heart, we must be of a bent to draw as close one to another as may be, and to drive it as far as truth will bear. Philip. iv. 1, he desires they may be of one mind, though they judge differently, and speak differently, yet that they be willing to close one with another; they did not affect to be of one mind and heart, and therefore he beseecheth the pastor to help them an-end, that they might mind one thing in the Lord; mind unity when it may be attained. But to help forward this brotherly love, the apostle exhorts them not to provoke one another, not to envy one another, Gal. v. 26. Let there be no wrath to provoke, no pride to envy, and this will maintain brotherly love; but because provocation will arise from those that have attained least degrees of grace, therefore we should forbear and forgive one another, Eph. iv. 2. If a man seeth that if he should speak any further, it would break love, then he forbeareth to speak his judgment in a thing. Men should take their times to speak, and not to exasperate the spirit of one another; so also must we forgive one another, Eph. iv. 32. When any one hath provoked another, let him forgive him, although he is not bound to express his forgiveness till the other desires it. Again, there is another rule, not to judge nor despise one another in differences of weakness, Rom. xiv. 3. He doth not require that they should be of one judgment; but they should not express their judgment if they see it will hinder edification, Rom. xiv. 22. But the rule is, let him not judge if the differences be not fundamental: 'Let not him that eateth,' &c. So great is the moderation of the apostle, he doth not bind them to be of one judgment and speech in such things; and therefore to bind all men to be of their own judgment and practice, be the things never so circumstantial, is against the nature of brotherly love, and not to be of an apostolical spirit. So far as we are come to 'walk by the same rule,' Philip. iii. 15, 16, he would have their mind one, and their rule one, and that will much help to unity. And what is that rule? Gal. vi. 16, it is in both places the rule of a new creature that saith, 'Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith, which works by love;' and the meaning is, he looks at all things as empty of true spiritual comfort, but faith in Christ, and then all rents about circumcision and uncircumcision will in due time fall to nothing. Stick to this rule, count Christ all in all, that his name might be magnified, his grace sanctified, and then they that plead for ceremonies will quickly come to be of one heart, although not of one judgment. What maketh a man to have a mind to differ? Is it to magnify the name of Christ? No; but to walk by that rule, ever preserveth unity of mind (to teach and learn one another the way of God more perfectly), this is another means to maintain unity of mind. Acts xviii. 26, Apollos and Aquila they both minded Christ, and that maketh him willing to learn, and them willing to teach him. Though he was a learned man in the

Scriptures, they took him unto them, and would not suffer him to be of another mind, but they expounded the way of God more fully unto him; they were not afraid of suspicion of arrogancy, that they should teach a learned man, but knew that he being a good man would be willing to learn of them, though they were but tent-makers. This that hath been spoken will not reach only to difference of mind, but to different practice also. If I know anything will grieve and offend my brother, and will be a stumbling-block unto him, it is good not to do it, Rom. xiv. 21. Whatsoever is offensive in judgment or practice should be removed; and therefore we should covet to be of one judgment. If we cannot, we may forbear the practice of many things that may be offensive; if there must needs be a difference, yet let there be one heart, endeavouring to be of one mind, not provoking, envying, or despising one another, but to grow up to the state of perfection that God calleth us unto: Eph. iv. 13, 'Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' This is the end that ministers look at, that Christians in their edifying should look at. Until we come to that unity, we are not perfect; but when we are, then we are come to the 'full measure of the stature of Christ.' Do but follow faith and love, and then when we come to believe, mind, and practise one thing, then are we perfect. It argues, that brethren should have a care one of another's faith, love, knowledge, that we may be all fit to be presented unto Christ. Num. xii. 29, I would that all God's people could prophesy. If we desire to help one another in the ways of grace, it is an evident sign of the work of grace in our own hearts; and till a man come to this, his work is not done.

Quest. Wherein standeth the brotherly equality which we are to hold one with another?

Ans. In submitting ourselves alike to all God's ordinances, in enjoying alike all Christian liberties, in preferring others before ourselves, in seeking one another's welfare, and feeling their estates as our own, in bearing the burdens one of another's estates, and imposing no burdens but in equal proportion. The sum is, that brotherly equality standeth in equal submission to all God's ordinances, in equal fruition of all Christian liberties, in giving equal honour to all alike, to feel one another's estates as our own, and to bear an equal proportion of burdens. First, for equality, in equal submission to all God's ordinances, and equal fruition of all Christian liberty. Gal. iii. 28, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for they are all one in Christ Jesus.' There is no difference between nations, nor between masters nor servants, nor between male or female in Christian liberties; one hath as much right to Christ, and the means of enjoying Christ, as the other; to the same covenant, to the same seals of the covenant, to the same admonitions and exhortations. What is administered to one is free to another, without respect of persons. These words the apostle useth also in another place, to shew equality of duty in submission to God's ordinances. Col. iii. 10-12, he exhorteth them all to put on the new man, and to put off 'anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy,' &c., and to put on 'bowels of mercies, and kindness, and humbleness of mind,' &c.; he calleth upon them all as one, all the faithful alike, every one to be clothed with these duties, and to put off these sins: for 'in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision,' &c. What duty one Christian owes, that another owes; what grace one should put on, that should another put on; and this equality is a spiritual equality. Deut. xvii. 19, 20, there it is said that the king should read the book of the

law all the days of his life, 'that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren,' though he be king. Solomon in all his royalty must not be exalted above his brethren; every commandment of God is alike given to the king as to the meanest man. It is said of kings, that they 'did evil in the sight of the Lord.' Threatenings and commandments belong alike to them; and the consideration that God putteth no difference between kings and peasants, will make him not to count his subjects like dogs. But the same inheritance is for them, the same church privileges; they are all one in privilege, all one in duty; and this they are and should be. Ezek. xlvi. 10, 'And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth;' they must not stay for him, neither must he be gone before them, but upon necessary occasions, as any other member of the church may. This is the rule, God by this means accommodating the spirit of great kings to frame themselves to brotherly equality in the house of God, with alike reverence and subjection, and alike to claim all the privileges of God's house. This is true spiritual equality. Not but that they may sit in a more eminent place in the house of God, that are of greater authority in the commonwealth. Joash, by the pillar, 2 Chron. xxiii. 13, which was the place for the king to sit in. It may be lawful in difference in that kind; not that men should be ambitious of the highest places; for it is spoken of the pharisees, Mat. xxiii. 6, and that with dislike, that they affected the chiefest seats in the synagogues; yet a confusion of civil difference is not comely. There are no other meetings, but in spiritual duties and privileges they are all alike, there is equality; they may not stay for him, nor he go out before them, but they should come in and depart together.