



CHURCH OFFICERS

JOHN OWEN



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THE TRUE NATURE OF
A GOSPEL CHURCH AND ITS GOVERNMENT.¹

THE SECOND PART
Excerpts concerning
CHURCH OFFICERS

Originally published 1689.

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Contents

[PREFATORY NOTE.](#)

[CHAPTER 4. OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.](#)

[CHAPTER 5. OF PASTORS](#)

[CHAPTER 6. OF TEACHERS](#)

[CHAPTER 7. OF RULING ELDERS.](#)

[CHAPTER 8. DUTY OF RULING ELDERS.](#)

[CHAPTER 9. OF DEACONS.](#)

PREFATORY NOTE.

On the ground of some statements in the following treatise, which was published in 1689, it has been gravely argued that the author returned to the Presbyterianism of his early days before he died. In the "Inquiry concerning Evangelical Churches," (see vol. 15), which forms the first part of this work, Owen states that he would "neither examine nor oppose the opinion" in favor of "a national church-state, arising from an association of the officers of particular churches, in several degrees, which they call *classical* and *provincial*." — p. 262. He declares in his answer to Stillingfleet, that had the Presbyterian government been established at the Restoration "without a rigorous imposition of everything supposed by any to belong to it," Presbyterians and Independents "would have both been to blame" if they had continued in a state of separation from each other.

"If it is asked, then," he proceeds, "why they did not formerly agree in the Assembly? I answer, — (1.) I was not part of them, and cannot tell; (2.) In my judgment they agreed well enough, if they could have thought so; and further I am not concerned in the difference." — p. 433.

The author of the anonymous memoir prefixed to Marshall's edition of his Sermons remarks, "He was of so healing a temper, that I heard him say before a person of quality and others, that he could readily join with Presbytery as it was exercised in Scotland." In his MSS. *Analecta*, under date 1716, the historian Wodrow records the following statement: —

"Mr. George Redpath told me two or three years ago, when in Edinburgh, that he visited Dr. Owen on his deathbed, and Presbytery and Episcopacy came to be discoursed about; and the Doctor said how he had seen his mistake as to the Independent way, and declared to him a day or two before his death, that after his utmost search into the Scriptures and antiquity, he was now satisfied that Presbytery was the way Christ had appointed in his new testament church."

If we add, that on the subject of the ruling elder (see chapter 7 of the following treatise) the views of Owen are in perfect harmony with Presbyterianism, and that, under certain qualifications, he contends for the lawfulness and authority of synods, we exhaust the evidence that in his last days he was more of a Presbyterian than an Independent.

Mr. Orme admits that “he seems to contend for a distinct office of ruling elder, or for elders who are called to rule and not to teach;” but he argues that it was a view which could not be reconciled with his other sentiments, and that it differs from the Presbyterian scheme, according to which pastor and elder “are offices so distinct that the ministers alone are considered as mere pastors, and the elders as mere laymen.” But Presbyterians really do not hold that elders are laymen, nor that there is any difference in respect of *office* between the minister and ruling elder, although their functions vary, *rule* being common to both, while *teaching* is the duty of the pastor; and on this point, Owen was no more chargeable with inconsistency as an Independent than other eminent men of the same denomination — Thomas Hooker, Cotton Mather, and Timothy Dwight, — who contend for the office of the ruling elder. Some Presbyterians would confirm implicitly the exposition which our author gives of the nature and objects of synodical action. But here his agreement with Presbyterian principles is, on the whole, not so clear and decided as in the case of the ruling elder. He objects to synods determining articles of faith, and issuing orders and decrees on their own authority; but asserts their “authority to declare the mind of God from the Scripture in doctrine, or give counsel as to practice.” There is nothing in this view from which Presbyterians would dissent.

That he should differ from both parties on some points is not surprising when we mark how carefully he has thought out his own views, from Scripture, giving a freshness and originality of coloring to his treatises on church-government, which render them to the present day peculiarly interesting and worthy of consultation. It is only, however, by a process of torture to which no man’s language should be subjected, that Owen can be claimed as a Presbyterian. We may gladly accept his decision on some points — not as confirming Presbyterianism so much, as affording room for the hope that, on matters of polity, evangelical churches may yet be united in common action and under the same forms. But the opinions of Owen can only be understood by reading the former part of this treatise in connection with this which follows, and “which,” says Chauncey, “he esteemed as his legacy to the church of Christ.” In the latter part, there is no recantation of the principle so abundantly urged in the former, that “the visible church-state which Christ has instituted under the New Testament consists in a special society or congregation of professed, believers;” and that for two hundred years after Christ, there is no mention “of any other organic,

visibly professing church, but only that which is parochial or congregational.” That Owen might deem it possible to accomplish and secure all the ends of congregational duty under the system of Presbytery may be true; but it would be hardihood ² to question that he was a Congregationalist, in regard to the spirit and substance of the ecclesiastical system for which he pleaded. To the story of Redpath must be opposed the assertion of Chauncey, by whom this treatise was edited, that it was corrected by Owen immediately before his death. Had he undergone a change of view so complete as is represented, he was not the man to quit the world in a spirit of dishonorable reticence, but would have frankly avowed to what extent his previous convictions had been modified or abandoned.

Edmund Blys, son of a clergyman in Devonshire, author of some Latin productions in prose and poetry, replied to this work in 1690, by the publication of “Animadversions³ upon some passages in a book entitled ‘The True Nature of a Gospel Church,’ etc.” — ED.

CHAPTER 4. OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.

THE church is considered either as it is *essential*, with respect to its nature and being, or as it is *organic*, with respect to its order. The constituent causes and parts of the church, as to its essence and being, are its institution, matter, and form, of which we have treated. Its order as it is organic is founded in that communication of power to it from Christ, which was insisted on in the foregoing chapter. The organizing of a church is placing or implanting in it those officers who the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed to act and exercise His authority in it. For the rule and government of the church are the exertion of the authority of Christ in the hands of those to whom it is committed; that is, the officers of it. It is not that all officers are called to rule, but that none are called to rule who are not officers.

The officers of the church in general are of two sorts, “bishops and deacons,” Phi 1:1; and their work is distributed into “prophecy and ministry,” Rom 12: 6-7.

The bishops or elders are of two sorts: —

1. Those who have authority to *teach* and administer the sacraments, which is commonly called the *power of order*; and also of *ruling*, which is corruptly called a power of jurisdiction; and,
2. Some have only *power for rule*; of which sort there are some in all the churches in the world.

Those of the first sort are distinguished into *pastors and teachers*. The distinction between the elders themselves is not like that between elders and deacons, which differ as to the whole kind or nature of the office; but it is only with respect to work and order, which we will treat distinctly.

The first sort of officers in the church are bishops or elders, concerning whom there have been mighty contentions in the recent ages of the church.

The principles which we have proceeded on up to here, discharge us from any especial interest or concern in this controversy. For if there is no church of divine or apostolic constitution, none yet existing in the second or third century, but only a *particular* congregation, then the foundation of that contest, which is about pre-eminence and power in the same person over many churches, falls to the ground.

Indeed, strife about power, superiority, and jurisdiction over one another, among those who pretend to be ministers of the gospel, is full of scandal.

It started early in the church. It was extinguished by the Lord Christ in his apostles, and rebuked by the apostles in all others, Mat 18:1-4, 23:8-11; Luke 22:24-26; 1Pet 5:1-5; 2Joh 9-10. And yet, through the pride, ambition, and avarice of men, it has grown to be the stain and shame of the church in most ages. For neither the sense of the authority of Christ forbidding such ambitious designs, nor the proposal of his own example in this particular case, nor the experience of their own insufficiency for the least part of the work of the gospel ministry, have been able to restrain the minds of men from coveting after and contending for a prerogative in church-power over others. For though this ambition, and all its fruits or rewards, are laid under a severe interdict by our Lord Jesus Christ, yet when men (like Achan) saw “the wedge of gold and the goodly Babylonish garment” that they thought were in power, domination, and wealth, they coveted them and took them, to the great disturbance of the church of God.

If men would but a little seriously consider what there is in that care of souls — even of all those over whom they pretend to have church power, rule, or jurisdiction — and what it means to give an account concerning them before the judgment-seat of Christ, then maybe it would abate their earnestness in contending for the enlargement of their cures.⁴

The claim of episcopacy, as consisting in a rank of persons distinct from the office of presbyters, is managed with great variety. It is not agreed whether they are distinct in order above them, or only as to a certain degree among those of the same order. It is not determined what constitutes that pretended distinct order, nor what that degree of preeminence in the same order consists in, nor what basis it stands upon. It is not agreed whether this order of bishops has any church-power appropriated to it, so as to be acted singly by themselves alone, without the concurrence of the presbyters; or how far that concurrence is necessary in all acts of church order or power. There are no bounds or limits of the dioceses which they claim the rule in and over, as churches to which they are peculiarly related. These are derived either from divine institution or tradition, or general rules of reason respecting both or either of them, or from the consideration of gifts and abilities, or anything else in which church-order or edification is concerned. Those who plead for diocesan episcopacy will not proceed any further; but insist only that there

is and ought to be a superiority of bishops over presbyters in order or degree. But whether this must be over presbyters in one church only, or in many distinct churches — whether it must be such that it not only utterly keeps them from discharging any of the duties of the pastoral office towards most of those whom they esteem as their flocks, and necessitates them to a rule by unscriptural church officers, laws, and power — they suppose does not belong to their cause. Whereas the weight and moment of it indeed lies in and depends on these things. There are innumerable other uncertainties, differences, and variances about this singular episcopacy, which we are not at present concerned to inquire into, nor will I insist on any of those which have been already mentioned.

Yet, it is necessary to clear the evangelical pastoral office now under consideration, and what has been pleaded before about the non-institution of any churches beyond particular congregations. This office is utterly exclusive of all pretences of the present episcopacy. So I will briefly, as a diversion, add the arguments which undeniably prove that, on the whole, New Testament bishops and presbyters (or elders), are in every way the same *persons*, in the same *office*, and have the same *function*, without distinction in order or degree — which also, as to the Scripture, the most learned advocates of prelacy ⁵ begin to grant: —

1. The apostle, describing what ought to be the qualifications of *presbyters* or elders, gives this reason for it: because a *bishop* must be so. Tit 1:5-9, “Ordain *elders* in every city, if any are blameless,” etc., “for a *bishop* must be blameless.” He would prove what sort of man a *presbyter* ought to be, who is to be ordained so; and he gives this reason for it: “*such a bishop* ought to be so.” He intends the same person and office by *presbyter* and *bishop*, or else there is no congruity of speech or consequence of reason in what he asserts. To suppose that the apostle does not intend the same persons and the same office by “presbyters” and “bishops,” in the same passage, is to destroy his argument and render the context of his discourse unintelligible. The one who says, “If you make a justice of peace or a constable, he must be magnanimous, liberal, full of clemency and courage, for so a *king* ought to be,” would not be thought to argue very wisely. Yet such is the argument here, if *distinct* orders and offices were intended by “elders” and “bishops”.

2. There were *many bishops* in one city, in one particular church: Phi 1:1, “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” It was proved before that the church at Philippi was one particular church or congregation. But to have *many* bishops in the same church, is absolutely inconsistent with the nature of the episcopacy pleaded for, which consists in the superiority of *one* over the presbyters of *many* churches. It will easily be granted that there may be many bishops in the same church, of the same order, equal in power and dignity with respect to their office; but then they are *presbyters* as well as bishops. I fear there will be no end of this contest, because of the prejudices and interests of some. But it can neither be expected nor desired that the identity between bishops and presbyters could be more plainly expressed.

3. The apostle, being at Miletus, sent to Ephesus for the *elders* of the church to come to him; that is, the elders of the church at Ephesus, as undeniably demonstrated elsewhere, Acts 20:17-18. To these elders he says, “Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you *bishops*, to feed the church of God,” verse 28. If “elders” and “bishops” are not the same persons, having the same office, the same function, the same duties, and the same names, it is impossible, so far as I understand, how it should be expressed. For these *elders* are those whom the Holy Ghost made *bishops*; there were many of them in the same church; it was their duty to attend to the flock and to feed the church, which comprise all the duties, the whole *function* of elders and bishops. These must therefore be the same. This plain testimony can in no way be evaded by pretences and conjectures, unwritten and uncertain. The only answer to it is, “It was indeed so *then*, but it was otherwise *afterward*,” which some now resort to. But these elders were either elders only, and not bishops; or bishops only, and not elders — or else the same persons were elders and bishops, as is plainly affirmed in the words. The last is what we plead. If the first is asserted, then there was no bishop then at Ephesus, for these elders had the whole oversight of the flock; if the second is asserted, then were there no elders at all, which is not a good exposition of those words that “Paul called to him the elders of the church.”

4. The apostle Peter writes to the “*elders*” of the churches that they should “feed the flock,” επισκοπου~ντες (*episkopountes*), “taking the oversight,” or exercising the office and function of bishops over it. And that was not as

“lords,” but as “examples” of humility, obedience, and holiness to the whole flock, 1Pet 5:1-3. Those on whom it is incumbent to feed the flock and superintend it, as those who in the first place are accountable to Jesus Christ, are *bishops*. And they are such that they have no other bishop over them, to whom this charge should be principally committed. But such, according to this apostle, are the *elders* of the church. Therefore these elders and bishops are the same. And such were the *hJgou>menoiv* (*hegoumenois*), the guides of the church at Jerusalem, whom its members were bound to obey as those who watched for and were to give an account of their souls, Heb 13:17.

5. The substance of these and all other instances or testimonies of the same kind is this: those whose names are the same, equally common and applicable to them all — whose function is the same, whose qualifications and characters are the same, whose duties, account, and reward are the same, concerning whom there is not in one place of Scripture the least mention of inequality, disparity, or preference in office among them — they are essentially, and in every way, *the same*. It cannot modestly be denied that it is thus with elders and bishops in the Scripture. I acknowledge that where a church is greatly increased, such that *many elders* are needed for its instruction and rule, decency and order, it requires that one of them presides in the management of all church affairs, to guide and direct the way and manner of it. So the presbyters at Alexandria chose one from among themselves who would have the pre-eminence of a *president* among them. Whether the person who is to so preside is directed to do so by first being converted, or first ordained, or on account of age, or by gifts and abilities — whether he continues only for a season, and then another is deputed to the same work, or it is for life — are things indifferent in themselves, to be determined according to the general rules of reason and order, with respect to the edification of the church.

I will never oppose this *order*, but rather I desire to see it in practice — namely, that particular churches were of such an extent as to necessitate *many elders*, both teaching and ruling, for their instruction and government. This is for the better observation of order and decency in the public assemblies; for the fuller representation of the authority committed by Jesus Christ to the officers of his church; for the occasional instruction of the members in lesser assemblies which, as to some ends, may also be stated;

with due attendance to all other means of edification, such as watching, inspecting, warning, admonishing, exhorting, and the like. And that among these elders, one should be chosen by themselves, with the consent of the church, not into a new order, not into a degree of authority above his brethren, but only to his part of the common work in a peculiar manner, which requires some kind of precedence. By this, no new officer, no new order of officers, no new degree of power or authority, is constituted in the church; only the work and duty of it is cast into such an order as the very light of nature requires.

But there is no intimation in the Scripture of the least imparity or inequality in order, degree, or authority, among officers of the same sort, whether extraordinary or ordinary. The apostles were all equal; so were the evangelists, so were elders or bishops, and so also were deacons. The Scripture knows no more of an archbishop (such as all diocesan bishops are), nor an archdeacon, than it does of an arch-apostle, or an arch-evangelist, or an arch-prophet. Yet it is evident that in all their assemblies they had one who presided in the manner described before, which seems among the apostles, to have been the prerogative of Peter.

Also, the brethren of the church may be so multiplied that the constant meeting of them all in one place may not be absolutely best for their edification. Even so, it was proved before that on all the solemn occasions of the church to which their consent was necessary, they did of old, and should still, meet in the same place for advice, consultation, and consent.⁶ This is so fully expressed and exemplified in the two great churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, Acts 15, that it cannot be questioned.

When Paul and Barnabas, sent by the “brethren” or church at Antioch, verses 1-3, had come to Jerusalem, they were received by “the church,” as the brethren are called, in distinction from the “apostles and elders,” verse 4. So when the apostles and elders assembled to consider the case proposed to them, the whole “multitude” of the church, that is, the *brethren*, assembled with them, verses 6, 12. Nor were they mute persons, mere auditors and spectators in the assembly, but they concurred both in the debate and determination of the question, insomuch that they are expressly joined with the apostles and elders in the advice given, verses 22, 23. And when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, the “multitude” to whom the letter of the church at Jerusalem was directed, came together about it, verses

23, 30. Unless this is observed, the primitive church-state is overthrown. But I will now return from this digression.

The first officer or elder of the church is the *pastor*. A pastor is the elder who feeds and rules the flock, 1Pet 5:2; that is, who is its teacher and its bishop: Poima>nate, ejpiskopou~ntev (*poimante episkopountes*), “Feed, taking the oversight.” It is not my present design or work to give a full account of the qualifications required in persons to be called to this office, nor of their duty and work, with the qualities or virtues to be exercised in it. That would require a large discourse to handle them practically, and it has been done by others. It would be wished that whatever of this kind is expressed in the *rule*, and which the nature of the office indispensably requires, that it was more exemplified in practice than it is. But some things relating to this officer and his office, that need to be well stated, I will now address.

The name of *pastor* or *shepherd* is metaphorical. It is a designation suited to his work, denoting the same office and person as a bishop or elder, spoken of absolutely, without limitation as to either teaching or ruling. And it seems to be used or applied to this office because it is more comprehensive of and instructive in all the duties that belong to it, than any other name, indeed, than all of them put together. For those who are called to the office, it is well worth considering the grounds and reasons for this metaphor, or why the church is called a flock; and why God terms himself the Shepherd of the flock; why the sheep of this flock are committed to Christ, upon which he becomes “the good shepherd that lays down his life for the sheep,” and the prince of shepherds; what is the interest of men in participating in this office, and what their duty is upon that. “Hirelings,” indeed, “wolves” and “dumb dogs,” in many places take it upon themselves to be shepherds of the flock, by whom it is devoured and destroyed, Act 20:18f; 1Pet 5:2-4; Cant. 1:7; Jer 13:17, 23:2; Eze 34:3; Gen 49:24; Psa 23:1; 80:1; John 10:11, 14-16; Heb 13:20; 1Pet 2:25, 5:4.

Therefore, although this name or appellation is taken from and includes in it *love, care, tenderness, and watchfulness* in all the duties of going before, preserving, feeding, and defending the flock, the sheep and the lambs, the strong, the weak, and the diseased, with accountableness as servants of the chief Shepherd — it was generally disused in the church. And the title

bishops or overseers, guides, presidents, elders, which seem to include more honor and authority, were retained in common use. Though one of them at last, namely, that of *bishops* (with some elating compositions and adjuncts of power) obtained preeminence. Out of the corruption of these compositions and additions (in *archbishops*, *metropolitans*, *patriarchs*, and the like), broke forth the cockatrice ⁷ of the church — that is, the *pope*.

But this name “pastor” or “shepherd” is appropriated by the Holy Ghost for the principal ministers of Christ in his church, Eph 4:11. And under that name they were promised to the church of old, Jer 3:15. And the work of these pastors is to feed the flock committed to their charge, as it is constantly required of them, Act 20:28; 1Pet 5:2.

There are two parts to pastoral feeding: —

1. *Teaching* or instruction;
2. *Rule* or discipline.

All the acts and duties of a shepherd toward his flock may be reduced to these two heads; and both are intended in the term “feeding,” 1Chr 11:2, 17:6; Jer 23:2; Mic 5:4, 7:14; Zec 11:7; Act 20:28; Joh 21:15-17; 1Pet 5:2, etc.

This is why the one who is the *pastor*, is the bishop, the elder, the teacher of the church.

These works of teaching and ruling may be distinct in several officers, namely, teachers and rulers. But to divide them in the same office of pastors, so that some pastors should feed by teaching only, but have no right to rule by virtue of their office, and some should exercise rule only, not esteeming themselves obliged to labor continually in feeding the flock, is almost to overthrow this office of Christ’s designation, and to set up two offices in its place, by men’s own projection.

So many things have been spoken and written by others at large of the call of men to this office, that I will only insist on, and very briefly, some things which are either of the most important consideration, or have been omitted by others; such as —

1. For the *call* of any person to this office of a pastor in the church, there are certain *qualifications* previously required in him, disposing and making him fit for that office. The outward call is an act of the church, as we will show

immediately; but in this is also required an obediential acting of the one who is called. Neither of these can be regular, nor can the church act according to rule and order, nor can the person called act in due obedience, unless there are some previous indications in him of the mind of God. These design that the person be called by such qualifications as may render him fit and able for the discharge of his office and work. For an ordinary vocation is not a collation of gracious spiritual abilities, suiting and making men fit for the pastoral office. Rather, it is the communication of right and power for the regular use and exercise of gifts and abilities received *antecedent* to that call, for the edification of the church, in which the office itself consists. And if we would know what these qualifications and endowments are, for the substance of them, we may learn them in their great example and pattern: our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the good Shepherd, whose sheep we are, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, the *Chief* Shepherd. He designed in the undertaking and exercise of His pastoral office, to give a type and example to all those who are to be called to the same office under him. And if there is not a conformity to him in this, then no man can assure his own conscience, or the church of God, that he is or can be lawfully called to this office.

The qualifications of Christ for, and the gracious qualities of his mind and soul in, the discharge of his pastoral office, may be referred to five heads:

(1.) That *furnishing with spiritual gifts and abilities* by the communication of the Holy Ghost to him in an unmeasurable fullness, by which he was fitted for the discharge of his office. This is expressed with respect to his undertaking it, in Isa 11:2-3, 61:1-3; Joh 3.34; Luk 4:14.⁸ In this he was “anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows,” Heb 1:9.

But this unction of the Spirit is, in a certain measure, required in *all* who are called, or who will be called to the pastoral office, Eph 4:7. I have declared at large in another treatise,⁹ that there are spiritual powers, gifts, and abilities required for the gospel ministry, and also what they are. And where there are none of those spiritual abilities which are necessary for the edification of the church in the administration of gospel ordinances (as in prayer, preaching, and the like), no outward call or order can constitute any man an evangelical

pastor. As to particular persons, I will not contend as to an absolute nullity in the office by reason of their deficiency in spiritual gifts, unless it is gross, and such that it renders them utterly useless for the edification of the church. I only say that no man can in an orderly way and manner be called or set apart to this office, in whom there are not some indications of God's designation of him to it by His furnishing that man with spiritual gifts of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and utterance for prayer and preaching, with other ministerial duties, in some competent measure.

(2.) *Compassion and love to the flock* were gloriously eminent in this "great Shepherd of the sheep." After other evidences of it, he gave them that signal confirmation in laying down his life for them. This testimony of his love, he insists on himself, Joh 10:15. And in this also, his example should lie continually before the eyes of those who are called to the pastoral office. Their entrance should be accompanied with love for the souls of men; and if the discharge of their office is not animated with love for their flocks, then they may be wolves, or hirelings, or thieves, but they are not shepherds. Neither is the glory of the gospel ministry more lost or defaced in anything, or by any means, than by the evidence that is given among most, of an unconformity to Jesus Christ in their love for the flock. Alas! It is scarcely once thought of among most of those who, in various degrees, take up the pastoral office. Where are the fruits of it? What evidence is given of it in any kind? It would be well if some, instead of laying down their lives for them, did not by innumerable ways destroy their souls!

(3.) There is and was in this great Shepherd a *continual watchfulness over the whole flock*, to keep it, to preserve it, to feed, lead, and cherish it, to purify and cleanse it, until it is presented unspotted to God. He never slumbers nor sleeps; he waters his vineyard every moment; he keeps it night and day so that none may hurt it; he loses nothing of what is committed to him. See Isa 40:11.¹⁰ I do not speak distinctly of previous qualifications for an outward call only, but with a mixture of those qualities and duties which are required in the *discharge of this office*; and in this also, the Lord Christ is to be our example. And to this belong, —

[1.] *Constant prayer* for the flock;

[2.] *Diligence* in the dispensation of the word with wisdom, as to times, seasons, the state of the flock in general, their light, knowledge, ways, walking, ignorance, temptations, trials, defections, weaknesses of all sorts, growth, and decays, etc.;

[3.] Personal admonition, exhortation, consolation, and instruction, as their particular cases require;

[4.] All with a design to keep them from evil, and to present them without blame before Christ Jesus at the great day.

But these and things of a like nature presenting themselves with some earnestness to my mind, I will at present discharge myself of thoughts about them, hoping for a more convenient place and season to give them a larger treatment. And something further will be spoken of them in the next chapter (*Of Pastors*).

(4.) *Zeal for the glory of God* — in his whole ministry and in all its ends — had its continual residence in the holy soul of the great Shepherd. Hence it is declared in an expression intimating that it was *inexpressible*: “The zeal of your house has eaten me up,” Joh 2:17. This also must accompany the discharge of the pastoral office, or it will find no acceptance with Him. The lack of it is one of those things which has filled the World with a dead, faithless, fruitless ministry.

(5.) As he was absolutely in himself “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” so the conformity to him in these things, and that was in *some degree of eminence* above others, is required in those who are called to this office.

2. Again; none can or may *take this office upon himself*, or discharge its duties (which are peculiarly its own) with authority, except someone who is called and set apart to it according to the mind of Jesus Christ. The continuation of all church order and power, of the regular administration of all sacred ordinances, indeed, of the very being of the church as it is organic, depends on this assertion. Some deny the continuation of the office itself, and of those duties which are peculiar to it, such as the administration of the sacraments; some judge that persons neither called nor set apart to this office may discharge all the duties and the whole work of it; some say that a temporary delegation of power to any by the church is all the warranty necessary for undertaking and discharging this office. Many have

been the contests about these things, occasioned by the ignorance and disorderly affections of some persons. I will briefly represent the truth in this, with the grounds for it, and proceed to the consideration of the call itself, which is so necessary: —

(1.) Christ himself, in his own person and by his own authority, was *the author of this office*. He gave it, appointed it, erected it in the church, by virtue of his sovereign power and authority, Eph 4:11-12; 1Cor 12:28. Just as he gave, appointed, and ordained an *extraordinary* office of apostleship, so he ordained, appointed, and gave the *ordinary* office of pastorship or teaching. They both have the same divine origin.

(2.) He appointed this *office for continuance*, or to abide in the church till the consummation of all things, Eph 4:13, Mat 28:19-20. And therefore he took order by his apostles so that, for the continuation of this office, pastors, elders, or bishops, should be called and ordained for the care and discharge of it in all churches. This was done by them accordingly, Acts 14:22, 23, 20:28, 1Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 — in which he gave rule to all churches to the end of the world; and he prescribed to them their duty.

(3.) On this office and its discharge he has laid the whole weight of *the order, rule, and edification of his church*, in his name and by virtue of his authority, Acts 20:28; Col 4:17; 1Tim 3:15; 1Pet, 5:1-4; Rev 2:1-5, etc. A double necessity of the continuation of this office depends on this —

first, that which arises from the *precept* or command of it, which made it necessary to the church on account of the obedience which it owes to Christ; and

secondly, from its being the principal *ordinary means* of all the ends of Christ in and towards his church.

This is why, although he can himself feed his church in the wilderness when it is deprived of all outward instituted means of edification, yet where this office fails through its neglect, nothing but disorder, confusion, and destruction, will ensue from it; no promise of feeding or edification.

(4.) The Lord Christ has given *commands* to the church for obedience to those who enjoy and exercise this office among them. Now, all these commands are needless and superfluous, nor can any obedience be yielded to the Lord Christ in their observance, unless there is a continuation of this office. The church loses as much in grace and privilege as it loses in commands; for grace in its exercise consists in obedience to the commands of Christ, 1Tim 5:17; Heb 13:7, 17.

(5.) This office is accompanied with *power* and *authority*, which none can take or assume to themselves. Whether in spiritual or temporal things, all power and authority which is not either founded in the law of nature, or collated by divine ordination, is usurpation and tyranny — no man can of himself take either sword. To invade an office which includes power and authority over others, is to disturb all natural, divine, and civil right. That such an authority is included in this office is evident, —

[1.] From the *names* ascribed to those in whom it is vested; such as pastors, bishops, elders, rulers, all of them requiring it.

[2.] From the *work* prescribed to them, which is feeding by rule and teaching.

[3.] From the execution of church-power in *discipline*, or the exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven committed to them.

[4.] From the commands given for *obedience* to them, which respect authority.

[5.] From their appointment to be *the means and instruments* of exerting the authority of Christ in the church, which can be done in no other way.

(6.) Christ has appointed *a standing rule of the calling of men to this office*, as we will see immediately; but if men may enter upon it and discharge it without any such call, then that rule, with the prescribed way of the call, is altogether in vain. And there can be no greater affront to the authority of Christ in his church, than to act in it in neglect of or in opposition to the rule that he has appointed for the exercise of power in it.

(7.) There is *an accountable trust* committed to those who undertake this office. The whole flock, the ministry itself, the truths of the gospel, as to their preservation, all are committed to them, Col 4:17; 1Tim 6:20; 2Tim 2:2, 16, 23; Acts 20:28; 1Pet 5:1-4; Heb 13:17, “those who must give account.” Nothing can be more wicked or foolish than for a man to intrude himself into a trust which is not committed to him. They are branded as profligately wicked who attempt any such thing among men; it cannot be done without falsification; and how will he be esteemed who intrudes himself into the highest trust that any creature is capable of in the name of Christ, and takes it upon himself to give an account of its discharge at the Last Day, without any divine call or warrant?

(8.) There are, for the discharge of this office, *especial promises* granted and annexed, of present assistance and future eternal rewards, Mat 28:19-20; 1Pet 5:4. Either these promises belong to those who take this office upon themselves without any call, or they do not. If they do not, then they have neither any especial assistance in their work, nor can they expect any reward from their labors. If it is said that they have an interest in them, then the worst of men may obtain the benefit of divine promises, without any divine designation.

(9.) The general force of *the rule*, Heb 5:4, [11](#) includes a prohibition of undertaking any sacred office without a divine call. And so the instances of such prohibitions under the Old Testament, may be pleaded in this case —the duties annexed to an office, as in the case of Uzziah invading the priesthood, 2Chr 26:16-21; or taking a ministerial office without call or mission, as Jer 27:9, 10, 14, 15, having respect to the order of God’s institutions.

(10.) Whoever, therefore, takes upon himself the pastoral office without a lawful outward call, *takes to himself power and authority* without any divine warrant, which is a foundation of all disorder and confusion. He interests himself in an accountable trust that is in no way committed to him; he has no promise of resistance in or reward for his work, but engages in that which is destructive to all church-order, and consequently of the very being of the church itself.

(11.) Yet there are *three things* that are to be annexed to this assertion, by way of limitation; such as —

[1.] Many things performed by virtue of *office*, in a way of authority, may be performed by others not called to office, in a way of *charity*. Such are the moral duties of exhorting, admonishing, comforting, instructing, and praying with and for one another.

[2.] *Spiritual gifts* may be exercised for the edification of others without office-power, where order and opportunity require it. But the constant exercise of spiritual gifts in preaching, with a refusal to undertake a ministerial office, or without the design to do so upon a lawful call, cannot be approved.

[3.] The *rules* proposed concern only ordinary cases, and the ordinary state of the church; extraordinary cases are accompanied with a warrant in themselves for extraordinary actings and duties.

(12.) The *call* of persons to the pastoral office is an act and duty of the church. It is not an act of the political magistrate, not of the pope, not of any single prelate, but of the whole church, to whom the Lord Christ has committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And indeed, although there are great differences surrounding the nature and manner of the call of men to this office, yet none who understands anything of these things, can deny that it is an act and duty of the church, which the church alone is empowered by Christ to put forth and exert.

But this will more fully appear in the consideration of the nature and manner of this call of men to the pastoral office, and the actions of the church in this. The call of persons to the pastoral office in the church consists of two parts, — first, *Election*; secondly, *Ordination*, as it is commonly called, or sacred separation by fasting and prayer. As to the former, four things must be inquired into: —

- I. What is *previous* to it, or preparatory for it;
- II. *What* it consists in;
- III. Its *necessity*, or the demonstration of its truth and institution;
- IV. What influence it has in *the communication of pastoral office-power* to a pastor so chosen.

I. What is previous to it is the *fitness* of the person for his office and work, who is to be chosen. It can never be the duty of the church to call or choose an unfit, unqualified, unprepared person to this office. No pretended

necessity, no outward motives, can enable or warrant it to do so; nor by any outward act, whatever the rule or solemnity of it is, can it communicate ministerial authority to persons who are utterly unqualified for and incapable of the discharge of the pastoral office according to the rule of the Scripture. And this has been one great means of debasing the ministry and of almost ruining the church itself. It is either by the neglect of those who suppose themselves entrusted with the whole power of ordination, or impositions on them by secular power and patrons of livings, as they are called, with the stated regulation of their proceedings in this by a defective law, from which there has not been a due regard for the antecedent preparatory qualifications of those who are called to the ministry.

There are two ways the fitness of anyone may be made known and judged:

1. By *evidence* given of the qualifications in him, as mentioned before. The church is not to call or choose anyone to office who is not known to them, whose frame of spirit and walking they have not had some experience of; not a novice, or one recently come to them. He must be one who by his ways and walking has obtained a good report, even among those who are outside, so far as he is known (unless they are enemies or scoffers); and one who has in some good measure evidenced his faith, love, and obedience to Jesus Christ in the church. This is the chief trust that the Lord Christ has committed to his churches; if they are negligent in this, or if at all venture to impose upon him an officer in His house, without satisfaction of his fitness upon due inquiry, then it is a great dishonor to him and a provocation of him. In this principally churches are made the overseers of their own purity and edification. To deny them an ability for a right judgment in this, or a liberty for the use and exercise of it, is error and tyranny. But that flock which Christ purchased and purified with his own blood is thought by some to be little better than a herd of brute beasts. Where there is a defect of this personal knowledge from lack of opportunity, it may be supplied by testimonies of unquestionable authority.

2. By *a trial of his gifts for edification*. These are those spiritual endowments which the Lord Christ grants, and the Holy Spirit works in the minds of men, for this very end: that the church may be profited

by them, 1Cor 12:7-11. And we must at present take it for granted that every true church of Christ, that is a church in its matter and form, is able to judge in some competent measure what gifts of men are suited to their own edification. Yet in making a judgment of this, one *directive means* is the advice of other elders and churches. They are obliged to make use of this by virtue of the communion of churches, and to avoid offense in their walk in that communion.

II. As to *the nature of this election*, call, or choice of a person known, tried, and judged fitly qualified for the pastoral office, it is an act of the *whole church*; that is, of the fraternity with their elders, if they have any. For a pastor may be chosen for a church which has other teachers, elders, or officers already instated in it. In this case, their concurrence in the choice intended is necessary by way of common suffrage, not of authority or office-power. For election is not an act of authority, but of liberty and power, in which the whole church in the fraternity is equal. If there are no officers stated in the church before, as it was with the churches in primitive times, upon the first ordination of elders among them, this election belongs to the fraternity.

III. Therefore, what we now have to prove is this: that it is the mind and will of Jesus Christ that fit persons should be called to the pastoral office (or any other office in the church) *by the election and choice of the church* itself to which they are called, antecedent to a sacred, solemn separation to their respective offices. For under the Old Testament there were three ways by which men were called to office in the church: —

1. They were called extraordinarily and immediately by the *nomination and designation of God* himself. So Aaron was called to the priesthood; and others afterward, such as Samuel, were called to be prophets.
2. By *a law of carnal generation*: so all the priests of the posterity of Aaron succeeded into the office of the priesthood without any other call.
3. By the *choice of the people*, which was the call of all the ordinary elders and rulers of the church: Deu 1:13, “Give to yourselves.” ¹² It was required of the people that in the first place they should make a judgment on their qualifications for the office to which they were

called. Men known to them as wise, understanding, righteous, and walking in the fear of God, they were to look out, and then present them to Moses for their separation to office; which is *election*. It is true that in Exo 18:25, it is said that Moses *chose* the elders; but it is frequent in the Scripture that where anything is done by many, where one is chief, that is ascribed indifferently either to the many or to the chief director. So is it said, “Israel sent messengers,” Num 21:21. Moses, speaking of the same thing, says, “I sent messengers,” Deu 2:26. So too, 1Chr 19:19, “They made peace with David and became his servants;” which is in 2Sam 10:19, “They made peace with Israel and served them.” See also 2Kng 11:12, with 2Chr 23:11; also 1Chr 16:1, with 2Sam 6:17; and the same may be observed in other places. This is why the people chose these elders under the conduct and guidance of Moses. This directs us to the right interpretation of Acts 14:23, which we will speak of immediately.

The first of these ways was repeated in the foundation of *the evangelical church*. Christ himself was called to his office by the Father, through the unction of the Spirit, Isa 61:1-3, Heb 5:5. And he himself called the apostles and evangelists, in whom that call ceased. The second ordinary way, by the privilege of natural generation of the stock of the priests, was utterly abolished. The third way only remained for the ordinary continuation of the church — namely, by the choice and election of the church itself, with solemn separation and dedication by extraordinary or ordinary officers.

The *first* instance of the choice of a church-officer had a mixture in it of the first and last ways, in *the case of Matthias*. As he was able to be a church officer; he had the choice and consent of the church. As he was to be an apostle or an *extraordinary* officer, there was an immediate divine disposition of him into his office; — the latter, to give him apostolic authority; the former, to make him a precedent of the future actions of the church in the call of their officers.

I say, this being the *first example* and pattern of the calling of any person to office in the Christian church-state, in which there was an interposition of the ordinary actions of men, is established as a rule and precedent — not to be changed, altered, or departed from, in any age of the church whatever. It is so as to what was of common right and equity, which belonged to the whole church. And I cannot but wonder how men ever dared reject and

disannul this divine example and rule. It will not avail them to say that it is only a matter of fact, and not a precept or institution that is recorded; for —

1. It is *a fact* left on record in the holy Scripture for our instruction and direction.
2. It is an *example* of the apostles and the whole church proposed to us; which, in all things not otherwise determined, has the force of an institution.
3. If there were no more in it than this — that we have a matter of common right, determined and applied by the wisdom of the apostles and the entire church of believers at that time in the world — it would be an impiety to depart from it, except in the case of the utmost necessity.

Whereas, what is recorded here was in the call of an *apostle*; it strengthens the argument which we hence plead. For if in the extraordinary call of an apostle, it was the mind of Christ that the fraternity or multitude should have the liberty of their suffrage, then how much more is it certainly his mind, that in the ordinary call of their own particular officers in whom, under Him, the concern is their own only, this right should be continued to them!

The order of the proceeding of the church in this is distinctly declared; for, —

1. The number in the church at that time — that is, of the men — was about a hundred and twenty, Acts 1:15.
2. They were assembled all together in one place, such that Peter could stand in their midst, verse 15.
3. Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles, declares to them the necessity of choosing one to be substituted in place of Judas, verses 16-22.
4. He limits the choice of the person to the especial qualification of being a fit witness of the resurrection of Christ, or to those who constantly accompanied him with themselves from the baptism of John; that is, from his being baptized by him, upon which he began his public ministry.
5. Among these, they were left at their liberty to nominate any two who were to be left to the lot for a determination which of them God designed for the office.

6. Upon this, the whole multitude “appointed two;” that is, the “men and brethren” to whom Peter spoke, did so, verse 16.

7. The same persons, to promote the work, “prayed and cast their lots,” verses 24-26.

8. Matthias was, by the common suffrage of the whole church, reckoned among the number of the apostles.

I am not saying that these things were done by the disciples in distinction from Peter and the rest of the apostles, but in *conjunction* with them. Peter did nothing without them, nor did they do anything without him.

The exceptions of Bellarmine and others against this testimony — that it was a grant and a condescension in Peter, not a declaration of the right of the church, that it was an extraordinary case, and that the determination of the whole was by lot — have no validity. The pretended concession of Peter is a figment; the case was so extraordinary as to include in it all ordinary cases, as to the substance of them. And although the ultimate determination of the individual person (which was necessary to his apostleship) was immediately divine, *by lot*, yet here all that is desired is granted *to the people*: in their choosing and appointing two, in their praying, in their casting lots, in their voluntary approbatory suffrage.

This blessed example is given to us by the wisdom of the apostles; indeed, by the Spirit of God in them, being eminently suited to the nature of the thing itself, as we will see immediately. And it is compliant with all other directions and apostolic examples in a like case. It is therefore to be followed, rather than the practice of some degenerate churches which, to cover the turpitude of their acting in deserting this example and rule, make use of a mock show and pretense of that which really they deny, reject, and oppose.

The *second* example we have of the practice of the apostles in this case, by which the preceding rule is confirmed, is given to us in Acts 6, in *the election of the deacons*. Had there ensued, after the choice of Matthias, an instance of a diverse practice, by an exclusion of the consent of the people, the former might have been evaded as that which was absolutely extraordinary, and thus not obliging to the church. But this was the very next instance of the call of any church-officer, and it was the first

appointment of any ordinary officers in the Christian church. Having occurred in the very year of Christ's ascension, there is no mention of any ordinary elders ordained in that church, as distinct from the apostles. For all the apostles still abiding there for most of this time, who made only some occasional excursions to other places, were able to take care of the rule of the church and the preaching of the word. Not long afterward, they are indeed mentioned as those who were well-known in the church, Act 11:30; but the first instance of the call of ordinary teaching elders or pastors is not recorded. That of deacons is recorded because of the occasion of it; and for our purpose, we may observe the following concerning it:

1. The institution of the office itself was of apostolic authority, and that fullness of church-power with which they were furnished by Jesus Christ.
2. They did not exert that authority except upon reasons that were satisfactory to the church, which they declare in Act 6:2.
3. The action is ascribed *to the twelve in general*, without naming any person who spoke for the rest. This renders the pretence of the Romanists altogether vain, taken from the former passage concerning Matthias, where Peter is said to have spoken to the disciples. Upon this supposition, the Romanists would have the actions of the church which ensued from it, to have been by Peter's concession and grant, and not of their own right. For the rest of the apostles were as much interested and concerned in what was then spoken by Peter as they were at this time, when the whole is ascribed to the twelve.
4. That the church was greatly multiplied at that time, on account of the conversion of three thousand to the faith recorded in the foregoing chapter (2:41). It is indeed probable that many, even most of them, were returned to their own habitations; for the next year there were churches in all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, chap. 9:31. And Peter went about "throughout all quarters," to visit the saints who dwelt in them, verse 32, of whose conversion we read nothing but that which fell out at Jerusalem at Pentecost; but they were a great multitude, chap. 6:1-2.
5. This whole multitude of the church — that is, the "brethren," verse 3, — assembled in one place, being congregated by the apostles (verse 2), who would not ordain anything in which they were concerned, without the consent of the multitude.

6. They judged the whole matter proposed to them, and gave their approval of it before they entered upon the practice of it. Verse 5, “The saying pleased the whole multitude.”

7. The qualifications of the persons to be chosen for the intended office, are declared by the apostles: Verse 3, “Of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.”

8. The multitude were to judge based on these qualities; and so they judged absolutely, the fitness of any for this office.

9. The choice is wholly committed and left to them by the apostles, as that which of right belonged to them, “Search out among you;” which they made use of, choosing them for the office by their common suffrage, verse 5.

10. Having thus chosen them, they presented them to the apostles as their chosen officers, to be set apart by them for the exercise of their office by prayer and imposition of hands, Verse 6.

It is impossible to have a more evident, convincing instance and example of the free choice of ecclesiastical officers by the multitude or fraternity of the church, than is given to us in this. Nor was there any ground or reason why this order and process should be observed, why the apostles would not themselves nominate and appoint persons whom they saw and knew were fit to receive this office, if not that it was the right and liberty of the people, according to the mind of Christ, to choose their own officers, which the apostles would not abridge nor infringe.

“So it was *then*,” ¹³ says Chrysostom on the passage, “and so it ought to be now.” But the usage then began to decline. It would be well if some considered how the apostles treated that multitude of the people at that time, which is so much despised now, and which is utterly excluded from all concern in church affairs, but what consists in servile subjection. But they have in this pattern and precedent for the future ordering of calling fit persons to office in the church, their interest, power, and privilege secured to them, such that they can never be justly deprived of it. And if there was nothing in this except a record of the wisdom of the apostles in managing church affairs, it is marvellous to me that any who would be thought to succeed them in any part of their trust and office, would dare to depart from the example set before them by the Holy Ghost in them, preferring their

own ways and inventions above it. I will ever judge that there is more safety in a strict adherence to this apostolic practice and example, than in compliance with all the canons of councils or churches afterward. The only objection usually insisted on — that is, by Bellarmine and those who follow him — is that “this being the election of deacons to manage *the alms of the church*, that is, something of their temporals, nothing can be concluded from that as to the right or way of calling bishops, pastors, or elders, who are to take care of the souls of the people. They may, indeed, be able to judge the fitness of those who are to be entrusted with their purses, or what they are willing to give out of them; but it does not then follow that they are able to judge the fitness of those who are to be their spiritual pastors, nor to have the choice of them.”

Nothing can be weaker than this pretense or evasion; for —

(1.) The question is concerning *the calling of persons* to office in the church in general, of which we have here a rule to which no exception is in any way entered.

(2.) This cannot be fairly pleaded by those *who appoint deacons to preach, baptize, and officiate publicly* in all holy things, except the administration of the eucharist.

(3.) If the people are fit and able to judge who are of “honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,” which is required of them here, they are able to judge who are fit to be their pastors.

(4.) The argument holds strongly on the other side; namely, that if it is right and equal, if it is of divine appointment and apostolic practice, that the people should choose those who were to collect and distribute their charitable benevolence because of their concern in it, much more are they to enjoy the same liberty, right, and privilege in the choice of their pastors, to whom they commit the care of their souls, and submit themselves to their authority in the Lord.

Thirdly. Accordingly they used the same liberty in the choice of *their elders*: Acts 14:23, “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting” ¹⁴ — that, say Erasmus, Vatablus, Beza, and all our old English translations, is appointing, ordaining, creating elders *by election, or the suffrage of the disciples*, having prayed with fasting. The whole order of the sacred separation of qualified persons to the office of the

ministry — that is, to be bishops, elders, or pastors — is clearly represented here; for —

1. They were *chosen by the people*, the apostles who were present, namely, Paul and Barnabas, presiding in the action, directing it and confirming it by their consent with them.

2. *A time of prayer and fasting* was appointed for the action or discharge of the duty of the church in this.

3. When they were so *chosen*, the apostles present *solemnly prayed*, by which their ordination was completed. Some would have the word mentioned here, *ceirotonia* (*cheirotonia*) — which is to vote by a show of hands — to instead be *ceirothesia* (*cheirothesia*), an authoritative imposition of hands, in which this ordination consisted. They say there is a hysterology in the words ¹⁵ — that is, they feign a disorder in them to serve their own hypothesis. They suppose that their complete ordination was effected *before* there was any prayer with fasting; for by imposition of hands in their judgment, ordination is completed. So say Bellarmine and Lapedone on the passage, with those who follow them. But first to pervert the true meaning of the Word, and then to countenance twisting it by assigning a disorder to the words of the whole sentence — such a disorder that it makes, in their judgment, a false representation of the factual matter related — is a way of interpreting Scripture that will serve *any* turn.

4. This was done in *every church* (or in every *congregation* as Tyndale ¹⁶ renders the word); namely, in all the particular congregations that were gathered in those parts. For that collection and constitution always preceded the election and ordination of their officers, as is plain in this place, and also in Tit 1:5.¹⁷ It is so far from the truth, claiming that the existence of churches depends on the successive ordination of their officers, for the church, essentially considered, is *always* antecedent to their being and call. But because it is some men's interest to entangle things that are plain and clear enough in themselves, I will consider the objection to this rendition of the words. The whole of it lies against the meaning, use, and application of *ceirotontes* (*cheirotontes*, Act 14.23). Now, although we do not argue here merely from the meaning of the word, but from the representation of the factual matter made in the context, I will observe some things that are sufficient for the removal of that objection; such as —

(1.) The native signification of *ceirotone* (cheirotoneo), by virtue of its composition, is to “lift up” or “stretch out the hands,” or a hand;¹⁸ nor is it ever used in any other signification.

(2.) The first constant use of it in political or civil things, and consequently ecclesiastical, is to choose, elect, design, or make any person an officer, magistrate, or ruler, by suffrage or common consent of those concerned. This was usually done by making bare the hand and arm with lifting it up.¹⁹

One must be a great stranger to these things not to know that among the Greeks, especially the Athenians (from whom the use of this word is borrowed or taken), *ceirotone* was an act “of the whole assembly” of the people in the choice of their officers and magistrates. *Ceirotone* is “by common suffrage to decree and determine anything, law, or order;” and when applied to persons, it signifies their choice and designation to office. So it is used in the first sense by Demosthenes, *Orat. De Corona*, od{’ —

“The people confirmed my sayings by their suffrage;” and in the other, *Php 1* — “Neither the senate nor the people choosing him to his office.”²⁰ So the passive verb is used, “to be created by suffrages.”²¹

3. The word is used only once more in the New Testament, *2Cor 8:19*, where it plainly signifies election of a person to employment: “He was chosen by the churches to travel with us.”²²

4. It is acknowledged that after this was the common use of the word, it was applied to signify the thing itself, and not the manner of doing it. Hence it is sometimes used for obtaining or collating authority, or dignity, or magistracy, in any manner of way, though not by election: “to appoint, to create.” But by an abusive application of the word, it expressed the thing itself that was intended, without regard to its signification and proper use. Why such a use of it should be allowed here no reason can be given; for in all other places on such occasions, the apostles admitted and directed the churches to use their liberty in their choice. So in *Acts 15:22*, “The apostles and elders, with the whole church, sent *chosen* men of their own company to Antioch,” those whom they chose by common suffrage for that end; again, verse 25. “Whomever you *approve*, I will send,” *1Cor 16:3*: the church chose them, the apostle sent them. “Who was chosen by the churches to travel with us,” *2Cor 8:19*. “Search out among you,” *Acts 6:3*.

If on all these and like occasions, the apostles guided and directed the people in their right and use of their liberty, as to the election of persons to offices and employments when the churches themselves were concerned, then what reason is there to depart from the proper and usual signification of the word in *this* place, denoting nothing but what was the common practice of the apostles on like occasions?

5. That which alone is objected to this by Bellarmine and others who follow him, and borrow their whole [argument] in this case from him — namely, that *ceirotanh>santev*, grammatically agreeing with and regulated by Paul and Barnabas, denotes *their* act, and not any act of the *people* — is of no force; for —

(1.) Paul and Barnabas presided in the whole action, helping, ordering, and disposing of the people in the discharge of their duty, as is fitting to be done by some on all like occasions; and therefore it is truly said of them that “they appointed elders by the suffrage of the people.”

(2.) I have shown instances before out of the Scripture, that when a thing is done by the people, it is usual to ascribe it to whoever was chief in it, as elsewhere the same thing is ascribed to the whole people.

The same authors contend that the liberty of choosing their own officers or elders, such as it was, was granted to them or permitted by way of *condescension for a season*, and not made use of by virtue of any right they had in it. But this permission is a mere imagination. It was either according to the mind of Christ that the churches should choose their own elders, or it was not. If it was not, the apostles would not have permitted it; and if it was, they ought to ordain it and practice according to it, *as they did*. Nor is such a constant apostolic practice proposed for the direction of the church in all ages, to be ascribed to such an origin as condescension and permission. Yes, it is evident that it arose from the most fundamental principles of the constitution and nature of the gospel churches, and it was only a regular pursuit and practice of them; for, —

First, the calling of bishops, pastors, or elders, is an act of *the power of the keys* of the kingdom of heaven. But these keys are originally and properly given to the whole church, and to its elders only ministerially so as to exercise them. Pastors are eyes to the church. But God and nature, in the first place, intend light for the *whole* body, the whole person. It is granted to

this end both subjectively and finally; but *actually* it is peculiarly seated in the eye. So it is in the grant of church-power: it is given to the *whole* church, though it is to be exercised only by its elders. It is the known judgment of Austin ²³ and a multitude of divines who followed him, that the grant of the keys to Peter was in the person, and as the *representative*, of the whole confessing church. So he fully expresses himself:

“Peter the apostle bore, in a general figure, the ‘person’ of the church. For as to what belonged to himself, he was by nature one man, by grace one Christian, and of special more abounding grace, one and the chief apostle. But when it was said to him, ‘I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,’ etc., He signified the whole church,” etc.

Again:

“The church, which is founded in Christ, received from Him, in (the person of) Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which is the power of binding and loosing.” ²⁴

To whomever these keys are granted, according to their distinct interests in that grant, they have the right and power to call their bishops, pastors, or elders; for it consists in the exercise of that trust and power. But this grant is made to the whole church; and as there are several sorts of persons in a church that is already constituted — some are elders, others are of the people only — this right resides in them, and is acted by them according to their respective capacities, as limited by the light of nature and divine institution. This means that their election should belong to the body of the people, and their authoritative designation or ordination should belong to the elders. When in any place the supreme magistrate is a member or part of the church, he also has his peculiar right in this. That the power of the keys is thus granted originally and fundamentally to the *whole church*, is undeniably confirmed by two arguments: —

1. The church itself is the wife, the spouse, the bride, the queen of the Husband and King of the church, Christ Jesus, Psa 45:9; Joh 3:29; Rev 21:9, 22:17; Mat 25:1, 5-6. Otherwise Christ has none; nor does the church have any other husband. Now, to whom should the keys of the house be committed if not to the bride? There is, I confess, another who claims the keys to be his own. But with that he makes *himself* the head and husband of the church, proclaiming himself not only to be an adulterer with that harlot

which he calls the church, but also a tyrant, in that pretending to be her husband, he will not trust her with the keys of his house — unlike Christ. Whereas by canon law, every bishop is the husband or spouse of his diocesan church, they for the most part commit an open rape upon the people, taking them without their consent. At least they are not chosen by the people, which is yet essential for a lawful marriage. But the bride of Christ does not otherwise come to be so, except by the voluntary choice of Him to be her husband. For the officers or rulers of the church belong to it as hers, 1Cor 3:21- 22, and as stewards in the house, chap. 4:1; the servants of the church for Jesus' sake, 2Cor 4:5. If the Lord Christ has the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that is, of "his own house," Heb 3:6; if the church itself is the spouse of Christ, the mother of the family, the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev 21:9; and if all the officers of the church are but stewards and servants in the house and to the family; if the Lord Christ makes a grant of these keys to any, upon which the disposal of all things in this house and family depends — then the question is whether He has originally granted them to His holy spouse, to dispose of according to her judgment and duty, or granted them to any servants in the house, to dispose of her and all her concerns at their pleasure?

2. The power of the keys as to binding and loosing, and consequently as to all other acts proceeding from there, is expressly granted *to the whole church*: Mat 18:17-18, "If he neglects to hear them, tell it to the *church*. But if he neglects to hear the church, let him be to you as a heathen and a publican. Truly I say to you, Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." What church is intended here, we have proved before, and that the church is entrusted with the power of binding and loosing. And what the role is of the body of the people in this, the apostle declares in 1Cor 5:4-5; 2Cor 2:6. [25](#)

Secondly, this right, exemplified in *apostolic practice*, is comprehended in the commands given to the church or body of the people with respect to teachers and rulers of all sorts. For in a multitude of places, the charge is given to them that they should discern and try false prophets, flee from them, test the spirits or those who pretend to spiritual gifts or offices, reject those who preach false doctrine, give testimony for those who are to be in office, with sundry other things of a like nature. All of these things presuppose, or they cannot be discharged without, a right in the elders to

choose the worthy and reject the unworthy, as Cyprian says.²⁶ See Mat 7:15-20; Joh 5:39; Gal 2:9; 1The 5:21; 1Joh 4:1; 2Joh 1.10-11.

What is objected to this — the unfitness and disability of the people to make a right judgment concerning those who are to be their pastors and rulers — labors with a threefold weakness:

1. It reflects dishonor on the *wisdom* of Christ, in commanding them to observe and discharge duties which they are in no way fit for.

2. It proceeds on a supposition of *that degenerate state* of churches in their members, as to their light, knowledge, wisdom, and holiness, which they have for the most part fallen into. This must not be allowed to have any force of argument in it, when it is to be *lamented* and ought to be *reformed*.

[27](#)

3. It supposes that there is no *supply of assistance* provided for the people in the discharge of their duty, to guide and direct them in it. But it is otherwise, seeing that the elders of the church in which any such election is made, and those of other churches in communion with that church, by the common advice and declaration of their judgment, are to be assistants to them.

Thirdly, The church is a *voluntary society*. Persons who are otherwise absolutely free as to all the rules, laws, and ends of such a society, coalesce into it of their own free will and choice. This is the origin of *all* churches, as it has been declared, “They first gave themselves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God,” 2Cor 8:5.

In this, no one has more power or authority than another, either by prescription, tradition, or succession, but they are all equal. The church is gathered into this society merely by the authority of Christ. And where it is so collected, it has neither right, power, privilege, rules, nor bonds as such, except what are given, prescribed, and limited by the institution and laws of Christ. Moreover, it abides and continues on the same grounds and principles as those upon which it was collected — namely, the will of its members, subjected to the commands of Christ. This is as necessary to its present continuance in all its members, as it was in its first planting. It is not like the political societies of the world, which being first established by force or consent, bring a necessity upon all who are born in them and under them, to comply with their rule and laws. For men may, and in many cases should, submit to the disposal of temporal things in a way that may not be

convenient for them, which they do not judge to be good, and which in many things are not to their advantage. And yet this may be just and equal because the special good which everyone would aim at, not being absolutely good, may be outbalanced by a *general* good; nor may it be alterable except by the prejudice of what is good *in particular*.

But it is not so with reference to spiritual and eternal things. No man can by any previous law, be concluded as to his interest in such things. Nor is there any general good to be attained by the loss of any of them. None, therefore, can coalesce in such a society, or adhere to it, or in any way belong to it, except by his own free choice and consent. And it is inquired, how is it possible that any rule, authority, power; or office should arise or be erected in such a society? We speak of that which is *ordinary*. For the One by whom this church-state is erected and appointed, may and did appoint in it and over it, extraordinary officers for a season. And we suppose that as He has, by his divine authority, instituted and appointed that such societies shall exist, he has granted privileges and powers to them, which are proper and sufficient for this end. We also suppose that He has given laws and rules, by the observance of which these ordinary officers may be made partakers of those privileges and powers, with a right to exercise them.

On these suppositions, in a society absolutely *voluntary*, among those who in their conjunction into it by their own consent are in every way *equal*, there can be but three things required for the actual constitution of rule and office among them: —

First is that there be some among them who are *fitted and qualified* for the discharge of such an office in a peculiar manner, above others. This is previous to all government, and beyond what is purely natural and necessary. ²⁸ So it was in the world, so it was in the church: “Presidents, who have been approved by the elders, have acquired this honor not by price, but by testimony.” — Tertullian. ²⁹ This preparation and furnishing of some persons with those abilities and fit qualifications for this office and work in the church, the Lord Christ has taken on himself; and He does and will effect it in all generations. Without this, there can be neither office, nor rule, nor order in the church.

Secondly, Whereas a new relation is to be made or created between a pastor, bishop, or elder, and *the church*, which did not exist before

between them (a bishop and a church, a pastor and a flock, are *relata*), it must be introduced at the same time by the *mutual voluntary acts* of one another, or of each part. For one of the *relata* can, as such, have no being or existence without the other. Now, this cannot be other than by the consent and voluntary subjection of the church to persons who are so antecedently qualified for office, according to the law and will of Christ. For it cannot be done by the delegation of power and authority from any other superior or equal, to those who receive it. Neither the nature of this power, which is incapable of such a delegation, nor the relation to Christ of all those who are pastors of the church, will allow an interposition of authority by way of a delegation of power from *themselves*, to other men. That would make them *their* ministers, and not Christ's. Nor is it consistent with the nature of such a voluntary society. This, therefore, can in no way be done except by free choice, election, consent, or approval. It cannot, I say, be so regularly.³⁰ How far an irregularity in this may vitiate the whole call of a minister, we do not now inquire into.

Now, this choice or election does not communicate a power from those who choose, to those who are chosen, as though such a power as that to which they are called, were formally inherent in the *choosers* antecedent to such a choice. For this would make those who are chosen *their* ministers only; they would act all things in their name, and by virtue of the authority derived from them. Rather, it is only an instrumental, ministerial means to instate them in that power and authority which is given to such officers by the constitution and laws of *Christ*, whose ministers they then are. These gifts, offices, and officers being granted by Christ to the churches, Eph 4:11-12, wherever there is a church called according to His mind, in and by their choice of these officers, they submit themselves to them in the Lord, according to all the powers and duties with which they are entrusted and to which they are called by Him.

Thirdly, It is required that persons so chosen, so submitted to, also be *solemnly separated, dedicated to, and confirmed in their office, by fasting and prayer*. This is consonant with the light of nature, which directs to a solemnity in the susception of public officers, from which the coronation of kings proceeds. This does not give them their title,

but solemnly proclaims it, which on many accounts is to the advantage of government. So too, it is prescribed for the church in this case by especial institution. But I will speak further of this immediately.

This order of calling men to the pastoral office is namely, by their previous qualifications for the ministry, by which a general designation of the persons to be called is made by Christ himself. The *orderly choice or election* of them in a voluntary subjection to them in the Lord, according to the mind of Christ, is made by the church itself. This is followed with solemn ordination, or setting apart to the office and its discharge, by prayer with fasting. All this is in obedience to the commands and institution of Christ, to which the communication of office-power and privilege, is annexed by law-constitution. This is suited to the light of reason in all such cases, the nature of gospel societies in order or churches, the ends of the ministry, the power committed by Christ to the church, and confirmed by apostolic practice and example.

We rest in this without any further dispute, or limiting the formal cause of the communication of office-power to any one act or duty of the church, or of its bishops or elders. All three of the things mentioned are essential to it. And when any of them are utterly neglected — where they are not found either formally or virtually — there is no lawful, regular call to the ministry, according to the mind of Christ.

This order was observed inviolate for a long time in the ancient church; and its footsteps may be traced through all ages of the church. But it first gradually decayed; and then it was perverted and corrupted, until it issued (as in the Roman church) in a pageant and show, instead of the reality of the things themselves. For the trial and approval of spiritual endowments, previously necessary to the call of anyone, was left to the pedantic examination of the bishop's domestics, who themselves knew nothing about them. The election and approval of the people was turned into a mock show in the sight of God and men, a deacon calling out that if any had objections against the one who was to be ordained, they should come forth and speak, to which another cries out of a corner, by compact, "He is learned and worthy." Ordination was esteemed to consist only in the outward sign of an imposition of hands, with some other ceremonies annexed to it. By these,

without any other consideration, there ensued a flux of power from the ordainers to the ordained!

But from the beginning, it was not so. A few instances of the right of the people, and the exercise of it in the choice of their own pastors, may be touched on in our passage: —

CLEMENS, Epist. ad Corinth., affirms that the apostles themselves appointed approved persons to the office of the ministry “by (or with) the consent (or choice) of the whole church.” ³¹ *Suneudokei~n (euleudokein)* is “to enact by common consent.” This makes it somewhat strange that a learned man would think that the right of the people in election is excluded in this very place by Clemens, from what is assigned to the apostles in ordination.

IGNATIUS, writing to the fraternity of the church, — “It becomes you, as a church of God, to choose or (ordain) a bishop.” ³²

TERTULLIAN, “The elders came to their honor (or office) by the testimony of the people;” that is, by their suffrage in their election. ³³

ORIGEN, in the close of his last book against Celsus, discourses expressly about the calling and constitution of churches or cities of God. Speaking of the elders and rulers of them, he affirms that they are *eklegomenoi (eklegomenoi)*, “chosen to their office” by the churches which they rule.

CYPRIAN. The testimony given by in various places to this right of the people, especially in Epist. 67, written to the elders and people of some churches in Spain, is so well known, so frequently urged and excepted against, to so little purpose, that it is in no way needed to insist on it again. I will only observe a few things concerning and out of that epistle; such as, —

1. It was not a simple epistle about his own more ordinary occasions, but a determination upon a weighty question, made by a synod of bishops or elders, in whose name (as well as that of Cyprian) it was written and sent to the churches who craved their advice.
2. He not only asserts the right of the people to choose worthy persons to be their bishops, and to reject those who are unworthy, but he also industriously proves it to be their right by divine institution and appointment.

3. He declares it to be the sin of the people, if they neglect the use and exercise of their right and power in rejecting and withdrawing themselves from the communion of unworthy pastors, and choosing others in their place.

4. He affirms that this was the practice not only of the churches of Africa, but of those in most of the other provinces of the empire. Some passages in his discourse, in which all these things are asserted, I will transcribe in the order in which they lie in the epistle: —

“For this cause the people, obedient to the commands of our Lord and fearing God, ought to separate themselves from a wicked bishop, nor mix themselves with the worship of a sacrilegious priest. For they principally have the power of choosing the worthy priests and rejecting the unworthy, which comes from divine authority (or appointment),” [34](#)

He proves this from the Old and New Testaments. Nothing can be said that more fully represents the truth we plead for. He assigns to the people a right and power to separate from unworthy pastors, to reject or depose them, as granted to them by divine authority. This power of election in the people, he proves from the apostolic practice insisted on before: “According to the divine commands, the same course was observed in the Acts of the Apostles;” of which he gives instances in the election of Matthias, Acts 1, and of the deacons, chapter 6. [35](#)

And afterward, speaking of ordination “by the suffrage of the whole brotherhood of the church,” [36](#) he says,

“According to which divine tradition and apostolical practice, this custom is to be preserved and kept among us also, as it is through almost all the provinces.” [37](#)

Those who are not moved by Cyprian’s authority, I think yet have reason to believe him as a matter of fact as to what was done everywhere, or almost everywhere, in his own days. And they may take time to answer his reasons when they can, which comprise the substance of all that we plead in this case.

But the testimonies in following ages given to this right and power of the people in choosing their own church-officers, bishops and others, recorded in the decrees of councils, the writings of the learned men in those councils,

the rescripts of popes,³⁸ and constitutions of emperors, are so fully and faithfully collected by Blondellus ³⁹ in the third part of his apology for the judgment of Jerome about episcopacy, that nothing can be added to his diligence. Nor is there any need for further confirmation of the truth in this behalf. To deny this right, is the same as denying that the sun gives light at noonday.

Bellarmino and others who follow him, and borrow their conceits from him, make a pretense that this liberty of the people in choosing their own bishops and pastors, was granted to them at first by way of indulgence or connivance. But being abused by them, and turned into disorder, it was gradually taken from them. That pretense resulted in the shameful mocking of God and man that is still in use in the Roman church, when at the ordination of a bishop or priest, one deacon makes a demand, “Is the person to be ordained approved by the people?” And another answers out of a corner, “The people approve him.” Bellarmine’s pretense has been so confuted by protestant writers of all sorts, that it is needless to insist on them any longer.

Indeed, the concessions that are made — that this ancient practice of the church in the people’s choosing their own officers, as to its right, is by various degrees transferred to popes, patrons, and bishops, with a representation in mere pageantry of the people’s liberty to make objections against those who are to be ordained — are as fair a concession of the gradual apostasy of churches from their original order and constitution, as could be desired.

This power and right which we assign to the people, is *not* to act only in a subsequent consent to one who is already ordained, in accepting him to be their bishop or pastor. How far that may salve the defect and disorder of the omission of prior election, and so preserve the essence of the ministerial call, I do not now inquire into. But what we plead for is the power and right of election, to be exercised *prior* to the solemn ordination or setting apart of anyone to the pastoral office, which is communicative of office-power in its own kind to the person chosen.

This is part of that contest which for many ages filled most countries of Europe with broils and disorders; nor is there yet an end to it. But in this present discourse, we are not in the least concerned with these things. For our inquiry is, What state and order of church-affairs is declared and

represented to us in the Scripture? And in this there is not the least intimation of those things from which this controversy arose, and on which it depends. Secular endowments, jurisdictions, investiture, rights of presentation, and the like, with respect to the evangelical pastoral office and its exercise in any place — which are the subjects of these contests — are foreign to all things that are directed in the Scriptures concerning them; nor can it be reduced to anything that belongs to them. This is why, whether this “jus patronatus” ⁴⁰ is consistent with gospel institutions; whether it may be continued with respect to lands, tithes, and benefices; or how it may be reconciled with the right of the people in the choice of their own ecclesiastical officers, from the different acts, objects, and ends required for the one and the other — are not things of our present consideration.

And we affirm that this is agreeable to natural reason and equity, to the nature of churches in their institution and ends, to all authority and office-power in the church necessary for its edification, with the security of the consciences of the officers themselves, and the preservation of due respect and obedience to them, and constituted by the institution of Christ himself in his apostles, and in the practice of the primitive church. This is why the utter despoiling of the church, of the disciples, of those gathered in church-societies by His authority and command, of this right and liberty, may be esteemed a *sacrilege* of a higher nature than many other things which are reproached as criminal under that label.

And if any still further appear to justify this deprivation of the right laid claim to, and the exclusion of the people from their ancient possession, with sobriety of argument and reason, the whole cause may yet be further debated from principles of natural light and equity, from maxims of law and policy, from the necessity of the ends of church-order and power, from the moral impossibility of any other way of conveying ecclesiastical office-power, as well as from evangelical institution and the practice of the first churches.

It may be objected, “I know that the restoration of this liberty to the people will overthrow that *jus patronatus*, or right of presenting livings and preferments, which is established by law in this nation. And so, under a pretense of restoring to the people their right in common, it will destroy other men’s undoubted rights in their own enclosures.

IV. But this election of the church does not actually and immediately instate the person chosen, into the office to which he is chosen; nor does it give an actual right to its exercise. It is moreover required that he be solemnly set apart to his office in and by the *church*, with fasting and prayer. That there should be some particular prayer in the dedication of anyone to the office of the ministry, is a notion that could never be obliterated in the minds of men concerned in these things, nor cast out of their practice. We do not now inquire what sort of prayers there have been among many. But there has been less regard to the *other* duty, namely, that these prayers should be accompanied with fasting; yet this also is necessary by virtue of apostolic example, Acts 14:23.

The conduct of this work belongs to *the elders or officers of the church* in which anyone is to be so ordained. It belonged to extraordinary officers while they continued in the church; and upon the cessation of their office, it devolved on the ordinary stated officers of the church. This is so, I say, in case there is any such officer previously fixed in the church to which any one is to be ordained. And in case there are no fixed officers, the assistance of pastors or elders of other churches may and ought to be desired for the conduct and regulation of the duty.

It is needless to inquire what authoritative influence this ordination has in communicating the office or office-power. For ordination is acknowledged to be indispensably necessary, and to belong *essentially*, to the call to office. For when various duties, such as these of election and ordination, are required for the same end by virtue of divine institution, it is not for me to determine what is the peculiar efficacy of the one or the other, seeing that one of them without the other has no efficacy at all.

To this is added, as an external adjunct, the imposition of hands — significant of the persons so called to office in and for the church. For it will be proved with difficulty that the use of this ceremony was designed for continuance, after a cessation of the communication of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. It was the sign of that — an outward means in *extraordinary* officers. Yet we freely grant it to the ordinary officers of the church, provided that there is no apprehension of its being the sole authoritative conveyance of a successive “flux” of office-power, which is destructive of the whole nature of the institution.⁴¹

This may at present suffice as to the call of fit persons to the pastoral office; and consequently, to any other office in the church. The following things are essentially necessary to it, so that authority and the right to feed the church, and to rule in it in the name of Christ, as an officer of his house, may be given to anyone thereby, by virtue of His law and the charter granted by Him to the church itself.

The first is that, prior to any actings of the church towards such a person with respect to an office, he be furnished by the Lord Christ himself with *graces*, and *gifts*, and *abilities*, for the discharge of the office to which he is to be called. This divine designation of the person to be called rests on the kingly office and care of Christ towards his church. Where this is wholly lacking, it is not in the power of any church under heaven, by virtue of any outward order or act, to communicate pastoral or ministerial power to any person whatsoever.

Secondly, there is to be *an exploration or trial of those gifts* and abilities as to their accommodation for the edification of that church to which any person is to be ordained a pastor or minister. But although the right of judging in this belongs to and resides in the church itself (for who else is able to judge for them, or is entrusted so to do?), yet is it their wisdom and duty to desire the assistance and guidance of those who are approved in the discharge of their office in other churches.

Thirdly, the *first act of power committed* to the church by Jesus Christ, for the constitution of ordinary officers in it, is the election of a person who is qualified and tried for his office, which we have now vindicated.

Fourthly, there is required for this the *solemn ordination*, inauguration, dedication, or setting apart of the person so chosen, by the presbytery of the church (the council of elders), with fasting and prayer and the outward sign of the imposition of hands.

This is that order which the rule of the Scripture, the example of the first churches, and the nature of the things themselves, direct us to. And although I will not say that a defect in any of these, especially if it is from unavoidable hindrances, disannuls the call of a person to the pastoral office, yet I must say that where they are not all duly attended to, the institution of Christ is neglected, and the order of the church is infringed.

This is why —

The plea of the communication of all authority for office, and of the office itself, solely by a *flux of power from the first ordainers*, through the hands of their pretended successors in all ages, under all the innumerable miscarriages to which they are subject, and have actually fallen into, without any respect to the consent or call of the churches, by rules, laws, and orders that are foreign to the Scripture, is contrary to the whole nature of evangelical churches, and all the ends of their institution, as will be manifested if it is needed.

CHAPTER 5. OF PASTORS

THE ESPECIAL DUTY OF PASTORS OF CHURCHES

WE have declared the way by which pastors are given to and instated in the church. What should ensue is an accounting of their work and duty in the discharge of their office. But this has been the subject of many long discourses, both among the ancient writers of the church and as of late; I shall therefore only touch on some things that are most necessary to consider:

1. The first and principal duty of a pastor is to *feed the flock* by diligent preaching of the word. It is a promise relating to the New Testament that God would give to his church “*pastors according to his own heart, who would feed them with knowledge and understanding.*” ^{Jer 3:15} This is by teaching or preaching the word, and not otherwise. This feeding is the essence of the office of a pastor, as to its exercise; so that he who does not, or cannot, or will not feed the flock is no pastor, whatever outward call or work he may have in the church. The care of preaching the gospel was committed to Peter, and through him to all true pastors of the church, under the name of “feeding.” ⁴² According to the example of the apostles, they are to free themselves from all encumbrances, so that they may give themselves wholly to the word and prayer. ^{Acts 6:1-4} Their work is “to labor in the word and doctrine,” ^{1Tim 5:17}; and thereby to “feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers,” ^{Acts 20:28} and it is what is given everywhere to those in charge.

This work and duty, therefore, as was said, is *essential* to the office of a pastor. A man is a pastor to those whom he leads by pastoral teaching, and to no others; the one who does not feed in this way is no pastor. Nor is it required only that he preach now and then at his leisure, but that he lay aside all other employments, though lawful, and all other duties in the church, if his constant attention to them would divert him from this work – so that he is laboring to the utmost of his ability in these things. Without this, no man will be able to give a comfortable account of the pastoral office at the Last Day.

There is, indeed, no more required of any man than what God gives him the ability for. Weakness, sickness, bodily infirmities, may disable men from

the actual discharge of this duty in that assiduity⁴³ and frequency which are required in ordinary cases. Some may, through age or other incapacitating illness, be utterly disabled for it – in which case it is their duty to lay down their office and be dismissed from it. Or if their disability is only partial, they should provide a suitable replacement, so that the edification of the church is not prejudiced. But for men to pretend to be pastors of the church, and to be unable for, or negligent of, this work and duty, is to live in open defiance of the commands of Christ.

We have lived to see and hear of reproachful scorn and contempt thrown upon “laboring in the word and doctrine.” ^{1Tim 5.17} All manner of discouragements are given, endeavoring to suppress it in a number of instances. Indeed, some have gone so far as to declare that the work of preaching is unnecessary in the church. That would reduce religion to the reading and rule of the liturgy. The next attempt, I suspect, might be to exclude Christ himself from their religion. That is what denying the necessity of preaching the gospel leads to; indeed it makes good progress toward it.

A number of things are required for this work and duty of pastoral preaching, such as,

(1.) *Spiritual wisdom* and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel, so that they may declare to the church “all the counsel of God” and “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”⁴⁴ The majority of the church, especially those who are grown in knowledge and experience, have a spiritual insight into these things. The apostle prays that all believers might have it.⁴⁵ But if those who instruct them, or were to do so, do not have some degree of eminence in it, they cannot be useful to lead others on to perfection. The little care or concern for this, has rendered the ministry of many a preacher both fruitless and useless in our days.

(2.) *Experience of the power of the truth* which they preach, in and upon their own souls. Without this, they will be lifeless and heartless in their own work; and their labor for the most part will be unprofitable to others. It is attended to by such men, as a task for their advantage, or as something that carries some satisfaction from the ostentation and supposed reputation that accompany it. But a man preaches only that sermon well to others which preaches itself in his own soul. The man

who does not feed on and thrive by digesting the food which he provides for others, will hardly make it savory to them. Indeed, he does not know if the food he has provided may be poison, unless he has really tasted it himself. If the word does not dwell with power *in* us, it will not pass with power *from* us. No man lives in a more woeful condition than those who do not really believe themselves what they persuade others to believe continually. The lack of this experience of the power of gospel truth on their own souls is what gives us so many lifeless, sapless orations, quaint in words, and dead in power – instead of preaching the gospel in the demonstration of the Spirit. Let anyone say what they please, it is evident that some men's preaching, as well as others' not-preaching, has lost the credit of their ministry.

(3.) *Skill to divide the word rightly*; ^{2Tim 2:15} this consists in a practical wisdom, by diligent attendance to the word of truth, to discover what is real, substantial, and fit food for the souls of the hearers – to give to all sorts of persons in the church their proper portion. And this requires,

(4.) A *prudent and diligent consideration of the state of the flock* over which any man is set, as to their strength or weakness, their growth or defect in knowledge (the measure of their attainments requiring either milk or strong meat), their temptations and duties, their spiritual decay or thriving – not only generally but, as near as possible, with respect to all the individual members of the church. Without a due regard for these things, men preach randomly, fighting uncertainly, like those who beat the air.^{1Cor 9:26} Preaching sermons that are not designed to benefit those to whom they are preached; insisting on general doctrines that are not adjusted to the condition of the hearers; speaking words without considering whether those words ought to be said – are all things that will make those whose minds do not have obvious advantages, weary of preaching; and they will make others weary simply by hearing them.

(5.) All of these, in the whole discharge of their duty, are to be constantly accompanied with the evidence of their *zeal for the glory of God* and *compassion for the souls of men*. If these are not vigorously exercised in the minds and souls of those who preach the word,

demonstrating themselves to the consciences of those who hear them, then the quickening form, the life and soul of preaching, is lost.

All these things seem common, obvious, and universally acknowledged; but the ruin of the ministry of most for lack of them, or from notable defects in them, is or may be no less evidently known. And the very naming of them (which is all I intend to do at present) is sufficient to evidence how incumbent it is on all pastors of churches to give themselves to the word and to prayer, to labor in the word and doctrine, to be continually intent on this work, to engage all the faculties of their souls, to stir up all their graces and gifts, for constant exercise in discharging their duty. For “who is sufficient for these things?” ^{2Cor 2.16} Just as the consideration of these is sufficient to stir all ministers to fervent prayer for supplies of divine aid and assistance for the work which they cannot perform in their own strength, so is it enough to warn them to avoid all things that would divert or distract them from their constant attendance to its discharge.

When men undertake the pastoral office, and either judge that it not their duty to preach, or are not able to do so, or they attempt it only on solemn occasions, or attend to it as a task required of them, but they lack that wisdom, skill, diligence, care, prudence, zeal, and compassion which are required for it, the glory and usefulness of the ministry will be utterly destroyed.

2. The second duty of a pastor towards his flock is *continual fervent prayer for them*.⁴⁶ “We will give ourselves continually to prayer.” ^{Acts 6:4} Without this, no man can or does preach to the flock as he should, nor does he perform any other duty of his pastoral office. From this, any man may take the best measure of the discharge of his duty towards his flock. The one who constantly, diligently, and fervently prays for them, will have a testimony in himself of his own sincerity in the discharge of all his other pastoral duties; nor can he voluntarily omit or neglect any of them. As for those who are negligent in this, no matter how great their pains, labor, and travail in other duties, they may be influenced by other reasons; and so they give no evidence of sincerity in the discharge of their office. This constant prayer for the church is so incumbent on all pastors, that whatever is done without prayer has no value in the sight of Jesus Christ.

So respect is to be paid,

(1.) to *the success of the word*, to all its blessed ends among them. These are no less than the improvement and strengthening of all their graces, the direction of all their duties, their edification in faith and love, along with the entire conduct of their souls in the life of God, for the enjoyment of him. To preach the word, therefore, and not follow it with constant and fervent prayer for its success, is to disbelieve its use, neglect its end, and throw away the seed of the gospel at random.

(2.) to *the temptations that the church is generally exposed to*. These greatly vary according to the outward circumstances of things. The temptations in general that accompany a state of outward peace and tranquility have another nature than those that attend a time of trouble, persecution, distress, and poverty, and also with regard to other occasions and circumstances. The pastors of churches ought to diligently consider these, looking at them as the means and ways by which churches have been ruined, and the souls of many lost forever. With respect to them, therefore, their prayers for the church ought to be fervent.

(3.) to *the specific state and condition of all the members, as far as it is known to them*. There may be those who are spiritually sick and diseased, tempted, afflicted, out of sight, wandering out of the way, surprised in sins and miscarriages, disconsolate and troubled in spirit in a special manner. The remembrance of them all ought to abide with the pastor, and be continually called over in their daily pastoral supplications.

(4.) to *the presence of Christ in the assembly of the church*, with all the blessed evidences and testimonies of it. This alone is what gives life and power to all church assemblies, without which all outward order and forms of divine worship in them are but a dead carcass. Now, this presence of Christ in the assemblies of his church is by his Spirit, accompanying all ordinances of worship with a gracious, divine efficacy, evidencing itself by blessed operations on the minds and hearts of the congregation. Pastors of churches are to continually to pray for this. Those who do so, understand that all the success of their labors, and all the acceptance of the church with God in their duties, depend on it.

(5.) to *their preservation in faith*, love, and fruitfulness, with all the duties that belong to them, etc.

It should be greatly desired that all those who take upon themselves this pastoral office well consider and understand how great and necessary a part of their work and duty consists in their continual fervent prayer for their flocks. It is the only instituted way by which they may, by virtue of their office, bless their congregations. But in and by the discharge of their duty to pray, they will also find their hearts and minds more and more filled with love, and engaged with diligence toward all other duties of their office. And they will be motivated to the exercise of all grace towards the whole church on all occasions. Where any are negligent in this duty, every other duty which they perform towards the church will be influenced by false considerations, and it will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary.

3. *The administration of the seals of the covenant* is committed to them as stewards of the house of Christ; for the authoritative dispensation of the word, to which the administration of the seals is annexed, is committed to them. Their principal end is the special confirmation and application of the preached word. And in this there are three things that they are to attend to:

(1.) The *times* and seasons of their administration for the church's edification, especially that of the Lord's Supper whose frequency is enjoined. It is the duty of pastors to consider all the necessary circumstances of their administration as to time, place, frequency, order, and decency.

(2.) To keep *severely* to Christ's institution, as to the way and manner of their administration. The gradual introduction of uninstituted rites and ceremonies into the church celebration of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper ended at length in the idolatry of the mass. In this then, alone, and not in bowing, cringing, and vestments, lies the glory and beauty of these administrations: namely, that they are compliant with and expressive of the institution of Christ, nor is anything done in them except in express obedience to his authority. "I have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you," says the apostle in this case. ^{1Cor} 11:23

(3.) To take care that these holy things are administered *only to those who are fit and worthy*, according to the rule of the gospel. Those who

impose on pastors the promiscuous administration of these divine ordinances, or the application of the seals to all without difference, deprive them of one-half of their ministerial office and duty.

But here it is asked by some, “If a church has no pastor at present, nor a teaching elder with pastoral power, may it not temporarily delegate and appoint the administration of these special ordinances to some qualified member of the church who is fit for their outward administration?” For the sake of some, I shall examine this.

No church is complete in order *without teaching officers*.⁴⁷

A church that is not complete in order cannot be complete in administrations, because the power of administrations depends proportionately upon the power of order. That is, the power of the church depends upon the being of the church. Hence the first duty of a church without officers is to obtain them, according to rule. And to endeavor to complete the administrations without an antecedent completing of its order is contrary to the mind of Christ. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5 “You should set in order the things that are lacking, and ordain elders in every church.” The practice proposed is therefore irregular, and it is contrary to the mind of Christ.

The order of the church is twofold – it is *essential* and it is *organic*.

The *essential* order of the church, with its power that arises from that order, is first for its preservation, and secondly for its perfection.

- (1.) For its preservation in the admission and exclusion of members;
- (2.) For its perfection in the election of officers.

No part of this power which belongs to the essence of the church, can be delegated; it must be carried out by the whole church. They cannot delegate power to some to admit members, in such a way that it is not an act of the whole church. They cannot delegate power to anyone to elect officers, nor can they delegate anything else which essentially belongs to them as a church. The reason is that things which belong to the essence of anything, belong to it formally, and so they cannot be transferred.

The church, therefore, cannot delegate the power and authority asked for, unless it is assumed to belong to the essential power of the order of the church, which it does not.

If the church may delegate or substitute others to discharge all ordinances whatsoever, without elders or pastors, then it may perfect the saints and complete the work of the ministry without them, which is contrary to Ephesians 4:11-12; and, secondly, it would render the ministry only convenient, and not absolutely necessary to the church, which is contrary to its institution.

A particular church, in its *organic* order, is the sole adequate subject of all the ordinances, and not in its *essential* order. That is because, in its essential order, it can never benefit from all the ordinances, specifically the ministry by which it is constituted as *organic*. If it could, then the church in its essential order would indeed be the sole adequate subject of all the ordinances.

Though the church is the only *subject* of gospel ordinances, it is not the only *object* of them; rather, the objects are varied. For instance,

(1.) The *preaching of the word*: its first object is the *world*, for conversion; its next object is *those who profess Christ*, for their edification.

(2.) *Baptism*: its object is neither the *world* nor the *members of a particular church*, but only *those who profess Christ*, along with those who are reckoned to them by God's appointment – that is, their infant seed.

(3.) The *supper*: its object is a *particular church only*, which is acknowledged, and it may be approved by the institution, one special end of it; the necessity of discipline depends on it.

Ordinances, of which the church is the only subject and the only object, cannot be administered authoritatively except by church officers,

(1.) Because none but Christ's stewards have authority in and towards his house as such.⁴⁸

(2.) Because it is an act of office-authority to represent Christ to the whole church, and to feed the whole flock by that authority.⁴⁹

There are no footprints of any such practice among the churches of God who walked in order – not in the Scripture nor in all antiquity.

But it is objected by those who allow this practice, that “If the church may appoint or send a person out to preach to others, or appoint a brother to preach to themselves, then they may appoint him to administer the ordinance of the supper.”

Ans. There is a mistake in the supposition. The church, that is, the church body, cannot authoritatively send out any brother to preach. There are two things required for it: the collation of gifts with the communication of the office. The church can do neither for someone who is sent out. But where *God* gives gifts someone by his Spirit and calls him by his providence, the church only complies with it, not by communicating any authority to the person, but by praying for a blessing upon his work.

It is the same case when desiring a brother to teach among them. The duty is moral in its nature; the gifts and call are from God alone; only the occasion of exercising his gifts is administered by the church.

It is further added by the same persons that, “If a brother or one who is only a disciple may baptize, then he may also administer the Lord’s supper when it is desired by the church.”

Ans. The supposition is not granted nor proved; but there is still a difference between these ordinances – the object of the one is those at large who profess Christ; the object of the other is those who profess Christ as members of a particular church.

But to return,

4. It is incumbent on them *to preserve the truth or doctrine of the gospel* received and professed in the church, and to defend it against all opposition. This is one principal end of the ministry, and one principal means of the preservation of the faith once delivered to the saints. This is committed especially to the pastors of the churches, as the apostle frequently and emphatically repeats its charge to Timothy, and through him to all to whom the dispensation of the word is committed.⁵⁰ He gives the same charge to the elders of the church at Ephesus.⁵¹ What he says of himself, that the “glorious gospel of the blessed God was committed to his trust,” ^{1Tim 1:11} is true of all pastors of churches, according to their measure and call; and they should all aim at the account which he gives of his ministry in this: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” ^{2Tim 4:7} The church is the “pillar and ground of the truth;” ^{1Tim 3.15} and it is

principally so in its ministry. The sinful neglect of this duty was the cause of most of the pernicious heresies and errors that have infested and ruined the church. Those whose duty it was to preserve the doctrine of the gospel entire in its public profession, have (many of them) “spoken perverse things to draw away disciples after them.” Acts 20:30 Bishops, presbyters, public teachers, have been the ringleaders in heresies. Which is why this duty is especially to be attended to at this time, when the fundamental truths of the gospel are impugned on all sides, by all sorts of adversaries.

A number of things are required for this, such as,

(1.) *A clear, sound, comprehensive knowledge of the entire doctrine of the gospel*, attained by all means that are useful and commonly prescribed for that end, especially by diligent study of the Scripture, with fervent prayer for illumination and understanding. Men cannot preserve for others what they are ignorant of themselves. Truth may be lost by weakness as well as by wickedness. And the defect in this, in many, is deplorable.

(2.) *Love of the truth* which they have so learned and comprehended. Unless we look at truth as a pearl, as what is valued at any rate, bought with any price, as what is better than all the world, we will not endeavor to preserve it with the required diligence. Some are ready to part with truth at an easy rate, or to grow indifferent about it; we have multitudes of examples in the days in which we live. It would be easy to give instances of various important evangelical truths, which our forefathers in the faith contended for with all earnestness, and were ready to seal with their blood, which are now utterly disregarded and opposed by some who pretend to succeed them in their profession. If ministers do not have a sense of that power of truth in their own souls, and a taste of its goodness, then the discharge of this duty is not to be expected from them.

(3.) *A conscientious care and fear of giving countenance or encouragement to novel opinions*, especially those that oppose any truth whose power and efficacy has been experienced among those who believe. Vain curiosity, boldness in conjectures, and readiness to vent their own conceits, have caused no small trouble and damage to the church.

(4.) *Learning and ability of mind to discern and disprove the oppositions of the adversaries* of the truth, and thereby to stop their mouths and convince those who question it.

(5.) *The solid confirmation of the most important truths* of the gospel, into which all other truths are resolved, in their teaching and ministry. Men may and often do prejudice, indeed, betray the truth by the weakness of their pleas for it.

(6.) *Keeping a diligent watch over their own flocks* against the craft of outside seducers, and against any bitter root of error springing up among themselves.

(7.) *Concurrent assistance with the elders and messengers* of other churches with whom they are in communion, in declaring the faith which they all profess; we must talk more at large about this later.

It is evident what learning, labor, study, pains, ability, and exercise of the rational faculties, are ordinarily required for the right discharge of these duties. Where men may be useful to the church in other things, but are defective in these things, it becomes them to walk and act both circumspectly and humbly, frequently desiring and adhering to the advice of those whom God has entrusted with more talents and greater abilities.

5. It belongs to their charge and their office to diligently *labor for the conversion of souls to God*. The ordinary means of conversion is left to the church, and the church's duty it is to attend to it. Indeed, one of the principal ends of the institution and preservation of churches is the conversion of souls. When there are no more to be converted, there shall be no more church on the earth. To enlarge the kingdom of Christ, to diffuse the light and savor of the gospel, to be subservient to the calling of the elect, and to gather all the sheep of Christ into his fold, are things that God designs by his churches in this world.

Now, the principal and instrumental cause of all these things is the preaching of the word; and this is committed to the pastors of the churches. It is true, men may be (and often are) converted to God through the occasional dispensation of the word by those who are not called to office. For it is the gospel itself that is the "power of God for salvation," Rom 1.16 whoever it is administered by. It has been effectual to that end even in the necessary and occasional teaching of women. But frequently it is effective

in the exercise of spiritual gifts by those who are not stated officers of the church,⁵² yet this does not hinder its dispensation. But the administration of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, as to all its ends, is committed to the pastors of the church; and the first object of the preaching of the gospel is the conversion of the world, or its men. And this is true in the preaching of all those to whom that work is committed by Christ.

The work of the apostles and evangelists had this order in it: *First*, they were to make disciples of men by the preaching of the gospel for conversion; and this was their principal work, as Paul testifies.⁵³ In this, they were gloriously instrumental in laying the foundation of the kingdom of Christ all over the world. The *second* part of their work was to teach those who were converted, and make disciples who would do and observe all that Christ commanded them. In the pursuit of this part of their commission, they gathered the disciples of Christ into churches under ordinary officers of their own. Although the work of these ordinary officers, pastors, and teachers is of the same nature as the apostles and evangelists, yet the method of it is changed in them. For their *first* ordinary work is to conduct and teach all the disciples of Christ to do and observe all things appointed by him – that is, to preach and watch over the particular flocks to whom they are related. But they are not discharged by that from an interest in the other part of the work – in preaching the word for the conversion of souls.

They are not bound to the method of the apostles and evangelists; indeed, by virtue of their office, they are ordinarily excluded from it. After a man is called to be a pastor of a particular church, it is not his duty to leave that church, and go up and down to preach for the conversion of strangers. It is not, I say, *ordinarily* so. For many cases may occur in which the edification of any particular church should give way to the glory of Christ with respect to calling the members of the church catholic.⁵⁴ But in the discharge of the pastoral office, there are many occasions for preaching the word for the conversion of souls, such as,

(1.) When any unconverted persons *come into the church assemblies*, and are worked on by the power of the word. We experience this every day. A man, preaching to one congregation, at the same time and in the same place, cannot preach with ministerial authority to those that are of the church to which he is related, and preach to the others only by

virtue of a spiritual gift which he has received. No man can distinguish those in his own conscience – and there is no rule or reason for it. Pastors, with respect to their whole office and all its duties, of which many can have only the church for their object, are ministers *in office* to the church; and so they are ministers of the church. Yet they are also ministers of Christ; and it is by *him*, and not by the *church*, that the preaching of the gospel is committed to them. And it is so committed to them, by virtue of their office, that they are to use it for all its ends in Christ's way and method – of which the conversion of sinners is one. No man can conceive of himself as having a double capacity while he is preaching to the same congregation, and no man's experience can reach it.

(2.) *In occasional preaching* in other places, to which a pastor of a church may be called and directed by divine providence. Although we have no concern in the figment of an indelible character accompanying sacred orders, we do not think that the pastoral office is such that a man must leave it behind him every time he goes from home; nor is it in his own power, or in the power of all men in the world, to divest him of it, unless he is dismissed or deposed from it by Christ himself, through the rule of his word. Wherever a true minister preaches, he preaches as a minister; for as a minister, the administration of the gospel is committed to him as to all its ends, of which the chief end, as was said, is the conversion of souls. Indeed, it is of such weight that the convenience and edification of particular churches ought to give way to it. When, therefore, there are great opportunities and providential calls to preach the gospel for the conversion of souls, and the harvest being so great that there are insufficient laborers for it, it is lawful, indeed, it is the *duty* of pastors of particular churches to leave their constant attendance on their pastoral charge in those churches, at least for a season, to apply themselves to the more public preaching of the word for the conversion of the souls of men. Nor will any particular church be unwilling, if it understands that the whole end of particular churches is but the edification of the church catholic, and that their good and advantage is to give way to the glory of Christ in the whole. The good shepherd will leave the ninety and nine sheep, to seek after one that wanders; and we may certainly leave a few for a season, to seek after a great multitude of wanderers, when we are

called to this by divine providence – and I could heartily wish that we might have a trial of it at this time.

The ministers who have been most celebrated, and deservedly so in the last ages, in this and in neighboring nations, have been such that God made their ministry eminently successful for the conversion of souls. To affirm that they did not do their work as ministers, by virtue of their ministerial office, is to throw away the crown and destroy the principal glory of the ministry. For my own part, if I did not think myself bound to preach as a minister, and as a minister authorized in all places and on all occasions, when I am called to it, I think I would not preach much more in this world. Nor do I know at all what rule they walk by who continue constant public preaching for many years, and yet neither desire nor intend to be called to any pastoral office in the church. But I must not insist on the debate of these things here.

6. It belongs to them, on the account of their pastoral office, to be *ready, willing, and able, to comfort, relieve, and refresh, those that are tempted*, tossed, wearied with fears and grounds of disconsolation, in times of trial and desertion. “The tongue of the learned” is required in them, “that they should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” Isa 50.⁴ One excellent qualification of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the discharge of his priestly office now in heaven, is that he is touched with a sense of our infirmities, and he knows how to succor those that are tempted. His whole flock in this world is a company of tempted ones; his own life on the earth he calls “the time of his temptation;” and those who have charge of his flock under him ought to have a sense of their infirmities, and endeavor in a special way to succor those that are tempted. But there are always some among them that are cast under darkness and disconsolations in a peculiar manner: some are at the entrance of their conversion to God, while they have a deep sense of the terror of the Lord, the sharpness of conviction, and the uncertainty of their condition; some are relapsed into sin or omissions of duties; some under great, sore, and lasting afflictions; some upon pressing, urgent, particular occurrences; some on sovereign, divine *desertions*; some through the *buffetings of Satan* and the injection of blasphemous thoughts into their minds, with many other occasions of a similar nature. Now, the troubles, disconsolations, dejections, and fears, that arise in the minds of persons in these exercises and temptations are various, oftentimes urged and fortified with subtle arguments and fair pretences, perplexing the souls of

men almost to despair and death. It belongs to the office and duty of pastors,

(1.) To be able *to rightly understand the various cases that will occur of this kind*, from such principles and grounds of truth and experience as will bear a just confidence in their prudent application to relieve those concerned – to have “the tongue of the learned, to know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” Isa 50.4 It will not be done by a collection and determination of cases, which is still useful in its place; for we will hardly meet with two cases of this kind that can be exactly determined by the same rule, for all manner of circumstances give them variety. But what is required for this are skill, understanding, and experience in the whole nature of the work of the Spirit of God on the souls of men; of the conflict that exists between the flesh and the Spirit; of the methods and wiles of Satan; of the wiles of the principalities and powers or wicked spirits that are in high places; of the nature, effects, and ends of divine desertions – along with wisdom to apply such principles, or to make appropriate medicines and remedies for every sore and distemper. These things are despised by some, neglected by some, and looked after by some only in cases of conscience where it is known that some have horribly debauched their own consciences and those of others, to the scandal and ruin of religion so far as they have prevailed. This is not to dispute how far helps such as books written on cases of conscience may be useful in this; they may be greatly useful to those who know how to use them rightly. But the proper ways by which pastors and teachers must obtain this skill and understanding are by diligent study of the Scriptures, meditation on it, fervent prayer, experience of spiritual things, and temptations in their own souls – with a prudent observation of the way God has dealt with others, and the ways in which opposition is made to the work of his grace in them. Without these things, all pretences to this ability and duty of the pastoral office are vain; which is why the whole work of it is much neglected.

(2.) To be ready and willing to *attend to the special cases that may be brought to them*, and not to look at them as unnecessary diversions; rather, a due application to them is a principal part of their office and duty. To discountenance, to discourage anyone from seeking relief in

perplexities of this nature, to bring it to them with a seeming moroseness and unconcern, is to turn away the lame, to push away the diseased, and not at all express the care of Christ for his flock, Isaiah 40:11. Indeed, it is their duty to hearken after those who may be so troubled, to seek them out, and to give them their counsel and direction on all occasions.

(3.) To *bear patiently and tenderly with the weakness*, ignorance, dullness, slowness to believe and to receive satisfaction, yes, maybe impertinence in those who are so tempted. These things will abound among them, partly from their natural infirmities, many being weak and perhaps froward, but especially from the nature of their temptations, which are suited to disorder and disquiet their minds, to fill them with perplexed thoughts, and to make them jealous of everything in which they are spiritually concerned. If much patience, meekness, and condescension is not exercised towards them, they are quickly turned out of the way.

In the discharge of the whole pastoral office, there is no duty of more importance, nor in which the Lord Jesus Christ is more concerned, nor more eminently suited to the nature of the office itself, than this. But it is a work or duty which, for the reasons mentioned, must be accompanied with the exercise of humility, patience, self-denial, and spiritual wisdom – having experience with the wearisome diversions on other occasions. Some of old had gotten the conduct of the souls of men into their management, and turned this whole part of their office and duty into an engine they called “auricular confession,” ⁵⁵ by which they wrested the consciences of Christians to promote their own ease, wealth, authority, and often worse ends.

7. *A compassionate suffering* with all the members of the church in all their trials and troubles, whether internal or external, belongs to them in the discharge of their office; nothing renders them more like Jesus Christ, whom it is their principal duty to represent to the church. The view and consideration, by faith, of the glory of Christ in his compassion with his suffering members, is the principal spring of consolation to the church in all its distresses. And the same spirit, the same mind in this, according to their measure, ought to be in all who have the pastoral office committed to them. So the apostle expresses it in himself,

“Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I do not burn?” 2Cor 11:29.

Unless this compassion and goodness runs through the discharge of their whole office, men cannot be said to be evangelical shepherds; nor can the sheep be said in any sense to be their own. There are those who perhaps pretend to the pastoral office, to live in wealth and pleasure, regardless of the sufferings and temptations of their flock, or of the poor of it, or who are related to churches in which it is impossible for them to even be acquainted with the state of the greatest part of them; this does not correspond to the institution of their office, nor to Christ’s design in it.

8. *Care of the poor and visitation of the sick* are parts of this duty, commonly known, though commonly neglected.

9. *The principal care of the rule of the church* is incumbent on its pastors. This is the second general head of the power and duty of this office, to which many things in particular belong. But because I will treat the rule of the church by itself distinctly later, I will not insist upon it here.

10. There is *a communion to be observed among all the churches of the same faith and profession in any nation*. What it consists in, and what is required for it, will be declared afterward. The principal care of this communion, for the edification of the churches, is incumbent on their pastors. Whether it is exercised by letters of mutual advice, of congratulation or consolation, or in testimony of communion with those called to office in those churches, or whether it is by convening in synods for consultation of their joint concerns (which things made up a great part of the primitive ecclesiastical polity), it is their duty to attend to it and to take care of it.

11. I will close with something concerning these few instances of the pastoral charge and duty, without which all the rest will neither be useful to men nor be accepted by the great shepherd, Christ Jesus. And that is *a humble, holy, exemplary conversation, in all godliness and honesty*. The rules and precepts of the Scripture, the examples of Christ and his apostles, with that of the bishops or pastors of the primitive churches, and the nature of the thing itself, with the religion which we profess, undeniably prove that this duty is necessary and indispensable in a gospel ministry. It would be easy to fill up a volume with ancient examples to this purpose, with

testimonies of the Scripture and of the first writers among Christians, with examples of public and private miscarriages in it, and with evident demonstrations, that the ruin of Christian religion in most nations where it has been professed, and so of the nations themselves, has proceeded from the ambition, pride, luxury, uncleanness, profaneness, and otherwise vicious conversations, of those who have been called the “clergy.” And in daily observation, it is a thing written with the beams of the sun, that whatever else is done in churches, if their pastors, or those who are so esteemed, are not exemplary in gospel obedience and holiness, religion will not be carried on and improved among the people. If persons are admitted into this office who are light or profane in their habits, garbs, and converse; if they are corrupt in their communication, unsavory and barren as to their spiritual discourse; if they are covetous, oppressive, and contentious; if they are negligent in their holy duties in their own families, and thus cannot stir up others to diligence in it; and much more, if they are openly sensual, vicious, and debauched – then we may take our leave of all the glory and power of religion among the people that are committed to their charge.

To handle this property (or adjunct) of the pastoral office, it would be necessary to distinctly consider and explain all the qualifications assigned by the apostle as necessary for bishops or elders, evidenced as necessary prior to the orderly call of them to this office;⁵⁶ but it is not consistent with my present design to engage in this work.

These are some instances of the things in which the office-duty of pastors of the church consists. They are but *some* of them; and these only proposed, not pursued and pressed with the consideration of all those particular duties, with the manner of their performance, way of management, motives and enforcements, defects and causes of them. That would require a large discourse. These may suffice for our present purpose; and we may derive from them the ensuing brief considerations:

1. A due meditation and view of these things, as proposed in the Scripture, is enough to make the wisest, the best of men, and the most diligent in the discharge of the pastoral office, cry out with the apostle, “Who is sufficient for these things?” This will make them look well to their call and entrance into this office, as that alone which will bear them out and justify them in undertaking it. For no sense of insufficiency can utterly discourage anyone in undertaking a work which he is assured that the Lord Christ calls him to.

For where Christ calls us to a duty, he gives competent strength to perform it. And when we say, under a deep sense of our own weakness, “Who is sufficient for these things?” he says, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

2. Although all the things mentioned, plainly, evidently, and undeniably, belong to the discharge of the pastoral office, yet in point of fact, we find by the [lack of] success, that they are very little considered by most who seek after the office. And the present ruin of religion in all places, as to its power, beauty, and glory, arises principally from this cause: that multitudes of those who undertake this office are not in any measure fit for it, nor do they either conscientiously attend to, or diligently perform, the duties that belong to it. It ever was and ever will be true in general, “Like priest, like people.”

3. An account is to be given of this office and of its discharge at the last day to Jesus Christ. The consideration of this had a mighty influence on the apostles themselves and all the primitive pastors of the churches. It is frequently proposed to us, and many warnings are given to us in the Scripture. Yet it is apparent they are but few who take it into due consideration. In the great day of Christ’s visitation, he will proceed on such articles as those laid down here, and others that are expressed in the Scripture, and not at all on those which are now inquired upon in our episcopal visitations. And if they may be reminded of their true interest and concern while they possess the places they hold in the church, without offense, then I would advise them to conform their inquiries in their visitations to those which they must know the Lord Christ will make in the great day of his visitation, which approaches. I think this is only reasonable. In the meantime, for those who desire to give up their account with joy and confidence, and not with grief and confusion, it is their wisdom and duty to continually bear in mind what the Lord Christ requires of them in the discharge of their office. To take benefices,⁵⁷ to perform legal duties, by themselves or others, is not fully compliant with what pastors of churches are called to.

4. It is also obvious from this how inconsistent it is with this office, and the due discharge of it, for any one man to undertake the relation of a pastor to more churches than one, especially if they are distant from one another. This is an evil like that of *mathematical prognostications at Rome* – *always condemned and always retained*. But one view of the duties incumbent on

each pastor, whose diligent performance he is to give an account of at the last day, will discard this practice from all approval in the minds of those who are sober. However, it is as good to have ten churches at once, as to have but one, if the duty of a pastor towards it is never discharged.

5. All churches may do well to consider the weight and burden that lies upon their pastors and teachers in the discharge of their office, so that they may be constant in fervent prayers and supplications for them; as also to provide what lies in them to provide, so that these pastors and teachers may be without trouble and care about the things of this life.

6. [It may be objected,] “There are so many duties necessary to the discharge of this office, and of such varied sorts and kinds, as to require various gifts and abilities for their due performance. It seems very difficult to find them coinciding in any one person in any considerable degree, so that it is hard to conceive how the office itself should be duly discharged.” I answer,

(1.) The end both of the office and of its discharge is the due edification of the church; this, therefore, gives them their measure. Where that is attained, the office is duly discharged, though the gifts by which men are enabled for it are not eminent.

(2.) Where a man is called to this office, and applies himself sincerely to the due discharge of it, if he is evidently defective with respect to any special duty or duties of it, that defect is to be supplied by calling to his assistance in office any other who is qualified to make that supply for the edification of the church. The same must be said concerning those pastors who, through age or bodily weakness, are disabled from attending to any part of their duty; for the edification of the church is still what, in all these things, is first to be provided for.

7. It may be asked, what is the state of those churches, and what relation should we have with them with respect to communion? Their pastors are evidently defective in these things or neglectful, if they are not attended to in any competent measure. And we may, in particular, instance the first and last of the pastoral duties insisted on before. Suppose a man is in no way able to preach the word for the edification of those that are pleaded to be his flock? Or having an ability, yet he does not, or will not, give himself to the word and prayer? Or he will not labor in the word and doctrine to the great

prejudice of edification? And suppose the same person is openly defective as to having an exemplary conversation? Or to the contrary, he lays the stumbling-block of his own sins and follies before the eyes of others? What shall we judge about his ministry, and of the state of that church of which he is a constituent part as its ruler? I answer:

(1.) I do not believe it is in the power of any church to really confer the pastoral office, by virtue of any ordination whatever, to any who are openly and evidently destitute of all those previous qualifications which the Scripture requires in those who are called to this office. There is, indeed, latitude to be allowed in judging them in times of necessity and great penury of able teachers, so that persons in holy ministry intend the glory of God and the edification of the church according to their ability; but otherwise there is a nullity in the pretended office.

(2.) Where any such persons are admitted, through ignorance or mistake, or the usurpation of undue power over churches in imposing ministers on them, there is no absolute nullity in their administrations until they are discovered and convicted by the rule and law of Christ. But if, on evidence of it, the people voluntarily adhere to such men, then they are partakers of these men's sins, and they do what lies in them to unchurch themselves. [58](#)

(3.) Where such persons are by any means placed as pastors in or over any churches, and there is no way for their removal or reformation, then it is lawful, and it is the duty of everyone who takes care of his own edification and salvation, to withdraw from the communion of such churches. He should join with those churches in which edification is better provided for. Because this is the sole end of churches, of all their offices, officers, and administrations, it is the highest folly to imagine that any disciple of Christ can be or is obliged, by Christ's authority, to abide in the communion of such churches, without seeking relief in the ways of Christ's appointment, in which that end is utterly overthrown.

(4.) Where most churches in any kind of association are headed by pastors who are defective in these things, all public church-reformation is morally impossible. It is the duty of private men to take care of their own souls, let churches and churchmen say what they please.

Here are a few things which may still be inquired into with reference to the office of a pastor in the church:

1. *Whether a man may be ordained a pastor or a minister, without relation to any particular church, so as to be invested with official power?* It is usually said that a man may be ordained as a minister to the church catholic, or he may be ordained to convert infidels, even though he is not related to any particular flock or congregation. I will not at present discuss various things about the power and method of ordination which influence this controversy; I will only speak briefly to ordination itself,

(1.) It is granted that a man *endowed with spiritual gifts* for the preaching of the gospel may be set apart *by fasting and prayer* to that work, when he may be orderly called to it in the providence of God; for,

[1.] Such a man has a call to it materially in the gifts which he has received, which warrants him to exercise those gifts for the edification of others as he has occasion.⁵⁹ Setting him apart to an important work by prayer is a moral duty, and useful in church-affairs in a special way.⁶⁰

[2.] *A public testimony* to the approval of a person undertaking the work of preaching is necessary,

1st. To the *communion of churches*, so that he may be received in any of them on occasion; such were the letters of recommendation in the primitive church.⁶¹

2dly. For *the safety of those* among whom this man may exercise his gifts, so they are not imposed on by false teachers or seducers. Nor would the primitive church allow, nor is it allowable in the communion of churches, for any person to undertake to constantly preach the gospel if he is not testified to, sent, and warranted in this way.

(2.) Such persons who are *set apart and sent* in this way, may be regarded as ministers in the general notion of the word, and they may be useful in the calling and planting of churches, in which they may be instated in the pastoral office. This was originally the work of

evangelists; but the office being ceased in the church (as proved elsewhere), the work may be supplied by persons of this sort.

(3.) No church whatever has power to *ordain* men ministers *for the conversion of infidels*. Since the cessation of extraordinary officers and offices, the care of that work is devolved merely on the providence of God, being left outside the bounds of church-institutions. God alone can send and warrant men for undertaking that work; nor can any man know or be satisfied in a call to that work without some previous guidance of divine providence leading him to it. Indeed it is the duty of all the ordinary ministers of the church to diffuse the knowledge of Christ, and of the gospel, to the heathen and infidels among whom, or near to whom their habitation is thrown. They have all manner of divine warrant for doing so, as many worthy persons have done effectually in New England. It is the duty of every true Christian who may be thrown among them by the providence of God, to instruct them according to his ability in the knowledge of the truth. But it is not in the power of any church, or any sort of ordinary officers, to ordain a person to the office of the ministry for the conversion of the heathen, prior to any designation to it by divine providence.

(4.) No man can be properly or completely ordained to the ministry, unless he is ordained to a determinate office, such as a bishop, elder, or pastor. But no man can be this unless he is ordained in and to a particular church; this is because the contrary practice,

[1.] Would be contrary to the constant practice of the apostles, *who ordained no ordinary officers* except in and to particular churches, which were to be their proper charge and care.⁶² Nor is there mention of any ordinary officers in the whole Scripture except those who were fixed in the particular churches to which they were related;⁶³ nor was any such practice known or heard of in the primitive church. Indeed,

[2.] It was *absolutely forbidden in the ancient church*, and all such ordinations were declared null, so as not to communicate office-power or give any ministerial authority. So it is expressly in the first canon of the council of Chalcedon, which decreed, “That all imposition of hands in such cases is invalid and of no effect.” Indeed, there were so exact and careful in this matter that

if anyone, for any just cause, as he judged himself, left his particular church or charge, they would not allow him to bear the name or title of a bishop, or to officiate occasionally in that church, or anywhere else. This is evident in the case of Eustathius, a bishop of Pamphylia. This good man resigned his charge upon finding that discharging his office was very troublesome. This was because his secular businesses encumbered it, and much opposition and reproach had befallen him from the church itself. And so, of his own accord, he laid down his charge; the church chose Theodorus in his place. But afterward, although he had left his charge, he desired to retain the name, title, and honor of a bishop. To this end, he petitioned the council of Ephesus. In mere commiseration to the old man (as they expressed it), they condescended to his desire for the name and title – but *not* as to any office-power, which they judged is related absolutely to a particular charge.⁶⁴

[3.] Such ordination lacks an *essential constitutive cause*; and it lacks part of the collation of office-power, which is the election of the people; therefore it is invalid. See what has been proved before to that purpose.

[4.] Bishop, elder, and pastor are terms of relation; making someone such without having any relation to a church, people, or flock, is to make him a father who has no child, or a husband who has no wife, a *relate* without a *correlate*, which is impossible, and it implies a contradiction.

[5.] It is inconsistent with the whole *nature* and *end* of the pastoral office. Whoever is duly called, set apart, or ordained to that office, therein and thereby takes on himself the discharge of all the duties belonging to it, and he is obliged to attend diligently to them. If then, we consider what was proved before as belonging to this office, then we find that not the least part of this office, scarcely anything of it, can be undertaken and discharged by those who are ordained absolutely, without any relation to particular churches. It is irregular for anyone to commit an office to others, and not charge them at the same time with all the duties of that office, and with their immediate attendance to them; it is

also irregular for anyone to accept an office and office-power, not knowing when or where to exert the power or perform the duties of it. In particular, ruling is an essential part of the pastoral office, which they cannot attend to if they have no one to rule.

2. *May a pastor remove from one congregation to another?* This is something the ancient church also made great provision against; for when some churches were increased above others in members, reputation, privileges, and wealth, it became an ordinary practice for the bishops to design and endeavor to obtain their own removal from a lesser benefice to a greater benefice. This is so severely interdicted⁶⁵ in the councils of Nice and Chalcedon that they would not allow a man to be a bishop or presbyter in any other place except the church in which he was originally ordained. Therefore, if anyone removed themselves, it was decreed that they be sent home again, and abide there, or else cease to be church officers.⁶⁶ Pluralities, as they are called, and openly contending for ecclesiastical promotions, benefices, and dignities, were then either unknown, or openly condemned.

Yet it cannot be denied that there are just causes for removing a pastor from one congregation to another. Because the end of all particular churches is to promote the edification of the church catholic (in general), then in any special instance where such a removal is useful to that end, it is equal that it should be allowed. Cases of this nature may arise from the consideration of persons, places, times, and many other circumstances that I cannot insist on in particular. But so that such removals may be done without offense, it is required that they be,

(1.) With the free consent of the churches concerned;

(2.) With the advice of other churches, or their elders, with whom they walk in communion. And there are many examples in primitive times of the removal of bishops or pastors from one church to another in an orderly manner, by advice and counsel, for the good of the whole church. Such was the removal of Gregory Nazianzen from Casima to Constantinople; though I acknowledge it did not have good success.⁶⁷

3. *May a pastor voluntarily, or of his own accord, resign and lay down his office, and remain in a private capacity?*

This also was judged inconvenient, if not unlawful, by the first synod of Ephesus, in the case of Eustathius. He was, as it appears, an aged man, one that loved his own peace and quietness, and who could not well bear the oppositions and reproaches which he met with from the church, or from some in it. On that basis, solemnly, on his own judgment, and without advice, he laid down and renounced his office in the local church, which then chose a good man in his place. Yet the synod condemned this practice, and with weighty reasons, they confirmed their judgment.

Yet no general rule can be established in this case; nor was the judgment or practice of the primitive church precise in this. Clemens, in his epistle to the church of Corinth, expressly advised those who were the occasion for disturbances and divisions in the church, to lay down their office and withdraw from it. Gregory Nazianzen did the same thing at Constantinople. He protested openly that although he was innocent and free from blame (as he truly was, and one of the greatest men of his age), yet he would rather depart or be thrown out than not to have peace among them; he did so accordingly.⁶⁸ Afterward, a synod at Constantinople under Photius, concluded that in some cases self-removal is lawful (can. 5). Therefore,

(1.) It does not seem lawful to do so merely on account of *weakness for work* and labor, even though it is occasioned by age, sickness, or bodily distemper. For no man is obliged in any way to do more than he is able with the regular preservation of his life; and the church is obliged to be satisfied with the conscientious discharge of whatever abilities a pastor has, otherwise providing for itself in what is lacking.

(2.) It is not lawful merely because of a *weariness of and despondency under* opposition and reproaches; a pastor is called and obliged to undergo these for the good and the edification of the flock, and not to faint in the warfare to which he is called.

These were the two reasons given by Eustathius at Perga, and which were disallowed in the council at Ephesus. But,

(3.) It is lawful where there is *such an incurable decay of intellectual abilities* that a man can discharge no duty of the pastoral office for the edification of the church.

(4.) It is lawful in case of *insurable divisions* in the church, constantly obstructing its edification, and which cannot be removed while such a

person continues in his office, even though he is in no way the cause of them. This is the case in which Clemens gives advice, and of which Gregory gave an example in his own practice.

But this case and its determination will hold only where the divisions are incurable by any other ways and means. For if those who cause such divisions may be thrown out of the church, or if the church may withhold communion from them, or if there are divisions into fixed parties and principles, or opinions or practices, and they may separate into distinct communions – then in such cases, this remedy of the pastor laying down his office, is not to be used. Otherwise, all things are to be done for edification.

(5.) It may be lawful where the church is *wholly negligent in its duty*, and persists in that negligence, after admonition, in providing according to their abilities for the outward needs of their pastor and his family. But this case cannot be determined without the consideration of many particular circumstances.

(6.) Where all or many of these causes concur, so that a man cannot cheerfully and comfortably continue in the discharge of his office, there is no such grievous yoke laid by the Lord Christ on the necks of any of his servants, that such a person may not peaceably lay down his office in that church. This is especially so if he is pressed *in a point of conscience*, through the church's noncompliance with their duty in regard to any of the institutions of Christ. And if the edification of the church, which is at present obstructed, may be provided for in this manner, in their own judgment, then he may remove himself. He may either abide in a private station, or take the care of another church in which he may discharge his office (still being able) to his own comfort and their edification.

CHAPTER 6. OF TEACHERS

OR AN INQUIRY INTO THE STATE, CONDITION, AND WORK OF THOSE CALLED TEACHERS IN THE SCRIPTURE.

THE Lord Christ has given to his church “pastors and teachers,” Eph 4.11. He has “set in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers,” 1Cor 12.28. In the church at Antioch there were “prophets and teachers,” Act 13.1; and their work is both described and assigned to them, as we will see afterward.

But the thoughts of learned men about those who in the Scripture are called *teachers* are various; nor is the determination of their state and condition easy or obvious, as we will find in our inquiry.

If there were originally a distinct *office* of teachers in the church, it was lost for many ages. Yet there was always a shadow or appearance of it retained first in public catechists, and then in doctors or professors of theology in the schools that belonged to any church. But as for the title of *doctor* or *teacher*, this is but a late invention. For the occasion of it rose about the year 1135. Lotharius the emperor, having found in Italy a copy of the Roman civil law, and being greatly taken with it, he ordained that it should be publicly read and expounded in the schools. This he began by the direction of Imerius, his chancellor at Bononia. And to give encouragement to this employment, they ordained that those who were the public professors of it would be solemnly created *doctors*, of whom Bulgarus Hugolinus, with others, were the first. Not long after, this rite of creating doctors was borrowed from the lawyers, by divines who publicly taught divinity in their schools. And this imitation first took place in Bononia, Paris, and Oxford. But this name has since grown into a title of honor for various sorts of persons, whether to any good use or purpose or not, I don't know. But it is in use and not worth contending about — especially if, as to some of them, it is fairly reconcilable with that saying of our Savior in Mat 23.8. ⁶⁹

But the custom of having teachers in the church who publicly explained and vindicated the principles of religion, is far more ancient and of known usage in the primitive churches. Such was the practice of the church of Alexandria in their school, in which the famous Pantaenus,⁷⁰ Origen, and Clemens,

were *teachers*. An imitation of this has been continued in all ages of the church.

And indeed, the continuation of such a peculiar work and employment, to be discharged in the manner of an office, is evidence that originally there was such a distinct office in the church. For although in the Roman church they instituted a mixture of orders of sacred officers, borrowed from the Jews or Gentiles (which have no resemblance to anything mentioned in the Scripture), yet various things that were abused and corrupted by them in church-officers, took their occasional rise from what is so mentioned.

There are four opinions concerning those who are called by this name in the New Testament: —

1. Some say that no office at all is denoted by it. It is only a general appellation of those who taught others, whether constantly or occasionally. Such were the prophets in the church of Corinth who spoke occasionally and in their turns (1Cor 14). It is that which all might do who had the ability for it, verses 5, 24, 25.⁷¹

2. Some say it is only another name for the same office as pastor, and so it is not [intended] to denote any distinct office. Jerome seems to be of this mind, Ephesians 4.

3. Others allow that it was a distinct office, to which some were called and set apart in the church. It was only to teach (in a particular manner) the principles of religion, but had no interest in the rule of the church or the administration of the sacred mysteries. So the pastor in the church was to rule, and teach, and administer the sacred mysteries; the teacher to teach or instruct only, but not to rule or dispense the sacraments; and the ruling elder to rule only, and neither to teach nor administer sacraments — which has the appearance of order, both useful and beautiful.

4. Some judge that it was a *distinct office*, but of the same nature and kind as that of the pastor, endowed with all the same powers, but differenced from it with respect to gifts and a peculiar kind of work allotted to it. But this opinion has this seeming disadvantage: that the difference between them is so small as not to warrant a distinct denomination of *officer* or to constitute a distinct *office*. And it may be that such a distinction in gifts will seldom appear; so that the church may be guided by it in the choice of fit

persons for distinct offices. But Scripture testimony and rule must take place, and I will briefly examine all these opinions.

The FIRST opinion is that this is *not the name of any officer; nor is a teacher as such, any officer in the church*. But it is used only as a general name for any who teach the doctrine of the gospel, on any account. Indeed, I don't know of any who have contended in particular for this opinion, but I observe that many expositors take no further notice of them than as such. This opinion seems to me to be most remote from the truth. It is true that in the first churches, not only *some*, but *all* who had received spiritual light in the gifts of knowledge and utterance, taught and instructed others as they had opportunity, 1Pet 4.10-11.⁷² Hence the heathen philosophers, such as Celsus in particular, objected to the Christians of old, that they allowed grocers, and weavers, and cobblers, to teach among them. But those who knew that Paul himself, their great apostle, worked at a trade not much better, were not offended at this. The disciples were mentioned as this sort in Act 8.4; so was Aquila, Act 18.26; and the many prophets in the church of Corinth, 1Cor 14.29.⁷³ But —

1. The name *didaskalos* (*didaskalos*); is not used in the New Testament except for a teacher with *authority*. The apostle John tells us that *didaskalos* is the same as *razzouni*,⁷⁴ or as it is written in Mar 10.51,⁷⁵ *razzoni*,⁷⁶ which in their mixed dialect was the same as *rabbi*. And *br' yBir'*, and *aB;r'* were then in use for the Hebrew *arah* (*yarah*), which we find in Job 36.22 and Isa 30.20. Now, the constant signification of these words is “a master in teaching,” a “teacher with authority;” nor is *didaskalos* (*didaskalos*) used in the New Testament except for such a one. And therefore, those who are called *teachers* were those who were set apart for the *office* of teaching, and not those who were so-called from an *occasional* work or duty.

2. Teachers are numbered among the officers Christ has given to and set in the church, Eph 4.11; 1Cor 12.8.⁷⁷ So that it is beyond contradiction that originally, church-*officers* were intended by the term *teachers*.

3. They are mentioned as those who, with others, presided in the church, and joined in the public ministrations of it, Act 13.1-2.⁷⁸

4. They are charged to attend to the work of teaching, which none can do except those whose *office* is to teach, Rom 12.7.⁷⁹ It is therefore undeniable

that there *is* such an office as that of a *teacher* mentioned in the Scripture.

The SECOND opinion is that, *although a teacher is a church-officer, yet no distinct office is intended in that denomination.* They say it is only another name for a *pastor*, the office being one and the same — the same persons being both pastors and teachers, or called by these several names, as they also have other titles ascribed to them.

So it has fallen out, and so it is usual in things of this nature, that men run into extremes — truth does not please them. In the first deviation of the church from its primitive institution, various offices were introduced to the church, that were not of divine institution. They were borrowed partly from the Jews and partly from the Gentiles; which issued in the *seven orders* of the church of Rome. They did not utterly reject any that were of a divine origin, but retained only some kind of figure, shadow, or image of them. Then they brought in others that were merely of their own invention. In the rejection of this exorbitance, some are apt to run into the other extreme: they will deny and reject some of them that have a divine warranty for their origin, even though they are not many nor burdensome. Indeed, they are all such that, without their continuation, the edification of the church cannot be carried on in a due manner. For the beauty and order of the church in its rule and worship, it is required not only that there be *many* officers in each church, but also that they be of various *sorts* — all harmony in natural, political, and ecclesiastical things arising from variety with proportion. And whoever considers with calmness and without prejudice, the whole work that is to be done in churches, with the purpose of their institution, he will be able to understand the necessity of pastors, teachers, ruling elders, and deacons, for those ends and no other.

And thus I hope I will demonstrate in the consideration of these respective offices, *the duties that belong to them.* Therefore, as to the opinion under present consideration, I say —

1. In the primitive church, about the end of the 2nd century — before there was the least attempt to introduce new officers into the church — there were persons called to the office and work of *public teaching*, who were not pastors, nor called to the administration of other ordinances. Those of this sort in the church of Alexandria, because of their extraordinary abilities, quickly gained great fame and renown. Their constant work was to publicly explain and teach the principles of Christian religion to all comers, both

believers and unbelievers, defending and vindicating it from the opposition of its heathen adversaries, whether atheists or philosophers.⁸⁰ This would never have been so precisely practiced in the church if it had not derived from divine institution. And of this sort is “the catechist,” οJ kathcw~n (*o katechoon*), intended by the apostle in Gal 6.6.⁸¹ For it is one who constantly labors in the work of preaching, and who has those who depend on his ministry — those who are taught or *catechised* by him, οiJ kathcou>menoi (*katechoumenoi*). For it is from this alone that maintenance (*remuneration*) is due to him for his work: “Let the catechised communicate to the catechist,” the taught to the teacher, “in all good things.” And it is not the *pastor* of the church that he intends; for he speaks of him in the same case in another manner, and nowhere is it with respect to teaching alone.

2. There is a plain distinction between the *offices* of a pastor and a teacher: Eph 4.11, “Some pastors **and** teachers.” This is one of the instances in which men test their wits in putting in exceptions to plain Scripture testimonies, as some do in all other cases. If this is allowed, we will have nothing certain left to us in the whole book of God. The apostle enumerates distinctly all the teaching officers of the church, both extraordinary and ordinary. “It is granted that there is a difference between apostles, prophets, and evangelists; but there is none,” say some, “between pastors and teachers,” which are also named distinctly. Why so? “Because there is an interposition of the article tou>v (*tous*) between those of the former sort, and not between ‘pastors and teachers.’” This is a very weak consideration to control the evidence of the design of the apostle in the words. We are not to prescribe to him how he expresses himself. But this I know, that the discrete and copulative conjunction kai> (*kai*) “and,” between “pastors” and “teachers,” no less distinguishes one from the other, than the tou<v (*tous*) and tou<v de> (*tous de*) made use of before that.⁸² And this I will confirm from the words themselves: —

(1.) The apostle does not say “pastors *or* teachers,” which in congruity of speech should have been done if the same persons and the same office were intended; and the discrete particle at the close of such an enumeration of things, as distinct as that used in this place, is of the same force as the other notes of distinction used before it.

(2.) After he has named *pastors* he names *teachers*, with a note of distinction. This must either contain the addition of a new office, or be

an interpretation of what went before, as if he had said, “Pastors, *that is*, teachers.” If it is the latter, then the term *teachers* must be added as that which was better known than that of *pastors*, and more expressive of the office intended (it is declared who are meant by pastors in calling them teachers). Otherwise the addition of the word is merely superfluous. But this is quite otherwise, the term *pastor* being more known as to the indication of office power and care, and more appropriated to *this* office than that of *teacher*, which is both a common name (not absolutely appropriated to an office), and also respective of only one part of the pastoral office and duty.

(3.) No instance can be given in any place, where there is an *enumeration of church-officers*, either by their names (as in 1Cor 12.28), or by their work (as in Rom 12.6-8), or by the offices themselves (as in Phi 1.1), of the same officer, at the same time, being expressed under various names. Doing so must indeed introduce confusion into such an enumeration. It is true, the same officers are called in the Scriptures by several names — such as pastors, bishops, presbyters. But if it had been said *anywhere* that in the church there were bishops *and* presbyters, then it must be acknowledged that they were distinct *officers*, such as bishops and deacons are (Phi 1.1).

(4.) The words in their first notion are *not synonymous*; for all pastors are teachers, but not all teachers are pastors: and therefore the latter cannot be exegetical of the former.

3. As these teachers are so called and named in contra-distinction to pastors in the same place, so they have *distinct office-works* and *duties* assigned to them in the same place also. Rom 12.7-8: “He who teaches, use it on teaching; he who exhorts, use it on exhortation.” If they have especial works to distinctly attend to by virtue of their offices, then their offices are distinct also; for from one there is an especial obligation to one sort of duties, and another sort from the other office.

4. These teachers are set in the church as a *distinct office* from that of prophets: “secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers,” 1Cor 12.28. And so they are mentioned distinctly in the church of Antioch. Act 13.1: “There were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers.” But in both places, pastors are comprised under the name *prophets*, exhortation being a special branch of prophesy (Rom 12.6-8).

5. There is a peculiar *institution of maintenance* (remuneration) for these teachers, which argues for a distinct office, Gal 6.6.

From all these considerations, it appears that the teachers mentioned in the Scripture, were officers in the church *distinct* from pastors: for they are distinguished from them —

- (1.) By their *name*, declarative of the special nature of their office;
- (2.) By their *peculiar work* which they are to attend to, in teaching by virtue of office;
- (3.) By their *distinct placing* in the church as peculiar officers in it, distinct from prophets or pastors;
- (4.) By the *special constitution* of their necessary maintenance;
- (5.) By the *necessity of their work*, to be distinctly carried on in the church.

This may suffice for the removal of the second opinion.

The THIRD is, that teachers *are a distinct office* in the church, but their office, work, and power, are confined to *teaching only* — such that they have no interest in rule or the administration of the sacraments. And —

1. I acknowledge that this seems to have been the way and practice of the churches after the apostles. For they ordinarily had catechists and teachers in assemblies, like *schools*, who were not called to the whole work of the ministry.

2. The name *teacher* — in its native signification, or in its ordinary application as expressing the work of this office — does not extend itself beyond or signify anything but the mere power and duty of teaching. It is otherwise as to the names *pastor*, *bishop* (or overseer), and *elder*. As to the two former, their constant use in the Scripture, suited to their signification, includes the whole work of the ministry; and the latter (elder) is a name of dignity and *rule*. Upon proposing to have church *officers* under these names, the whole of *office power and duty* is apprehended as included in them. But the name *teacher*, especially considering the signification of *rabbi* among the Jews, carries with it a confinement to an especial work or duty.

3. I judge it lawful for any church, from the nature of the thing itself, from Scripture, and from general rules and directions, to choose, call, and set apart, fit persons to the office, work, and duty of teachers, without any interest in the *rule* of the church, or the *administration* of the holy ordinances of worship. The same thing is practiced by many as to the substance of it (though not in due order); and it may be that the practice of it, duly observed, would lead us back to the original institution of this office. But —

4. Whereas a teacher, merely as such, has no right to rule or to administer ordinances — no more than the doctors among the Jews had a right to offer sacrifices in the temple. Yet the one who is called to be a *teacher* may also be called to be an *elder* at the same time; and as such, a teaching-elder has the power of all holy administrations committed to him.

5. But someone who is called to be a teacher in a peculiar manner, even though he is an elder also, is to attend peculiarly to that part of his work from which he receives his denomination.

So at present I defer this third opinion for further consideration, if there is any occasion for it.

The FOURTH opinion I embrace (rather than any of the others) is namely on the supposition that a teacher is a *distinct officer* in the church. And his office is *of the same kind* as that of the pastor, though distinguished from it as to degrees, both materially and formally; for —

1. They are joined with pastors in the same order as their associates in office, Eph 4.11. So they are joined with prophets, and set in the church as they are, 1Cor 12.28; Acts 13.1. [83](#)

2. They have a peculiar work assigned to them, which is of the same general nature as that of pastors (Rom 12:7). And because teaching or preaching the gospel is by virtue of an office, they have the same office as the pastors (as to its substance).

3. They are said to minister in the church, leitourgh~sai (*leitourgesai*), Act 13.1-2, [84](#) which comprises all sacred administrations. This is why, upon the consideration of all that is said in the Scripture concerning church-teachers, with the various conjectures of all sorts of writers about them, I will

conclude my own thoughts in a few observations. And then I will inquire into the state of the church with reference to these “pastors and teachers.”

And I say —

1. There *may be teachers* in a church called only to the work of teaching, without any further interest in rule or right to the administration of the sacraments. They seem to be those mentioned in Gal 6.6, where they are particularly called *kathcou~ntev* “catechists;” and *paidagwoi*,[>] (*pedagogy*) “instructors of those who are young” in the rudiments of religion, 1Cor 4.15.⁸⁵ And there were such in the primitive churches; some of them were eminent, famous, and useful. And this was very necessary in those days when the churches were great and numerous. For the whole rule of the church, and the administration of all ordinances in it, are originally committed to the *pastor*, as belonging entirely to his office. The discharge of that office in all its parts, for the edification of the church — especially when a church is numerous — is impossible for any one man; and it may be impossible for more in the same office, where all are obliged to specially attend to one part of it, namely, *the word and prayer*. And so it pleased the Lord Christ to appoint those who, in distinct offices, would be associated with them for the discharge of various parts of their duty. So *deacons* were ordained to take care of the poor and the outward concerns of the church, without any interest in rule or the right to teach. So elders were (as we will prove) ordained to assist and help in *rule*, without any call to preach,⁸⁶ or administer the sacraments. And so teachers were appointed to instruct the church and others in the truth, who had no right to rule or to the administration of other ordinances. And thus, although the whole duty of the edification of the church is still incumbent on the *pastors*, yet being supplied with assistance to all the parts of it, it may be comfortably discharged by them. And if this order were observed in all churches, not only would many inconveniencies be prevented, but the order and edification of the church would be greatly promoted.

2. Someone who is *peculiarly called to be a teacher*, with reference to a distinction from a pastor, may yet at the same time be called to *be an elder also*; that is, to be a *teaching elder*. And where there is in any officer, a concurrence of both these — *i.e.*, a right to rule as an elder, and the power to teach or preach the gospel — there is the same *office*, and same *office-power* (for the substance of it) as there is in the pastor.

3. On the foregoing supposition, there yet remains *a distinction between the office of a pastor and that of a teacher* — which, as far as light may be taken from their names and distinct ascriptions to them, consists materially in the different *gifts* which those who are called to the office have received, which the church in their call ought to regard. And it consists formally in the peculiar exercise of those gifts in the discharge of their office, according to the assignation of their special work to them, which they themselves are to attend to.

Based on what has been said before concerning the office of pastors and teachers, it may be inquired whether there may be many of them in a particular church, or whether there should only be of one of each sort? And I say —

1. Take teachers in the *third sense* — those who are *only* teachers and have no further interest in office-power — and there is no doubt that there may be and ought to be as many of them in any church as are necessary for its edification. And a due observation of this institution would prevent the inconvenience of men's preaching constantly who are in *no office* of the church. For I grant that those who have once been regularly and solemnly set apart or ordained to the ministry, have the right of constant preaching *inherent* in them, and the duty of it *incumbent* on them, though they may be separated from those churches in which, and to whom, they were particularly ordained. Yet for men to give themselves up constantly to the work of teaching by preaching the gospel, who were never set apart to it by the church, I don't know that it can be justified.⁸⁷

2. If there is but one *sort* of elder mentioned in the Scripture, it is beyond all question that there may be many *pastors* in the same church. For there were many elders in every church, Act 14.23, 20.17, 28; Phi 1.1; Tit 1.5. But if there are various sorts of elders mentioned in the Scripture — such as pastors who particularly feed the flock, those *teaching elders* of whom we have spoken, and those *rulers* concerning whom we will treat in the next place — then no determination of this inquiry can be taken merely from the multiplicity of them in any church.

3. It is certain that the order very early observed in the church was to have *one* pastor, “*the president*,” οJ proestw>v (ο *proestoos*)⁸⁸ — quickly called “*episcopus*,” by way of distinction — with *many elders* assisting in rule and teaching, and *deacons* ministering in the things of this life, by which the

order of the church was preserved, and its authority represented. Yet I will not deny that in each particular church there may be many pastors with an equality of power, if the edification of the church requires it.

4. It was the alteration of the state of the church from its primitive constitution, and the deviation from its first order by an occasional coalescence of many churches into one, by a new form of churches never appointed by Christ (which didn't come in until after the end of the 2nd century) that gave occasion to corrupt this order into episcopal *preeminence*; and this degenerated more and more into confusion under the name of *order*.⁸⁹ And the absolute equality of many pastors in one and the same church is also liable to many inconveniences, if not diligently watched against.

5. Therefore, let the state of the church be preserved and kept to its original constitution, which is *congregational*, and no other. And I judge that the order of the officers which existed so early in the primitive church — namely, of one pastor or bishop in one church, assisted in rule and all holy administrations, with many elders teaching or ruling only — does not so overthrow church order as to render its rule or discipline useless.

6. In the Scripture, there is no difference intimated between bishops and presbyters as to office or power, as we have proved. When there are many teaching elders in any church, an equality in office and power is to be preserved. Yet this does not diminish the due preference of the pastoral office, nor the necessity of precedence for the observation of order in all church assemblies, nor the consideration of the peculiar advantages that the gifts, age, abilities, prudence, and experience which may belong to some, *according to rule*, may give.

CHAPTER 7. OF RULING ELDERS.

1. THE rule and government of the church, or *the execution of the authority of Christ* in it, is in the hand of the elders in office. They have rule, and none have rule in the church but elders. As such, rule belongs to them. The apostles, by virtue of their especial office, were entrusted with all church-power; but therefore *they* were elders also, 1Pet 5:1; 2John 1; 3Joh 1 (see Act 21:18; 1Tim 5:17). Some of them, on other accounts, are called “bishops, pastors, teachers, ministers, guides;” but what belongs to any of them in point of rule, or what interest they have in it, belongs to them as elders, and not otherwise, Act 20:17, 28.

So under the Old Testament, where the word does not signify a difference in age, but is used in a *moral* sense, elders are the same as rulers or governors, whether in civil or ecclesiastical offices; especially, the rulers of the church were constantly called its *elders*. And the use of the word, with the abuse of the power or office intended by it, is traduced to signify men in authority (“seniores, aldermanni”) in all places.

2. Church-power, acted in its rule, is called “The keys of the kingdom of heaven,” by an expression derived from the keys that were a sign of office-power in the families of kings, Isa 22:22; and it is used by our Savior himself to denote the communication of church-power to others, which is absolutely and universally vested in Himself under the name of “The Key of David,” Rev 3:7; Mat 16:19.

3. These keys are usually referred to two headings — namely, one of *order*, and the other of *jurisdiction*.

4. The “key of order” intends the *spiritual right, power, and authority of bishops* or pastors to preach the word, to administer the sacraments, and doctrinally to bind and loose the consciences of men.

5. “Jurisdiction” designs *the rule, government, or discipline of the church*; though it was never so called or esteemed in the Scripture or in the primitive church, until the whole nature of church rule or discipline was depraved and changed. Therefore, neither the word “jurisdiction,” nor anything signified by it, nor applied to it, ought to be admitted to any consideration in the things that belong to the church or its rule. For “jurisdiction” expresses and directs us to that corrupt administration of ecclesiastical things, according to the *canon law*, by which all church rule

and order is destroyed. I therefore at once dismiss all disputes about it, as things that are foreign to the gospel and to Christian religion — I mean as to the institutions of Christ in his church. The civil jurisdiction of supreme magistrates, about the externals of religion, is another consideration. But it is freely granted that these keys include the twofold distinct powers of teaching and rule, of doctrine and discipline.

6. In the church of England (as in that of Rome) there is a peculiar distribution made of these keys. (1) To some — that is, to one special sort or order of men — they are *both* granted, *both the key of order and of jurisdiction*; these are diocesan bishops with some others, under various canonical restrictions and limitations, such as deans and archdeacons. (2) To some is granted *the key of order only*, without the least interest in jurisdiction or rule by virtue of their office; these are the parochial ministers, or mere presbyters, without any additional title or power, such as commissary surrogates or the like. And (3) to a third sort there is granted *the key of rule or jurisdiction almost plenipotent*, who have no share in the *key of order* — that is, they were never ordained, separated, or dedicated to any office in the church; such are the chancellors, etc.

7. These chancellors are the *only lay elders* that I know anywhere in any church — that is, persons entrusted with the rule of the church and the disposition of its censures — who are not ordained to any church-office, but in all other things continue in the order of the laity or the people. All church-rulers by institution are elders; to be an elder of the church and a ruler in it is all one thing. Therefore, these persons being rulers in the church, and yet thus continuing in the order of the people, are lay elders. I wonder how so many of the church came so seriously to oppose them, seeing that this order of men is owned by none but themselves. The truth is, and it must be acknowledged, that there is no known church in the world (I mean, whose order is known to us, and is of any public consideration) which does not dispose the rule of the church, in part, into the hands of persons who do not have the power of authoritative preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments committed to them. For even those who place the whole external rule of the church in the *civil magistrate*, do it as they judge him to be an officer of the church, entrusted by Christ with church-power. And those who deny that any such officers — usually called “ruling elders” in the reformed churches — are of divine institution, still

maintain that it is very necessary that there be such officers in the church, either appointed by the magistrate, or chosen by the people; and that is done with cogent arguments. See *Imp. Sum. Pot. circ. sacra*.

8. But this mentioned distribution of church-power is *unscriptural*; nor are there any footsteps of it in *antiquity*. It is so as to the two latter branches of it. That anyone should have the *power of order* to preach the word, to administer the seals, to bind and loose the conscience doctrinally, or to ministerially bind and loose in the court of conscience — and yet by the virtue of that same office which gives him this power, *not* to have a right and power of rule or discipline, nor to bind and loose in the court of the church — is that which neither the Scripture nor any example of the primitive church gives countenance to. And because by this means those persons are abridged and deprived of the power granted to them by the institution and law of Christ (as it is with *all* elders duly called to their office), so in the third branch (see 6 above) there is a grant of church-power to those who, by the law of Christ, are excluded from any interest in it. The enormity of this constitution I will not at present insist upon.

But inquiry must be made as to what the Scripture directs us to in this. And —

1. There is *a work and duty of rule in the church*, distinct from *the work and duty of pastoral feeding* by the preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments. All agree in this, unless it is Erastus and those who follow him, who seem to oppose it. But their arguments do not lie against *rule* in general, which would be brutish, but only a rule by *external jurisdiction* in the elders of the church. So they grant the general assertion of the *necessity* of rule, for who can deny it? But they contend about the subject of power required for it. Few of that opinion deny a spiritual rule by virtue of mutual voluntary confederation for the preservation of peace, purity, and order in the church; at least that is not what they oppose. For to deny all rule and discipline in the church, with all administration of censures in the exercise of a spiritual power internally inherent in the church, is to deny that the church is a spiritual political society, to overthrow its nature, and to frustrate its institution, in direct opposition to the Scripture. That there is such a rule in the Christian church, see Act 20:28; Rom 12:8; 1Cor 12:28; 1Tim 3:5, 5:17; Heb 13:7, 17; Rev 2:3.

2. *Different and distinct gifts* are required for the discharge of these distinct works and duties. This belongs to the harmony of the dispensation of the gospel. Gifts are bestowed corresponding to all prescribed duties. Hence, they are the first foundation of all power, work, and duty in the church: “To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ;” Eph 4:7 — that is, an ability for duty according to the measure in which Christ is pleased to grant it. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; ... but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with,” 1Cor 12:4, 7-10. “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,” etc., Rom 12:6-8.

“As every man has received the gift, so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,” 1Pet 4:10.

Hence they are called “The powers of the world to come,” Heb 6:4, 5. This is why differing *gifts* are the first foundation of differing *offices and duties*.

3. That *differing gifts* are required for the different works of *pastoral teaching* on the one hand, and *practical rule* on the other, is evident —

(1.) From *the light of reason*, and the nature of the works themselves being so different; and,

(2.) From *experience*. Some men are fitted by gifts for the dispensation of the word and doctrine in a way of *pastoral feeding*, who have no useful ability for the work of *rule*; and some are fitted for *rule* who have no gifts for the discharge of the *pastoral work in preaching*. Indeed, it is very seldom that both these sorts of gifts concur in any eminence in the same person, or without some notable defect. Those who are ready to assume all things to themselves are, for the most part, fit for nothing at all. And hence it is that most of those who esteem *both* these works to belong principally to themselves, almost totally decline the one (that of pastoral preaching), under a pretense of attending to the other (that is, rule), in a very preposterous way. For they omit what is incomparably the greater and more worthy, for that which is less and inferior to it, even if it were attended to in a due manner.

But this, and various other things of like nature, proceed from the corruption of that traditional notion which is true in itself and continued among all sorts of Christians — namely, that there ought to be some on

whom the rule of the church is incumbent in a special manner, and whose principal work is to attend to it. For the great depravations of all church-government proceed from the corruption and abuse of this notion, which in itself and in its origin, is true and sacred. In this also, “*Malum habitat in alieno fundo*” — there is no corruption in church order or rule that is not corruptly derived from or set up as an image of some divine institution.

4. The work of rule, as distinct from teaching, is in general to *watch over the walking or conversation of the members of the church with authority* — exhorting, comforting, admonishing reproofing, encouraging, directing of them, as occasion requires. The gifts necessary for this are diligence, wisdom, courage, and gravity; as we will see afterward. The pastoral work is principally to “declare the whole counsel of God,” to “divide the word aright,” or to “labor in the word and doctrine,” both as to the general *dispensation* and the particular *application* of it, in all seasons and on all occasions. For this, spiritual wisdom, knowledge, sound judgment, experience, and utterance are required — all of which are to be improved by continual study of the word and prayer. But this difference of *gifts*, for these distinct *works*, does not of itself constitute distinct *offices*, because the same persons may be fitly furnished with gifts of both sorts.

5. Yet, in the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, *distinct works and duties* (though some men were furnished with gifts for both) were a ground for *distinct offices* in the church. One sort of works was as much as those of one office could ordinarily attend to, Act 6:2-4. Ministration to the poor of the church for the supply of their temporal necessities is an ordinance of Christ. For the administration of it, the apostles were furnished with gifts and wisdom above all others. Yet, because there was another part of their work and duty that was superior to it, and of greater necessity for the propagation of the gospel and the edification of the church — namely, a diligent attendance to the word and prayer — the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in them thought it fitting to erect a *new office* in the church for the discharge of that part of the ministerial duty. It was to be attended to, yet not so as to be any obstruction to the other. I do not observe this as if it were legally required for any others after them to do the same — namely, upon a supposition that a special work erects a special office. I would only demonstrate from this, the equity and reasonable ground of that institution, which we will afterward evince.

6. *The work of the ministry in prayer and preaching of the word*, or labor in the word and doctrine, to which the administration of the seals of the covenant is annexed, with all the duties that belong to the especial application of these things (insisted on before) to the flock, are ordinarily sufficient *to take up the whole man*, and the utmost of their endowments who are called to the pastoral office in the church. The very nature of the work in itself is such as that the apostle, giving a short description of it, adds as an intimation of its greatness and excellency, “Who is sufficient for these things?” 2Cor 2:16. And the manner of its performance adds to its weight; for — not to mention that intension of mind in the exercise of faith, love, zeal, and compassion, which is required of them in the discharge of their whole office — the diligent consideration of the state of the flock, so as to provide spiritual food convenient for them, with a constant attendance to the issues and effects of the word in the consciences and lives of men, is enough for the most part, to take up their whole time and strength.

It is gross ignorance or negligence that occasions anyone to think otherwise. As the work of the ministry is generally discharged (consisting only in a weekly provision of sermons and the performance of some stated offices by reading), men may have time and liberty enough to attend to other occasions. But we are not at present concerned with such persons. Our rule is plain, 1Tim 4:12-16.⁹⁰

7. It does not follow from this, that those who are called to the ministry of the word as pastors and teachers, who are also elders, are *divested of the right of rule in the church*, or discharged from its exercise, because others who are not called to their office are appointed to be their assistants — that is, *helps in the government*. For the right and duty of rule is inseparable from the office of *elders*, which all bishops or pastors are. The right is still in them; and consistent with their more excellent work, its exercise is required of them. So it was in the first institution of the Sanhedrin in the church of Israel, Exo 18:17-23. Moses previously had the sole rule and government of the people. In the addition of an eldership for his assistance, there was no diminution of his right nor its exercise according to his precedent power. And the apostles, in the constitution of elders in every church, derogated nothing from their own authority, nor discharged themselves of their care. So when they appointed deacons to take care of supplies for the poor, they did not forego their own right nor the exercise of

their duty, as their other work would permit them, Gal 2:9-10. And in particular, the apostle Paul manifested his concern in this, in the care he took about a collection for the poor in all churches.

8. As we observed at the entrance of this chapter, *the whole work of the church*, as to authoritative teaching and rule, is committed to the elders. For authoritative teaching and ruling is teaching and ruling by virtue of the *office*; and this office to which they belong is that of *elders*, as it is undeniably attested in Act 20:17, etc. All that belongs to the care, inspection, oversight, rule, and instruction of the church, is expressly committed to its elders; for “elders” is a name derived from the Jews, denoting those who have authority in the church. The first signification of the word in all languages, respects *age*. Elders are old men, well-stricken in years; to whom respect and reverence are due by the law of nature and Scripture command, unless they forfeit their privilege by levity or wickedness — which they often do. Now, aged men were originally judged to be, if not the only, yet the fittest for rule; and they were constantly called to it before others. Hence the name of “elders” was appropriated to those who presided and ruled over others in any kind. Only, it may be observed that in the Scripture there is no mention of rulers who are called elders, except those who are in a subordinate power and authority. Those who were in supreme, absolute power, such as kings and princes, are never called “elders;” but elders *by office* were only those who had ministerial power under others. This is why the highest officers in the Christian church being called *elders*, even the apostles themselves, and Peter in particular (1Pet 5:1-2), it is evident that they have only a *ministerial* power; and so it is declared, verse 4.⁹¹ The pope would now scarcely take it well to be esteemed only an elder of the church of Rome, unless it is in the same sense in which the Turkish monarch is called the *Grand Seignior*. But those who could be in the church *above* elders, have no office in it, whatever usurpation they may make over it.

9. To the complete constitution of any particular church, or the protection of its organic state, it is required that there be *many elders* in it, at least more than one. In this proposition is the next foundation of the truth which we plead for, and therefore it must be distinctly considered. I do not determine what their number ought to be, nor is it determinable as to all churches. For the light of nature sufficiently directs that it is to be proportioned to the

work and end desired. Where a church is numerous, there is a need to increase their number proportionately to their work. In the days of Cyprian there were ten or twelve of them in the church of Carthage, who are mentioned by name; and at the same time there were a great many in the church of Rome, under Cornelius. Where the churches are small, the number of elders may also be small; for no office is appointed in the church for pomp or show, but for labor only. And as many are necessary in each office, as are able to discharge the work which is allotted to them. But that church, be it small or great, is not complete in its state, it is *defective*, which does not have more elders than one, and which does not have as many as are sufficient for their work.

10. The government of the church, in the judgment and practice of some, is absolutely *democratic or popular*. They judge that all church power or authority is seated and settled in the community of the brethren, or the body of the people. They look at elders or ministers only as secants of the church.⁹² This is not only *materially* in the duties they perform, and finally for their edification — serving for the good of the church in the things of the church — but *formally* also, such as acting out the authority of the church by a mere delegation, and not by any authority of their own as received directly from Christ by virtue of His law and institution. Hence, they occasionally appoint persons among themselves who are not called to nor vested with any office, to administer the supper of the Lord, or any other solemn office of worship. On this principle and supposition, I see no necessity for any elders at all, though usually they confer this office on some with solemnity. But because among them there is no direct necessity of any elders for the role, we will not address them at present.

11. Some place the government of many particular churches in a *diocesan bishop*, with those who act under him and by his authority, according to the rule of the canon law and the civil constitution of the land. These are so far from judging it necessary that there be many elders for rule in every particular church, that they allow no rule in them at all, but only assert a rule *over* them. But a church where there is no rule in itself, to be exercised in the name of Christ by its own rulers, officers, and guides who immediately preside in it, is unknown to Scripture and antiquity. This is why we do not deal with these in this discourse, nor do we have any apprehension that the power of presenting men to the bishop's or

chancellor's court, for any pretended disorder, is any part of church power or rule.

12. Others place the rule of particular churches, especially in cases of greatest moment, in an *association, conjunction, or combination of all the elders* of them in one society, commonly called a *classis*. So in all acts of rule there will be a conjunct acting of many elders. And no doubt it is the best provision that can be made on a supposition of the continuance of the present parochial distribution. But those of this judgment who have most weighed and considered the nature of these things, also assert the necessity of many elders in every particular church — which is the common judgment and practice of the reformed churches in all places.

13. And there are some who begin to maintain that there is no need for any more than one *pastor, bishop, or elder* in a particular church, which has its rule in itself — other elders for *rule* being unnecessary. This is a novel opinion, contradictory to the sense and practice of the church in all ages;

(1.) The pattern of the first churches constituted by the apostles, which it is our duty to imitate and follow as our rule, constantly expresses and declares that *many elders* were appointed by them in every church, Act 11:30, 14:23, 15:2, 4, 6, 22; 16:4; 20:17, etc.; 1Tim 5:17; Phi 1:1; Titus 1:5; 1Pet 5:1. There is no mention in the Scripture, no mention in antiquity, of any church in which there were not more elders than one; nor does that church correspond to the original pattern where it is otherwise.

(2.) Where there is but one elder in a church, there cannot be an *eldership* or *presbytery*, as there cannot be a senate where there is but one senator; this is contrary to 1Tim 4:14.

(3.) The *continuation* of every church in its original state and constitution is, since the ceasing of extraordinary offices and powers, committed to the care and power of the church itself. To this belong the calling and ordaining of ordinary officers, pastors, rulers, elders, and teachers. And in this, as we have proved, concurs both the election of the people, submitting themselves to them in the Lord, and solemnly setting them apart by imposition of hands. But if there is only one elder in a church, upon his death or removal, this imposition of hands must either be left to the people, or be supplied by elders of other

churches, or be wholly omitted — all of which are irregular. And that church-order is defective which lacks the symbol of authoritative ordination.

(4.) It is difficult, if not impossible, on a supposition of only one elder in a church, to preserve the rule of the church from being either *prelatical* or *popular*. There is nothing more frequently objected to those who dissent from diocesan bishops, than that every one would be bishops in their own parishes and to their own people. All such pretences are excluded on our principles of the liberty of the people, of the necessity of many elders in the same church in an equality of power, and the communion of other churches in association. But practically, where there is but one elder, one of the two extremes can hardly be avoided. If he rules by himself, without the previous advice, in some cases, as well as the subsequent consent of the church, then it has an eye of unwarrantable *prelacy* in it. If everything is to be originally transacted, disposed, and ordered by the *whole society*, then the authority of the elder will quickly be insignificant; he will be little more, in point of rule, than any other brother of the society. But all these inconveniences are prevented by fixing many elders in each church, which may maintain the authority of the presbytery, and also free the church from the despotic rule of any Diotrephes (3Joh 1.9). But in case there is but one elder in any church, unless he has wisdom to maintain the authority of the eldership in his own person and actings, there is no *rule*, but only *confusion*.

(5.) The nature of the work to which they are called requires that, in every church consisting of any considerable number of members, there should be *more than one elder* (when God first appointed rule in the church under the Old Testament, he assigned to every ten persons or families a distinct ruler, Deu 1:15). For the elders are to take care of the walk or conversation of all the members of the church, so that it is according to the rule of the gospel. This rule is eminent as to the holiness that it requires, above all other rules of moral conversation whatsoever. And there is, in all the members of the church, great accuracy and circumspection required in their walking after it and according to it. Also, the order and decency which is required in all church assemblies stands in need of exact care and inspection. That all

these things can be attended to and discharged in a due manner in any church, by one elder, is for them to suppose things, who know nothing about them. And although there may be an appearance for a season of all these things in such churches, yet if there is not in this a due compliance with the wisdom and institution of Christ, they have no present beauty, nor will they be of any long continuance.

These considerations, and also those that follow, may seem *jejune* ⁹³ and contemptible to those who have another frame of church rule and order drawn in their minds and interests. A government vested in a few persons, with titles of pre-eminence, and legal power exercised in courts with coercive jurisdiction — by the methods and processes of canons of their own framing — is that which they suppose better becomes the grandeur of church-rulers and the state of the church, than these creeping elders with their congregations. But whereas our present inquiry about these things is only in and out of the Scripture, there is neither shadow nor appearance in this, of *any* of these practices, I beg their pardon if at present I do not consider them.

We will now apply these things to our present purpose. I say, then —

1. Whereas there is a *work of rule* in the church, distinct from that of *pastoral feeding*; and,
2. Whereas this work is to be attended to with *diligence*, which includes the whole duty of the one who attends to it; and,
3. Whereas the *ministry of the word and prayer*, with all those duties that accompany it, is a *full employment* for any man, and consequently it is his principal and proper work which it is unlawful for him to be remiss in by attending to another with diligence; and,
4. Whereas there ought to be *many elders* in every church, so that both the works of teaching and ruling may be constantly attended to; and,
5. Whereas, in the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, *distinct works* required *distinct offices* for their discharge (all which we have proved already), our inquiry on this is —

Whether the same Holy Spirit has distinguished this office of elders into two sorts — namely, those who are called to teaching and rule also, and those who are called only to rule? — which we affirm.

The testimonies by which the truth of this assertion is confirmed, are generally known and pleaded. I will insist only on some of them, beginning with that which is of uncontrollable evidence if it had anything to conflict with besides prejudices and interest; and this is 1Tim 5:17.

“*The elders*, or presbyters in office, elders of the church, *who rule well*, or discharge their presidency for rule in due manner, are to *be counted worthy*, or ought to be reputed worthy, of *double honor*, especially those of them *who labor* or are engaged in the great labor and travail of *the word and doctrine*.” ⁹⁴

In 1Tim 3:4, 5, 12,⁹⁵ it is applied to family rule and government. ⁹⁶ In Tit 3:8, 14, it is also applied to care and diligence about good works.⁹⁷ And some things may be observed in general concerning these words: —

1. This testimony relates directly to the *rules and principles* laid down before, which direct to the practice of them. These words are to be interpreted according to the analogy of those principles; and unless they are overthrown, it is to no purpose to put in exceptions against the sense of this or that word. The interpretation of them is to be suited to the analogy of the things which they relate to. If we do not consider what is spoken here in consent with other scriptures treating the same matter, then we depart from all sober rules of interpretation.

2. On this supposition, the words of the text have a *plain and obvious signification*, which at first view presents itself to the common sense and understanding of all men. And where there is nothing contrary to any other divine testimony or evident reason, such a sense is constantly to be embraced. There is nothing here of any spiritual mystery, but only a direction concerning outward order in the church. In such cases the literal sense of the words, rationally apprehended, is all that we are concerned with.

But on the first proposal of this text — “the elders who rule well are worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine” — a rational man who is unprejudiced, who never heard of the controversy about ruling elders, can hardly avoid an apprehension that there are *two sorts* of elders: some who labor in the word and doctrine, and some who do not. The truth is, it was interest and prejudice that first caused some learned men to strain their wits to discover evasions from the evidence of this

testimony. Being so found out, some others of meaner abilities have been entangled by them. For there is not one new argument advanced in this cause, not one exception given to the sense of the place we plead for, that was not long ago coined by Papists and Prelatists, and managed with better colors than some now are able to lay on them who pretend to the same judgment.

3. This is the substance of the truth in the text: — There are *elders in the church*; there are or ought to be so in every church. *The whole rule of the church* is entrusted to these elders; all these and only these rule in it. Of these elders there are *two sorts*, for a description is given of one sort as *distinct* from the other, and *compared* with it. The first sort *rules* and also *labors in the word and doctrine*. It was declared before that these works are distinct and different; yet as distinct works they are not incompatible, but are committed to the same person. They are so to those who are not only elders, but moreover pastors or teachers. No rule belongs to pastors and teachers *as such*, even though by the institution of Christ the right of rule is inseparable from their office. For all who are rightfully called to the office are elders also, which gives them an interest in rule. They are elders, with the addition of pastoral or teaching authority. But there are elders who are *not* pastors or teachers. For there are some who rule well, but do not labor in the word and doctrine — that is, who are not pastors or teachers.

Elders who rule well, but do not labor in the word and doctrine, are ruling elders only; and they are such in the text.

The most learned of our protestant adversaries in this case are Erastus, Bilson, Saravia, Downham, Scultetus, Mede, Grotius, and Hammond. They do not agree at all among themselves about the sense of the words: for —

1. Their whole design and endeavor is to *make exceptions* against the obvious sense and interpretation of the words, not fixing on any determinate exposition of it themselves, that they will abide by in opposition to any other sense of the place. Now, this is a most sophistical way of arguing over testimonies, and suited only to make endless controversies. Whose wit is so barren as not to be able to raise one exception or other against the plainest and most evident testimony? So the Socinians deal with us in all the testimonies we produce to prove the deity or satisfaction of Christ. They suppose it is enough to evade their force if they can but pretend that the

words are capable of another sense, even though they will not abide that this or that is their sense. For if they would do so, when that sense is overthrown, the truth would be established. *But every testimony of the Scripture has one determinate sense.* When this is contended about, it is equal that those who differ will express their apprehensions of the mind of the Holy Spirit in the words which they abide by. When this is done, let it be examined and tested which of the two senses pretended to, best complies with the signification and use of the words, the context or scope of the place, other Scripture testimonies, and the analogy of faith.⁹⁸ No such rule is attended to in this case by our adversaries. They think it is enough to oppose our sense of the words, but they will not fix on any of their own, which if disproved, ours ought to take its place. Hence —

2. They *do not in the least agree among themselves*, scarcely any two of them, on what is the most probable sense of the words. Nor are any of them singly well-resolved what application to make of them, nor to what persons, but they only propose things as their *conjecture*. But of the very many opinions or conjectures that are advanced in this case, all of them but one are accompanied by the modesty of granting that diverse sorts of elders are intended here — which cannot be denied without more than ordinary confidence. But —

- Some, by “elders who rule well,” understand *bishops who are diocesans*; and by “those who labor in the word and doctrine,” they understand ordinary preaching presbyters, which plainly gives them the advantage of pre-eminence, reverence, and maintenance above the others!
- Some, by “elders who rule well,” understand *ordinary bishops and presbyters*; and by “those who labor in the word and doctrine,” they understand evangelists, thus carrying the text out of the present concern of the church. Deacons are esteemed by some to have an interest in the rule of the church, and so they are intended in the first place, and preaching ministers in the latter.
- Some speak of *two sorts of elders*, both of the same order, or ministers; some who preach the word and administer the sacraments; and others who are employed in inferior offices such as reading and the like, which is the conceit of Scultetus.

- Mr. Mede weighs most of these conjectures, and at length prefers one of his own before them all — namely, that by “elders who rule well” *civil magistrates* are intended, and by “those who labor in the word and doctrine” the ministers of the gospel are intended.

But some, discerning the weakness and improbability of all these conjectures, and how easily they may be disproved, resort to a direct denial of what seems to be plainly asserted in the text: namely, that two sorts of elders are intended and described here; they countenance themselves in this by taking exception to the application of some terms in the text, which we will immediately consider.

Grotius, as intimated before, argues against the divine institution of such temporary lay-elders as are made use of in sundry of the reformed churches. But when he has done so, he affirms that it is highly necessary that such conjunct *associates in rule* from among the people, should be in every church; he proves this by various arguments. And he would have these men either nominated by the magistrate, or chosen by the people.

Therefore, omitting all contests about the forementioned concepts, or any other of a like nature, I will propose one argument from these words, and vindicate it from the exceptions of those of the latter sort.

Preaching elders, although they rule well, are not worthy of double honor, unless they labor in the word and doctrine;

But there are elders who rule well who are worthy of double honor, even though they do not labor in the word and doctrine.

Therefore, there are elders who rule well who are not teaching or preaching elders — that is, who are ruling elders only.

The proposition is evident in its own light, from its very terms. For to preach is to “labor in the word and doctrine.” Preaching or teaching elders who do not labor in the word and doctrine, are preaching or teaching elders who do not preach or teach. To say that preachers, whose office and duty it is to preach, are worthy of that double honor which is due on account of preaching, even though they do not preach, is uncouth and irrational. It is contrary to the Scripture and the light of nature, as implying a contradiction that a man whose office it is to teach and preach should be esteemed worthy

of double honor on account of his *office*, who does not as an *officer* teach or preach.

The assumption on the matter consists in the very words of the apostle; for he who says, “The elders who rule well are worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine,” says there are or may be elders who rule well, who do not labor in the word and doctrine — that is, who are not obliged so to do.

The argument from these words may be framed otherwise, but this contains the plain sense of this testimony.

Various things are excepted to this testimony and our application of it. Those of any weight consist in a contest about two words in the text: (1) *malista* (*malista*, “especially”) and (2) *kopiw~ntev* (*kopioontes*, “to labor”). Some place their confidence in evading *one of them*, and some the *other*, the argument from both being inconsistent. If that sense of one of these words, which is pleaded as a relief against this testimony, is embraced, then that which for the same purpose is pretended to be the sense of the other, must be rejected. Such shifts put men in opposition to the truth.

Some say that *malista*, “especially,” is not *distinctive*, but *descriptive* only. That is, it does not distinguish one sort of elder from another, but only describes that single sort of elder by an adjunct of their office, which the apostle speaks of. The meaning of it, they say, is, *as much as*, or *seeing that*: “The elders who rule well are worthy of double honor, seeing that they also labor,” or “especially considering that they labor,” etc.

That this is the sense of the word — that it is to be interpreted this way — must be proved from the authority of ancient translations, or from the use of it in other places in the New Testament, or from its precise signification and application in other authors who are learned in this language, or that it is enforced from the context or the matter treated.

But none of these can be pretended.

1. The rendering of the word in *old translations* we have considered before. They agree in “*maxime illi qui*,” that *malista* is distinctive.
2. The use of it in *other places of the New Testament* is constantly distinctive, whether applied to things or persons: Act 20:38 — “Sorrowing chiefly at the word” of seeing his face no more.⁹⁹ Their sorrow in this was

distinct from their other trouble. Gal 6:10, “Let us do good to all, but chiefly,” *especially*, “to the household of faith.” ¹⁰⁰ It distinguishes between the household of faith and all others, by virtue of their special privilege. This is the direct use of the word by that same apostle, in Phi 4:22, “All the saints salute you — *especially* those who are of Caesar’s house.” ¹⁰¹

Two sorts of saints are plainly expressed — first, those who were saints in general; they were also so, but under this especial privilege and circumstance, that they were of Caesar’s house, which the others were not. So it is here with respect to elders: all “rule well,” but some moreover “labor in the word and doctrine.” 1Tim 5:8, “If a man does not provide for his own, *especially* those of his own house,” ¹⁰² especially children or servants who live in his own house, and are thereby distinguished from others of a more remote relation. 2Tim 4:13, “Bring the books, *especially* the parchments;” ¹⁰³ not because they are parchment, but among the books, those parchments in particular and in an especial manner. 2Pet 2:9-10, “The Lord knows how to reserve the unjust for the day of judgment to be punished, *especially* you who walk after the flesh,” ¹⁰⁴ who will be singled out for exemplary punishment. It is used but once more in the New Testament, namely, Act 26:3, where it includes a distinction in the thing that is under consideration.

Because this is the constant use of the word in the Scripture (being principally used by this apostle in his writings), in which it is distinctive and comparative of the things and persons regarded, it is to no purpose to pretend that it is used here in another sense or is otherwise applied, unless they can prove from the context that there is a necessity for their peculiar interpretation of it.

3. The use of the word in *other authors* is concurrent with that in the Scripture: Herodian, lib. 2, cap. 28, “The Syrians are naturally lovers of festivals, *especially* those who dwell at Antioch.” ¹⁰⁵ It is the same phrase of speech used here; for all those who dwelt at Antioch were Syrians, but all the Syrians did not dwell at Antioch. There is a distinction and distribution made of the Syrians into *two sorts* — those who were Syrians only, and those who, being Syrians, dwelt at Antioch, the metropolis of the country. If a man said that all Englishmen were stout and courageous, especially Londoners, he would both affirm that Londoners are Englishmen, and distinguish them from the rest of their countrymen. So too, all who labor in

the word and doctrine are elders. But all elders do not labor in the word and doctrine, nor is it their duty to do so. These we call “ruling elders,” and as I judge, rightly so.

4. The sense which the words give, being so interpreted as not to make a distinction between elders, is absurd — the subject and predicate of the proposition being convertible terms.¹⁰⁶ It must be so if the proposition is not allowed to have a distinction in it. “One sort of elders only,” it is said, “is intended here.” I ask who they are, and of what sort? It is said, “The same as pastors and teachers, or ministers of the gospel;” for if the one sort of elders intended is of *another* sort, then we obtain what we plead for as fully as if *two sorts* were allowed. Who then are these elders, these pastors and teachers, these ministers of the church? Are they not those who labor in the word and doctrine? “Yes,” it will be said, “them and no others.” Then this is the sense of the words: “Those who labor in the word and doctrine, who rule well, are worthy of double honor, especially if they labor in the word and doctrine;” for if there is but one sort of elders, then “elders” and “those who labor in the word and doctrine” are convertible terms. But “elders” and “labor in the word and doctrine” are subject and predicate in this proposition.

This is why there are few of any learning or judgment who make use of this evasion. But allowing a distinction to be made, they say that it refers to *work* and employment, and not to *office* — those who in the discharge of their office as elders, so labor as intended and included in the Greek word *kopioontes*, which denotes a particular kind of work in the ministry. Yes, say some, “This word denotes the work of an *evangelist*, who was not confined to any one place, but traveled up and down the world to preach the gospel.” And those of this mind allow that two sorts of elders are intended in the words. Let us see whether they have any better success in their conjecture than the others had in the former answer.

1. I grant that *kopian*, the word used here, signifies to labor with pains and diligence, “*ad ultimum virinum, usque ad fatigationem*,” — to the utmost of men’s strength, and unto weariness. But —
2. To so labor in the word and doctrine is the duty of *all* pastors and teachers, and whoever does *not* so labor is negligent in his office, and worthy of severe blame instead of double honor: for —

(1.) *Kopos*, from which we get *kopiaoo*, is the labor of a minister; and so it is the labor of any minister in his work of teaching and preaching the gospel: 1Cor 3:8, “Everyone” (*i.e.*, everyone employed in the ministry, whether to plant or to water, to convert men or to edify the church) “will receive his own reward, according to his own labor.” ¹⁰⁷ Whoever does not strive, *kopian*, in the ministry, will never receive a reward according to his own labor,¹⁰⁸ and so he is not worthy of double honor.

(2.) It is a *general* word, used to express the work of *anyone* in the service of God; for which it is applied to the prophets and teachers under the Old Testament: Joh 4:38, “I sent you to reap that for which you bestowed no labor,” ¹⁰⁹ — “others have labored, and you have entered into their labors;” *i.e.*, of the prophets and John the Baptist. Indeed, it is so for the labor that women may take in serving the church: Rom 16:6, “Salute Mary, who *labored* much;” ¹¹⁰ which is more than simply *kopian*. Verse 12, “Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who *labor* in the Lord.”¹¹¹ Salute the beloved Persis who *labored* much in the Lord.” ¹¹² It is so far from truth, that this word should signify a labor peculiar to some sorts of ministers, which are not obliged to all in common.

3. If the labor of evangelists, or of those who traveled up and down to preach the word, is intended, then it is either because this is the proper signification of the word, or because it is constantly used elsewhere to express that kind of labor. But the contrary to both of these is evident from all places in which it is used. So it is expressly applied to fixed elders. 1The 5:12, “We exhort you, brethren, to know those who *labor* among you,” ¹¹³ who are the rulers and instructors.

It is therefore evident that this word expresses no more but what is the ordinary, indispensable duty of every teaching elder, pastor, or minister; and if it be so, then those elders — that is, pastors or teachers — that do not perform and discharge it are not worthy of double honor, nor would the apostle give any countenance unto them who were any way remiss or negligent, in comparison of others, in the discharge of their duty. See 1The 5:12.

Therefore, there are *two sorts of duties* confessedly mentioned and commanded here: — the first is *ruling well*; the other, *laboring in the word and doctrine*. Suppose that both these, ruling and teaching, are committed to one sort of persons only, having one and the same office absolutely, then some are commended who do not discharge their whole duty, at least not as compared to others; which is a vain imagination. It is the mind of the apostle that both of these duties are committed to one sort of elders, and one of them *only to another*, each discharging its duty with respect to its work; and so both are worthy of honor.

It is objected from the next verse that, “Maintenance belongs to this double honor, and consequently, if there are elders who are employed in the work only of rule, then maintenance is due to them from the church.” I answer, it is no doubt so —

1. If the church is *able* to make them an allowance;
2. If their work is such as to take up *the whole* or *the greatest part of their industry*; and,
3. If they *stand in need of it*.

Without these considerations, it may be dispensed with, not only in them, but in teaching elders also.

Our next testimony is from the same apostle, Rom 12:6-8:

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; or he who teaches, on teaching; or he who exhorts, on exhortation; he who gives, let him do it with simplicity; he who rules, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Our argument from here is this: There is in the church “one who rules.” [114](#) That word for *rule*, *proi`sthmi* (*proistemi*), is “to rule with authority by virtue of office;” from which come *proestw>v* (*proestoos*) and *proi`sta>menov* (*proistamenos*), one who presides over others with authority. For the discharge of their office, there is a “differing peculiar gift,” [115](#) verse 6, bestowed on *some*.[116](#) And there is the especial manner prescribed for the discharge of this especial office, by virtue of that especial gift;[117](#) it is to be done with peculiar “diligence.” And this ruler is

distinguished from “one who exhorts” and “one who teaches,” with whose especial work, as such, he has nothing to do — even as they are distinguished from those who “give” and “show mercy” — that is, there is an elder by *office* in the church, whose work and duty it is to *rule*, not to exhort nor teach ministerially. This is our ruling elder. It is answered that, “In this place, the apostle does not address offices, functions, or distinct officers, but differing gifts in *all* the members of the church, which they are to exercise as their different nature requires.”

I will return to various things here, which will both explain the context and vindicate our argument: —

1. Those with whom we have to principally deal allow no exercise of spiritual gifts in the church except by virtue of office. This is why a distinct exercise of those gifts is here placed in distinct officers, one being expressly distinguished from another, as we will see.

2. If they give such a probable enumeration of the distinct offices in the church which they assert — namely, of archbishops, bishops, presbyters, and chancellors, etc. — we will yield the cause.

3. Gifts alone do no more, and give no other warranty or authority, than to render men fit for their exercise as they are called, and as occasion requires. If a man has received a gift of teaching, but is not called to office, he is not obliged nor warranted thereby to attend to public teaching, nor is it required of him by way of duty, nor is a charge given to him, as it is here.

4. There is in one “*rule*” required “with diligence.” He is a “ruler;” [118](#) and as such it is required of him that he attend to his work with diligence. And there are but two things required to confirm our thesis:

(1.) That this rule is an act of *office-power*;

(2.) That the one to whom it is ascribed is *distinguished from those to whom the pastoral and other offices in the church are committed*.

For the first, it is evident that rule is an act of *office*, or of *office-power*: for it requires an,

[1.] Especial *relation*; this is so between one who rules and those who are ruled; and this is the relation of *office*; otherwise all confusion will ensue.

[2.] Especial *prelation*. The one who rules is *over*, is *above* those who are ruled: “Obey those who are *over you* in the Lord.” In the church, this cannot be in any except by virtue of office.

[3.] Especial *authority*. All lawful rule is an act of authority; and there is no authority in the church except by virtue of office. Secondly, this officer is distinct from all others in the church, as we will immediately demonstrate when we have cleared the context a little further.

Therefore —

5. It is confessed that respect is had to *gifts* — “Having differing gifts,” verse 6 — because all office-power in the church is founded in them, Eph 4:7-8, 11-12. But gifts absolutely, with reference to *common use*, are not intended, as they are in some other places. Rather, they are spoken of with respect to offices or functions, and the communication of them to officers for the discharge of their office. This is evident from the text and context, with the whole design of the place; for —

(1.) The analysis of the place directs us to this interpretation. Three sorts of duties are prescribed for the church in this chapter —

[1.] Those duties which are *universal*, belonging absolutely to *all* and every one that pertains to it, which are declared in Rom 12:1-2.

[2.] Those which are *peculiar to some*, by virtue of that especial place which they have in the church, verses 3-8. This can be nothing but an *office*.

[3.] Those which are *general* or common with respect to *occasions*, from verse 8 to the end of the chapter. Hence the same duty is doubly prescribed — to some by way of a special office, to others by way of a gracious duty in general. So it is here: “*He who gives, let him do it with simplicity,*” verse 8. It is the same duty or work as to its substance, as “*distributing to the necessity of saints,*” verse 13. And the apostle does not repeat his charge of the same duty in so few words as required in the same *manner*, and of the same *persons*. Rather, in the first place he speaks of the manner of its performance by virtue of *office*; and in the latter by virtue of its discharge as to its substance, such as a grace that is

found in all believers. The design of the apostle lies plain in the analysis of this discourse.

(2.) The context makes the same truth evident; for —

[1.] The whole ordinary public work of the church is distributed into prophecy and ministry; ¹¹⁹ for the extraordinary gift of prophecy is not intended here, but only that of the interpretation of the Scripture, whose rule is the “analogy of faith,” ¹²⁰ It is prophecy that is regulated by the Scripture itself, which gives the “proportion of faith.” ¹²¹ And there is nothing in any or both of these, prophecy and ministry, that does not belong to an office in the church; nor is there anything belonging to an office in the church that may not be reduced to one of these, as all of them are here by the apostle.

[2.] The gifts spoken of are, in general, referred to all those who are intended. Now, these are either the whole church and all its members, or else all the officers of the church only. Hence it is expressed in the plural number, “*We* having;” ¹²² that is, all of us who are concerned in it. This cannot be “all of the church,” for not all in the church have received the gifts of prophecy and ministry; nor can any distinction be made between who does receive them and who does not, except with respect to an office. And therefore —

[3.] In the distribution which ensues of prophecy into exhorting and teaching, and of ministry into showing mercy, rule, and giving — having stated these gifts in general, in the officers in general, and making a distinct application of them to distinct officers — he speaks in the *singular* number: “He who teaches, he who exhorts, he who rules.” ¹²³

6. It is then evident that *offices* are intended; and it is no less evident that *distinct* offices are intended, which was to be proved in the second place; for —

(1.) The distributive *particle* ei]te (*eite*), and the indicative *article*, prefixed to each office in particular, show them [to be] distinct, so far as words can do that. As by the *particle* ei]te (*eite*, “whether”) they are distinguished in their *nature* — whether they are of this kind or that—

so by the *article* prefixed to each of them in exercise, they are distinguished in their *subjects*.

(2.) The operations, works, and effects ascribed to these gifts, require distinct offices and functions in their exercise. If the distribution is made to all promiscuously, without respect to distinct offices, it would only be a way to bring *confusion* into the church. Whereas, here indeed an accurate *order* in all church-administrations is represented to us.

And it is further evident that distinct offices are intended —

(1.) From the comparison made to the members of the body, verse 4, “All members do not have the same office;” the eye has one, the ear has another.

(2.) Each of the duties mentioned and given as a charge, is sufficient for a distinct officer, as declared in Act 6:1-4.

7. In particular, “He who rules” is a distinct officer — an officer, because *rule* is an act of office or office-power; and he is expressly distinguished from all others. But some say, “He who rules” is whoever does so — that is, the pastor or teacher, the teaching elder.” But the contrary is evident:

(1.) He says, “He who exhorts,” and then adds, “He who rules,” having distinguished before between *prophecy*, to which exhortation belongs, and *ministry*, of which rule is a part, and prefixing the prepositive indicative article to each of them. This as plainly differentiates them as can be done by words.

2.) *Rule* is the principal work of the one who rules, for he is to attend to it “with diligence,” ¹²⁴ — that is, attend to whatever is peculiar to *rule*, in contradistinction to what is principally required in other administrations. But rule is not the *principal work* of the pastor, such that it requires constant and continual attendance. For his labor in the word and doctrine is ordinarily sufficient for the utmost of his diligence and abilities.

8. We have in this context, therefore, a beautiful order of things in and of the church — all its duties with respect to its edification, are derived from distinct and differing spiritual gifts, exercised in and by distinct officers, to their peculiar ends. The distinction that is in the nature of those gifts, their use and end, is provided for in distinct subjects. The mind of no one man (at

least ordinarily) is fit to be the seat and subject of all those differing gifts in any eminent degree. No man is sufficient, fit, or able, to exercise them in a way of office towards the whole church — especially “those who labor in the word and doctrine” being obliged to “give themselves wholly to it,” and those who “rule” being obliged to attend to it with “diligence.” Having so many distinct works, duties, and operations, with the qualifications required in their discharge, are inconsistent in the same subject.¹²⁵ Thus, all things are distributed here into their proper order and tendency for the edification of the church. Every distinct gift that is required to be exercised in a peculiar manner for the public edification of the church, is distributed to peculiar officers to whom an especial work is assigned; and it is to be discharged by virtue of the gifts received for the edification of the whole body. ^{1Cor 12.7} No man alive is able to fix on anything which is necessary for the edification of the church, that is not contained in these distributions under some of their heads. Nor can any man discover anything in these assignations of distinct *duties* to distinct *offices* that is superfluous, redundant, or not directly necessary for the edification of the whole, with all its parts and members. Nor do I know any wise and sober man who knows anything of how the duties enjoined are to be performed — with what care, diligence, circumspection, prayer, and wisdom, suited to their nature, ends, and their objects — who can ever imagine that *all* of them can belong to one and the same office, or be discharged by one and the same person.

Let men advance any other church-order in place of that which is declared here — one that is so suited to the principles of natural light; one whose operations and duties of diverse natures are distributed and assigned to such distinct gifts, and acted out in distinct offices, that it renders those to whom they are prescribed, fit and able for them; one that so corresponds to all institutions, rules, and examples of church-order in other places of Scripture; one that is so suited for the edification of the church; one in which nothing which is necessary to it is omitted, nor is anything added above what is necessary — and that church-order will be cheerfully embraced.

The truth is, the ground of the different interpretations and applications of this text or context of the apostle, arises merely from the prejudiced apprehensions that men have concerning the state of the church and its rule. For if its state is national or diocesan, if its rule is by arbitrary rules and

canons that proceed from an authority exerting itself in ecclesiastical courts, legal or illegal, then the order of things described here by the apostle in no way belongs to nor can it be accommodated to it. To suppose [as we do] that we have a full description and account in these words — of all the offices and officers of the church, of their duty and authority, of all they have to do, and how they are to do it — would be altogether unreasonable and senseless to those who have *another* idea of church affairs and rule, one which is conceived in their minds, received by tradition, and riveted by interest. On the other hand, those who know little or nothing of what belongs to the due edification of the church, beyond preaching the word and reaping the advantage that is obtained by it, cannot see any necessity to distribute these several works and duties to several officers. Rather, they suppose that all may be done well enough by one or two in the same office. This is why it will be necessary for us to briefly treat the nature of the rule of the church in particular, and what is required for it, which will be done at the close of this discourse.

9. The *exceptions* which are usually made for this testimony do not have the least countenance from the text or context, nor from the matter treated; nor do they have confirmation from any other divine testimony. It is therefore in vain to contend about these exceptions, for any man may multiply them at his pleasure on like occasion. And they are used by those who, upon other considerations, are not willing have things be as they are here declared to be by the apostle. Yet we may take a brief specimen of them.

Some say the apostle treats *gifts absolutely*, without respect to distinct offices. This has been disproved from the text and context before. Some say that rule is included in the pastoral office, such as that the pastor alone is intended here. But —

(1.) *Rule* is not his principal work which he is to attend to in a peculiar manner, with diligence, above other parts of his duty.

(2.) The *care of the poor of the flock* also belongs to the pastoral office; yet there is another officer appointed to attend to it in a peculiar manner, Act 6:1-6.

(3.) “He who rules” is expressly distinguished in this place from “he who exhorts” and “he who teaches.” Some say that “he who rules” is he who rules his *family*. But this is disproved by the analysis of the

chapter declared before. And this duty, which is common to all who have families, and is confined to their families, is ill-placed among those public duties which are designed for the edification of the whole church. It is objected that “he who rules” is placed after “he who gives,” that is, the *deacon*. I say, then, that it cannot be the pastor that is intended (if we may prescribe methods for the apostle to express himself). Rather, he uses his liberty, and does not oblige himself to any order in the enumeration of the offices of the church. See 1Cor 12:8-10, 28.

Some other exceptions are insisted on of the same nature and importance, which indeed do not deserve our consideration.

10. The same evidence is given for the truth argued for in another testimony of the same apostle: 1Cor 12:28, “God has set some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, varieties of tongues.” I will not insist on this testimony and its vindication in particular, seeing that many things would be required for it which have been treated already. Some things may be briefly observed concerning it. That there is an enumeration here of officers and offices in the church, both extraordinary for that season, and ordinary for continuance, is beyond exception. To them is added the present exercise of some extraordinary gifts, such as “miracles, healings, tongues.” Most agree that “helps” intends the deacons of the church, because their original institution was as helpers in the affairs of the church. “Governments” are governors or rulers, the abstract being put for the concrete — that is, those who are distinct from “teachers.” God has placed such men in the church, and such there ought to be. But it is said that, “*gifts*, not *offices*, are intended — the gift of government, or the gift *for* government.” If so, then these gifts are either ordinary or extraordinary. If they are ordinary, then how do they come to be reckoned among “miracles, healings, and tongues”? If they are extraordinary, then what extraordinary gifts for government were given *distinct* from those of the apostles? And what instance is given of them anywhere in the Scripture? Again, if God has given gifts for government to abide in the church, distinct from those given to teachers, and to persons other than the teachers, then there is a distinct *office* of rule or government in the church, which is all we plead for.

11. The original order of these things is plain in the Scripture. The apostles had all church-power and church-office in themselves, with authority to exercise all the acts of them, everywhere and on all occasions. But considering the nature of the church, with the nature of the rule appointed by the Lord Christ in it or over it, they did not, they *would* not, ordinarily exercise their power by themselves, nor in their own persons alone. And therefore, when the first church consisted of a small number, the apostles acted out all things in it by the consent of the whole multitude, or the fraternity, as we have proved from Act 1:15-26 (see chap. 4). And when the number of believers increased, the apostles themselves could not in their own persons attend to all the duties that were to be performed towards the church by virtue of office. They added, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, the office of the deacons, for the especial discharge of the duty which the church owes to its poor members. By the same token, it is evident here that the apostles could no longer personally attend to the *rule* of the church with all that belongs to it, without encroaching on that labor in the word and prayer which was incumbent on them — any more than they could attend to the relief of the poor. And so they appointed elders to help and assist in that part of *office-work*, as the deacons did in the other work.

These elders are first mentioned Act 11:30 where they are spoken of as those which were well known, and had been in the church for some time. Afterward they are still mentioned in conjunction with the apostles, and in distinction from the church itself, Act 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 16:4, 21:18. Now, the apostles themselves were *teaching* elders — that is, those who had the work of teaching and rule committed to them, 1Pet 5:1; 2 John 1. And these other elders are constantly distinguished from them; which makes it evident that they were *not* teaching elders. Therefore, in all the mention that is made of them, the work of teaching or preaching is nowhere ascribed to them. At Jerusalem, the apostles reserved these to themselves, Act 6:2-4. But they are everywhere introduced as joining with the apostles in the *rule* of the church, and that is in distinction from the church itself, or its brethren. Yes, it is altogether improbable that while the apostles were at Jerusalem, giving themselves wholly to the word and prayer, they should appoint in the same church many more *teaching elders*, though it is plain that the elders intended were many.

I will add, for a close to all, that there is no sort of churches which are not of this persuasion that there ought to be rulers in the church who are not in “sacred orders,” as some call them — who have no interest in the pastoral or ministerial office as to the dispensation of the word, and the administration of the sacraments. For as the government of the Roman church is in the hands of such persons in great measure, so in the church of England much of the rule of it is managed by chancellors, officials, commissaries, and like officers, who are absolutely *laymen*, and not at all in their holy orders. Some would place the rule of the church in the civil magistrate,¹²⁶ who they suppose is the only ruling elder. But most Protestant churches throughout the world, both Lutheran and Reformed, both in their judgment and practice, assert the necessity of the ruling elders which we plead for. And their office lies at the foundation of all their order and discipline, which they cannot forego without extreme confusion — indeed, without the ruin of their churches. And although some among us, considering particular churches only as small societies, may think there is no need for any such office or officers for rule in them, yet when such churches consist of some thousands, without any opportunity to distribute themselves into several congregations (as at Charenton in France), it is a weak imagination that the rule of Christ can be observed in them by two or three ministers alone. Hence in primitive times we often have instances of twenty, even forty elders in a particular church. In this, they respected the institution under the Old Testament, by which each ten families were to have a particular ruler. However, it is certain that there is such a reformation in all sorts of churches, that there ought to be some attending to *rule* who are not called to labor in the word and doctrine.

CHAPTER 8. DUTY OF RULING ELDERS.

HAVING declared *who are the rulers of the church*, something must be added concerning the rule itself which is to be exercised in it. I have treated this before in general. What I now design is what in particular respects those who are called to rule only, to which some considerations must be premised: —

1. There is power, authority, and rule, granted to and residing in some persons of the church, and not in the body of the fraternity or community of the people. How far the government of the church may be denominated *democratic* from the necessary consent of the people to the principal acts of it in its exercise, I will not determine. But whereas this consent, and the liberty of it, are absolutely necessary according to the law of obedience to Christ, which is prescribed for the church, requiring that all they do in compliance with it be voluntary as to the manner of its exercise, being in dutiful compliance with the guidance of the rule, it does not change the state of the government. And therefore, where anything is acted and disposed in the church by suffrage, or the plurality of voices, the vote of the fraternity is not determinant and authoritative, but only declarative of consent and obedience. It is so in all acts of rule where the church is organic or in complete order.

2. That there is such an authority and rule instituted by Christ in his church is not liable to dispute. Where there are “bishops, pastors, elders, guides, rulers, stewards,” instituted, given, granted, called, ordained — and there are some to be ruled, “sheep, lambs, brethren,” obliged by command to “obey them, follow them, submit to them in the Lord, regard them as over them” — there is rule and authority in some persons. And that rule is committed to them by Jesus Christ. But all these things are frequently repeated in the Scripture. And when, in the practical part or exercise of rule, due respect is not had for their authority, there is nothing but confusion and disorder. When the people judge that the power of the keys is committed to them only, and the right of their use and exercise resides in them; and that their elders have no interest in the disposing of church-affairs or in acts of church-power, but it exists only in their own suffrages, or what they can obtain by reasoning; and the people think there is no duty incumbent on them to acquiesce in the elders’ authority in anything (which is an evil apt

to grow in churches) — it overthrows all that beautiful order which Jesus Christ has ordained. And if any take advantage of this complaint that where the people have their due liberty granted to them, they are apt to *assume that power* to themselves which does not belong to them — an evil that is attended with troublesome impertinencies and disorder tending to *anarchy* — let them remember how, on the *other* hand, upon confining power and authority to the guides, bishops, or rulers of the church, they have changed the nature of church-power, and enlarged their usurpation, until the whole rule of the church issued in absolute *tyranny*. This is why no fear of consequents that may ensue and arise from the darkness, ignorance, weakness, lusts, corruptions, or secular interests of men, ought to entice us to the least alteration of the rule by any prudential provisions of our own.

3. This *authority* in the rulers of the church is not *autocratic* or sovereign, nor is it *nomothetic* or legislative, nor *despotic* or absolute; but it is *organic* and ministerial only. We are not concerned in the endless controversies which have sprung out of the mystery of iniquity, about an autocratic and monarchical government in the church, about power to make laws to bind the consciences of men, even to kill and destroy them, with the whole manner of the execution of this power. A pretense of any such power in the church is destructive of the kingly office of Christ, contrary to express commands of Scripture, and condemned by the apostles, Isa 33:22; Jas 4:12; Mat 17:5, 23:8-11; Luk 22:25, 26; 2Cor 1:24; 1Cor 3:21-23; 2Cor 4:5; 1Pet 5:1-3. 4. The rule of the church in those by whom it is exercised, is merely ministerial with respect to the authority of Christ, his law, and the liberty of the church, with which he has made it free. So too, its *nature* is purely and only spiritual. The apostle affirms this expressly in 2Cor 10:4-6. For its *object* is spiritual — namely, the souls and consciences of men to which it extends, which no other human power does. Nor does it reach those other concerns of men that are subject to any political power. Its *end* is spiritual — namely, the glory of God, in the guidance and direction of the minds and souls of men to live to him, and come to the enjoyment of him. Its *law* is spiritual, even the word, command, and direction of Christ alone. Its *acts and exercise*, in binding and loosing, in remitting and retaining sin, in opening and shutting the kingdom of heaven, are all *spiritual*, merely and only. Neither can there be an instance given of anything belonging to the rule of the church that is of another nature. Indeed, it is eternally sufficient to exclude any power or exercise of it, any act of rule or government, from

any interest in church-affairs, that it can be proved to be carnal, political, despotic, of external operation, or not entirely spiritual.

5. The change of this government of the church fell out and was introduced gradually, upon an advantage taken from the unfitness of the people to be laid under this spiritual rule. For most of those who made up Christian churches having become ignorant and carnal, that rule which consists in a spiritual influence on the consciences of men was in no way able to retain them within the bounds of outward obedience, which was in the end was only aimed at. There was therefore another kind of rule and government that was judged necessary to retain them in any order or decorum. And it must be acknowledged that where the members of the church are not in some degree spiritual, a rule that is merely spiritual will be of no great use to them. But principally, this change was introduced by those who were in possession of the rule itself, and that is on two grounds: —

(1.) Their *unskilfulness* in the management of this spiritual rule, or weariness of the duties which are required for it — which made them willing to desert it (with that perpetual labor and exercise of all sorts of graces which are required in it), and to embrace another that was easier and more suited to their inclinations.

(2.) A *desire for the secular advantages* of profit, honor, and veneration, which tendered themselves to them in another kind of rule. By these means, the original government of the church, which was of divine institution, was utterly lost, and worldly domination was introduced in its place. But the brief delineation given of it before, with what will now be added, will sufficiently demonstrate that all those disputes and contests in the world between the church of Rome and others, about church power and rule, are utterly foreign to Christian religion.

I will therefore briefly inquire into these three things: —

1. What skill and polity are required for the exercise or administration of the government of the church;
2. What is its *sole law and rule*;
3. What are its *acts and duties*, *i.e.*, what it is conversant about, especially those acts and duties in which the office of ruling elders takes place: —

1. The *polity* of church-government, subjectively considered, is generally supposed to consist in:

(1.) A skill, learning, or understanding in the *civil*, and especially the *canon* law, with the additional canons accommodating that law to the present state of things of the nation, to be interpreted according to its general rules;

(2.) Knowledge of and acquaintance with the constitution, power, jurisdiction, and practice of some law-courts which being merely *secular* in their original grant of power, manner of proceeding, pleas and censures, are yet called *ecclesiastical* or *spiritual*;

(3.) A good discretion to understand aright the extent of their power, with its bounds and limits; that on the one hand they let none escape whom they can reach by the discipline of their courts, and on the other, not encroach so far on the civil power and the jurisdiction of other courts, according to the law of the land, as to bring themselves into charge or trouble;

(4.) An acquaintance with the table of fees, so that they may neither lose their own profit nor give advantage to others to question them for taking more than their due. But at present we are not concerned with these things.

The skill, then, of the officers of the church for its government, is spiritual wisdom and understanding in the law of Christ for that end, with an ability to apply it in all requisite instances, for the edification of the whole church and all its members — demonstrated through a ministerial exercise of the authority of Christ himself, and a due representation of his holiness, love, care, compassion, and tenderness, towards his church.

(1.) The sole *rule and measure* of the government of the church is the law of Christ — that is, the intimation and declaration of his mind and will, in his institutions, commands, prohibitions, and promises. An *understanding* in this, with wisdom from that understanding, is and must be the whole of the skill inquired after. How this wisdom is bestowed as a spiritual gift — how it is to be acquired by way of duty, prayer, meditation, and study of the word — has been intimated before, and it will be fully declared in our discourse about Spiritual Gifts. ¹²⁷ In this matter, all decrees and decretals, canons and glosses,

properly come under one title, namely, *extravagant*. The utmost knowledge of them and skill in them will contribute *nothing* to this wisdom. Nor is there any sort of men who are more strangers to it, or unacquainted with it, for the most part, than those who are eminently cunning in such laws and the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. But knowledge of the will of Christ as revealed in the Scripture, is that alone which is of use in the government of the church.

(2.) A part of this wisdom consists in an *ability of mind to apply the law of Christ* in all requisite instances, for the edification of the church in general, and all its members respectively. This wisdom is not *notional* only, but *practical*. It does not consist in a speculative comprehension of the sense of *rule*, or of the mind of Christ in this only (though that is required in the first place), but in an ability of mind to apply it; to which diligence, care, watchfulness, and spiritual courage are required. Some are to be admonished, some are to be rebuked sharply, some are to be cut off — in which and like cases, a spirit of government acting in diligence, boldness, and courage, is necessary. And this is one reason why the Lord Christ has appointed many elders in each church, and those of several sorts; for it is seldom that any one man is qualified for the whole work of rule. Some may have a good understanding in the law of the church's government. Yet, through a natural tenderness and an insuperable kind of modesty, they are not so ready and prompt for that part of this discipline which consists in reproofs and severe censures. Some may not have so great an ability for the indication of the sense of the law as others have, who yet, upon the knowledge of it being revealed to them, have a readiness and boldness in Christ to apply it as occasion requires. All elders, therefore, in their variety of gifts, are to be helpful to each other in the common work which they are called to. But those who are utterly destitute of these gifts are not called to this work, nor to any part of it.

(3.) The power that is exercised in this is *the power and authority of Christ, committed to the elders*:

“The Lord has given us our authority for edification, and not for destruction,” 2Cor 10:8.

It is granted to the rulers of the church, not to reside in them formally — as the power of a king is in his own person — but ministerially and

instrumentally only. For it must be the authority of Christ himself, by which the consciences of men are spiritually affected with reference to spiritual ends — by which they are bound or loosed in heaven and earth, and have their sins remitted or retained. And the consideration of this alone is what gives a due regard to the ministry of the church in the discharge of their office, among those who desire to commend their consciences to the Lord Christ in what they do.

(4.) The especial design of the rule of the church in its government is *to represent the holiness, love, compassion, care, and authority of Christ towards his church*. This is the great end of *rule* in the church, and of all the discipline which is to be exercised by virtue of it. While this is not attended to — when the officers and rulers of the church do not endeavor in all the actings of their power and office, to set forth these virtues of Christ, to exemplify that impression of them which he has left in his laws and rule, with the divine testimonies which he gave about them in his own person — they utterly deviate from the principal end of all rule in the church. For these men to act in a way of domination, with a visible elation of mind and spirit above their brethren — with anger, wrath, and passion; by rules, order, and laws of their own devising; without the least consideration of what the Lord Christ requires, and what the frame of His heart is towards all his disciples — is to reflect the highest dishonor imaginable upon Christ himself. Whoever comes into the courts of the king in Westminster Hall when it is filled with judges who are grave, learned, and righteous, must ordinarily be allowed to judge even the king himself, as to his wisdom, justice, moderation, and clemency, by the law which they proceed upon and their manner of administering it. But God forbid that Christians should pretend to make a judgment concerning the holiness, wisdom, love, and compassion of *Christ* by the representation which is made of him and them in some courts in which church rule and discipline is administered! When any of old had offended, their censure by the church was called “bemoaning them,” 2Cor 12:21. And that was because of the sorrow, pity, and compassion by which, in that censure, they evidenced the compassion of the Lord Christ towards the souls of sinners. This scarcely corresponds to those pecuniary mulcts and other penalties which are inflicted with indignation and contempt on those who are made offenders, whether

they will or not. Certainly, those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and have a due honor for the gospel, will at one time or another begin to think it fitting that this stain on our religion should be washed away.

2. *The rule and law* of the exercise of power in the elders of the church is *the holy Scripture alone*. The Lord Christ is the only lawgiver of the church. All his laws to this end are recorded in the Scripture; no other law is effectual, nor can oblige or operate on the objects or to the ends of church-rule. If the church made a thousand rules, or canons, or laws for government, none of them, nor all of them in general, have the least power to oblige men to obedience or compliance with them, except in so far as they virtually or materially contain what is from the law of Christ and derive their force from there. The judges in our civil courts of justice are bound to judge and determine all cases out of and according to *the law of the land*; and when they do not, their sentence is of no validity, but may and ought to be reversed. But if they were to introduce laws or rules, willfully or by choice, that are not legally established in this nation, judging according to them, it would render them highly criminal and punishable.

It is no different in the kingdom of Christ and its rule. It is by His law alone that rule is to be exercised in it. There is nothing left to the elders of the church but the application of his laws and general rules to particular cases and occasions. To make, bring, or execute any *other* rules, laws, or canons in the government of his church, is to usurp his kingly dominion, to which all legislative power in the church is subordinate. Nor is it possible that anything can fall out in the church, that anything can be required in its rule, nor any instance be given of any such thing, in which for the ends of church-rule, there is or can be any more left to its rulers, except the application and execution of the laws of Christ. For this application to be made in a due manner, the wisdom and skill described before is requisite, and that alone.

Where there are other laws, rules, or canons of the government of the church, and where their administration is directed by civil or political laws, skill is required for that administration, as all will confess. So the wisdom we described before, and that alone, is necessary for that rule of the church which the Lord Christ has ordained — the instrument and means of which is His word and law alone.

3. The matter of this rule, about which it is conversant, and so its acts and duties, may be reduced to three heads: —

(1.) The *admission and exclusion of members*. Both these are acts of church power and authority, which are to be exercised by the elders only, in a church that is organic and complete in its officers. There is in them both that which is founded in, and that which is warranted from the light and law of nature and rules of equity. Every righteous voluntary society, rightfully coalescing in this upon known laws and rules for the regulation of it for certain ends, has a power naturally inherent in it, and inseparable from it, to receive into its incorporation those who, being fit for it, voluntarily offer themselves to it; and also to reject or withhold the privileges of the society from those who refuse to be regulated by the laws of that society.

This power is inherent in the church *essentially* considered, antecedent to instating its officers. By virtue of their mutual confederation, they may receive into the privileges of the society those who are fit, and withdraw the same privileges from those who are unworthy. But in these actings of the church, essentially considered, no exercise of the *power of the keys* is made as to authoritative rule, except what is merely *doctrinal*. In what it does, there is a declaration of the mind of Christ as to the state of the persons whom they receive or reject. But as the church is *organic*, a peculiar authority is committed to the elders or rulers instated in it according to the mind of Christ, for those acts of admission and exclusion of members. To this end, the key of rule is committed to the elders of the church, to be applied with the consent of the whole society, as we will see afterward.

(2.) The *direction* of the church in all its members, is toward the observance of the rule and law of Christ in all things, for His glory and their own edification. And all these things may be reduced to these four heads: —

[1.] Mutual, intense, peculiar love among themselves, to be exercised continually in all its duties.

[2.] Personal holiness, in gracious moral obedience.

[3.] Usefulness towards the members of the same church, towards other churches, and all men absolutely, as occasion and

opportunity require.

[4.] The due performance of all those duties which all the members of the church mutually owe each other, by virtue of that place and order which they hold and possess in the body. Church rule is to be exercised about these things; for they all belong to the preservation of its being and the attainment of its ends.

(3.) To this also belongs the *disposal of the outward concerns* of the church in its assemblies, and in the management of all that is performed in them, so that “all things may be done *decently* and in order.” The disposal of times, seasons, places, the way and manner of managing all things in church-assemblies, the regulation of speeches and actions, the appointment of seasons for extraordinary duties according to the general rules of the word and the reason of things from present circumstances, are *acts of rule*, whose right resides in the *elders* of the church.

These things being premised, we may consider what is the work and duty of that sort of elders which we have proved to be placed by Christ for rule in the church. For considering that which has been spoken before concerning the pastoral office, or the duty of teaching elders of the church, and what has now been added concerning its *rule* in general, I cannot but admire that any one man should have such a confidence in his own abilities as to suppose himself fit and able to discharge the duties of both sorts in the least church of Christ that can well be supposed. Indeed, supposing there is more than one teaching elder in every church, if they are all and every one of them equally bound to give themselves to the word and prayer, so as not to be diverted from that work by any inferior duties, then if they are obliged to continually labor in the word and doctrine to the utmost of their strength, at length it will appear necessary to have some elders whose peculiar office and duty is to attend to *rule with diligence*. And the work of these elders consists in the following things: —

1. They are joined to the *teaching elders* in all acts and duties of church-power for the rule and government of the church; such are those declared before. This is plain in the text of 1Tim 5:17. Both sorts of elders are joined and concur in the same rule and all its acts, one sort of them laboring also in the word and doctrine. The presbytery or eldership is composed of both sorts, in which resides all church-authority. And in this conjunction, those

of both sorts are equal in every way, determining all acts of rule by their common suffrage. This gives order to the church in its government, with a necessary representation of authority.

2. They are, in particular, to attend to all things in which *the rule or discipline* of the church is concerned, with due care that the commands of Christ are duly observed by and among all the members of the church. This is the substance of the rule which Christ has appointed, whatever may be pretended to the contrary. Whatever is set up in the world in opposition to it, or that is inconsistent with it, under the name of *the government of the church*, is foreign to the gospel. Church-rule is a due care and provision that the institutions, laws, commands, and appointments of Jesus Christ are duly observed, and nothing else. And as to the duty of the elders, we may give some instances of this; such as —

(1.) *To watch diligently* over the ways, walking, and conversation of all the members of the church, to see that it is blameless, without offense, useful, exemplary, and in all things corresponding to the holiness of the commands of Christ, the honor of the gospel, and the profession which they make of it in the world. And upon the observation which they so make, in the watch in which they are placed, they are to instruct, admonish, charge, exhort, encourage, comfort, as they see cause. And this are they to attend to with courage and diligence.

(2.) To watch against all risings or appearances of such *differences* and divisions, on account of ecclesiastical or civil things, as to their names, rights, and proprieties in the world, as are contrary to that love which the Lord Christ requires in a peculiar and eminent manner to be found among his disciples. This he calls his own “new commandment” with respect to his authority requiring it, his example first illustrating it in the world, and the peculiar fruits and effects of it which he revealed and taught. This is why the due observance of this law of love, in itself and in all its fruits, with the prevention, removal, or condemnation of all that is contrary to it, is what the rule of the church principally consists in. And considering the weakness, the passions, the temptations of men, the mutual provocations and exasperations that are apt to occur even among the best — the influence that earthly occasions are apt to have on their minds, the frowardness sometimes of men’s natural tempers — attendance to this one duty or part of rule,

requires the utmost diligence of those who are called to it. And it is merely either the want of acquaintance with the nature of that law and its fruits which the Lord Christ requires among his disciples, or an undervaluation of the worth and glory of it in the church, or inadvertency as to the causes of its decays and breaches made in it, or ignorance of the care and duties that are necessary for its preservation, that induces men to judge that the work of an especial office is not required for it.

(3.) Their duty is to *warn all the members of the church* of their especial church-duties, so that they are not found negligent or lacking in them. There are *especial duties* required respective of all church-members, according to the distinct talents which they have received, whether in spiritual or temporal things. Some are rich, and some are poor; some are old, and some are young; some are in peace, some in trouble; some have received more spiritual gifts than others and have more opportunities for their exercise. It belongs to the rule of the church that all be admonished, instructed, and exhorted to attend to their respective duties, not only publicly in the *preaching of the word*, but *personally* as occasion requires, according to the observation which those in rule make of their forwardness or remissness in them. In particular, and in the way of instance, men are to be warned to contribute to the necessities of the poor and other occasions of the church, according to the ability that God in his providence has entrusted them with; and to admonish those who are defective in this, in order for their recovery to the discharge of this duty in such a measure as there may be an equality in the church, 2Cor 8:14. And they are to attend to all other duties of a like nature.

(4.) They are to watch against the beginnings of any *church-disorders*, such as those that infested the church at Corinth, or any of a like sort, with remissness as to [attending] the assemblies of the church and the duties of them, which some are subject to, as the apostle intimates in Heb 10:25. The very being and order of the church greatly depend on the constancy and diligence of the elders in this part of their work and duty. The lack of this has opened a door to all the troubles, divisions, and schisms that in all ages have invaded and perplexed the churches of Christ from within themselves. And from there, decays in faith,

love, and order insensibly have also prevailed in many, to the dishonor of Christ and the danger of their own souls. First one grows remiss in attending to the assemblies of the church, and then another, first to one degree, then to another, until the whole lump is infected. A diligent watch over these things, as to the beginnings of them in all the members of the church, will either heal and recover those who offend, or it will warn others, and keep the church from being either corrupted or defiled, Heb 3:12, 12:15.

(5.) It also belongs to them to *visit the sick*, especially those whose inward or outward conditions expose them to more than ordinary trials in their sickness; that is, the poor, the afflicted, those tempted in any way. This in general is a *moral duty*, a *work of mercy*; but it is moreover a peculiar church-duty by virtue of institution. And one end of the institution of churches is that the disciples of Christ may have all that spiritual and temporal relief which is needed for them and useful to them in their troubles and distresses. And if this duty were diligently attended to by the officers of the church, it would add much to the glory and beauty of our order, and be an abiding reserve with relief in the minds of them whose outward condition exposes them to straits and sorrows in such a season.

I add to this, as a duty of the same nature, the *visitation of those who suffer under restraint and imprisonment* on account of their profession, adherence to church-assemblies, or the discharge of any pastoral or office duties in them. This is a case with which we are not unacquainted, nor are we likely to be so. Some look at this as the duty of all the members of the church who still enjoy their liberty. And so it is as their opportunities and abilities will allow them, provided the discharge of it is useful to those whom they visit, and inoffensive to others. But this duty diligently attended to by the elders, representing in this the care and love of the whole church, even of Christ himself to his prisoners, is a great spring of relief and comfort to them. And by the elders, may the church be acquainted with what yet is required of them in a way of duty on their account. The care of the primitive churches in this was most eminent.

(6.) It belongs to them and their office to *advise and give direction to the deacons* of the church as to making provision for and distributing

the charity of the church for the relief of the poor. The office of the deacons is principally to execute, as we will see afterward. But inquiring into the state of the poor, with all their circumstances, along with warning all the members of the church to be liberal for their supply, belongs to the *elders*.

(7.) When the state of the church is such that, through suffering, persecution, and affliction, *the poor are multiplied among them*, and the church itself is not able to provide for their relief in a due manner, then if any supply is sent to them from the love and bounty of other churches, it is to be deposited *with these elders*, and disposed according to their advice, with that of the teachers of the church, Act 11:30.

(8.) It is also their duty, according to the advantage they have by their peculiar inspection of all the members of the church, their ways and their walking, *to acquaint the pastors* or teaching elders of the church *with the state of the flock*. This may be of singular use to them for their direction in the present work of the ministry. Whoever does not make it his business to know the state of the church which he ministers to in the word and doctrine, as to their knowledge, their judgment and understanding, their temptations and occasions, and does not apply himself in his ministry to search out what is necessary and useful for their edification, he fights uncertainly in his whole work, as a man beating the air. But whereas their obligation to attend to the word and prayer greatly confines them to retirement for most of their time, they cannot by themselves obtain that acquaintance with the whole flock; but others may greatly assist in it from their daily inspection, converse, and observation.

(9.) And it is their duty to *meet and consult with the teaching-elders* about those things of importance that are to be proposed in and to the church, for its consent and compliance. Hence nothing crude or undigested, nothing unsuited to the sense and duty of the church, will at any time be proposed in this, so as to give occasion for contests or janglings, or disputes contrary to order or decency. Rather, all things may be preserved in a due regard for the gravity and authority of the rulers.

(10.) To take care of the *due liberties* of the church, so that they are not imposed on by any type of Diotrephes, in office or outside it.

(11.) It is incumbent on them in times of difficulties and persecution, to *consult together with the other elders* concerning all those things which concern the present duty of the church from time to time, and their preservation from violence, according to the will of Christ.

(12.) Because there may be and often is but one teaching-elder, pastor, or teacher in a church, upon his death or removal it is the work and duty of these elders to *preserve the church in peace and unity*, to take care of the continuation of its assemblies, to prevent irregularities in any persons or parties among them, and to go before to direct and guide the church in the call and choice of some other fit person or persons in place of the deceased or removed.

I have given these few instances of the work and duty of ruling-elders. All of them deserve a greater enlargement in their declaration and confirmation than I can afford here, and other various things of a like nature, especially with respect to communion with other churches and synods. But what has been said is sufficient for my present purpose. And to manifest that this is so, I will add the ensuing observations: —

1. All the things insisted on undoubtedly and unquestionably belong to the rule and order appointed by Christ in his church. Not one of them is liable to any just exception from those by whom all church-order is despised. Therefore, where there is a defect in them, or any of them, the church itself is defective as to its own edification. And where this defect is great in many of them, there can be no beauty, no glory, no order in any church, but only an outward show and appearance of them. And no other proof or confirmation that all these things belong to the duty of these elders is needed, than that they all undoubtedly and unquestionably belong to that rule and order which the Lord Christ has appointed in his church, and which the Scripture testifies to both in general and particularly. For all the things which belong to the rule of the church are committed to the care of the rulers of the church.

2. It is a vain apprehension to suppose that one or two teaching officers in a church, who are obliged to “give themselves to the word and prayer,” to “labor” with all their might “in the word and doctrine,” to “preach in season

and out of season” — that is, at all times, on all opportunities, as they are able — to convince deniers by pleading for the truth in word and writing; to assist and guide the consciences of all those under temptations and desertions; along with sundry other duties, spoken to in part before — that they should be able to take care of and attend with diligence, those things that evidently belong to the rule of the church.

And hence churches at this day live on the preaching of the word — the proper work of their pastors, which they greatly value — but are very little sensible of the wisdom, goodness, love, and care of Christ in the institution of this rule in the church; nor are they partakers of its benefits for their edification. The supply which many have had in this up to now, by persons who are either unacquainted with their duty, or insensible of their own authority, or cold if not negligent in their work, does not correspond to the end of their institution. Hence the authority of church government, and its benefit, are ready to be lost in most churches. It is vainly and presumptuously pleaded, to countenance a neglect of their order, that some churches walk in love and peace, and are edified *without* it, supplying some defects by the prudent aid of some of their members. For it is nothing but a preference of our own wisdom over the wisdom and authority of Christ, or at best an unwillingness to venture upon the warranty of His rule, for fear of some disadvantages that may ensue from it.

3. Whereas a number of the duties mentioned before, as to their substance, are required *of the members of the church* in their several stations, without any especial obligation to attend to them with diligence, to look after them, nor power to exercise any authority in the discharge of them — to then leave them from being under the office-care of the elders, is to let confusion and disorder into the church, and to gradually remove the whole advantage of the discipline of Christ; as it has come to pass in many churches already.

It is therefore evident that neither the purity, nor the order, nor the beauty or glory of the churches of Christ, nor the representation of His own majesty and authority in their government, can be long preserved without a multiplication of elders in them, according to the proportion of their respective members, for their rule and guidance. And for lack of this, churches of old and of late have either degenerated into anarchy and confusion — their self-rule being managed with vain disputes and janglings, to their division and ruin — or else they have surrendered

themselves to the domination of some prelatical teachers, to rule them at their pleasure. These proved to be the bane and poison of all the primitive churches; and they will and must do so in the neglect of this order for the future.

CHAPTER 9. OF DEACONS.

THE original institution, nature, and use of the office of *deacons* in the church, are so well known that we need not insist much upon them; nor will I address the term itself, which is common to any kind of ministry, whether civil or sacred. Rather, I will speak of it as appropriated to that special work for which this office was ordained.

The remote foundation of it lies in that saying of our Savior, “The poor you will always have with you,” Joh 12:8. He not only foretells that there would be such persons in the church, but he recommends their care to the church: for he uses these words of the Law: Deu 15:11, “The poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, saying, You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor, and to your needy.” The Lord Christ, by his authority, transfers and translates this legal institution, founded in the law of nature, for the use of gospel churches among his disciples.

And it may be observed that, at the same instant, hypocrisy and avarice began their advance on the consideration of this provision for the poor, which they afterward effected for their safety; for on this pretense, Judas immediately condemned an eminent duty towards the person of Christ, as having a cost which might better have been laid out in provision for the poor. He thought the ointment poured on our Savior might have been “sold for three hundred pence” ¹²⁸ (it may be about forty or fifty pounds ¹²⁹), “and given to the poor.” Joh 12:5 But “he said this, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag,” out of which he could have made a good profit for himself, Joh 12:6. And it may be observed that although Judas maliciously began this murmuring, yet in the end, some of the other disciples were also credulous of his insinuation, seeing the other evangelists ascribe it to them also.¹³⁰ But the same pretense, on the same grounds, in following ages, was turned to the greatest advantage of hypocrisy and covetousness that was ever in the world. For under this pretense of providing for the poor, the thieves who had gotten the bag — that is, the rifling part of the clergy, with the priests, friars, and monks who served them — allowed men to neglect the greatest and most important duties of religion towards Christ himself, so they would give all that they had to the poor. It was not that they cared for the poor, but because they were thieves, and “had the bag.” By this means they got possession for

themselves of the greatest part of the wealth of the nations that professed the Christian religion. This was their compliance with the command of Christ, which they equally made use of in other things.

This foundation of their office was further raised by preaching the gospel among the poor. Many of those who first received it were in that state and condition, as the Scripture testifies everywhere: “The poor are evangelized,” Mat 11:5; “God has chosen the poor,” Jas 2:5. And so it was in the first ages of the church, when the provision for them was one of the most eminent graces and duties of the church in those days. And this way reflected well on the original propagation of the gospel; for it was made manifest by it, that the doctrine and the profession of the gospel were not a matter of worldly design or advantage. God also declared in it how little his esteem is of the riches of this world. And also provision was made for the exercise of the grace of the rich in the supply of the poor: the only way by which they may glorify God with their substance. And it would be well if all churches, and all their members, would wisely consider how eminent this grace is, how excellent this duty is, of making provision for the poor — how much the glory of Christ and the honor of the gospel are concerned in it. For the most part, it is looked at as an ordinary work, to be performed transiently and cursorily, scarcely deserving of any of the time allotted to the church’s public service and duties. And yet it is indeed one of the most *eminent* duties of Christian societies, in which the principal exercise of the second evangelical grace consists; namely, love.¹³¹

The care of making provision for the poor having been made an institution of Christ in the church, it was naturally incumbent on those who were *the first and only officers of the church*; that is, the *apostles*. This is plain from the occasion of the institution of the office of deacons in Act 6:1-6.¹³² The whole work and care of the church being in their hands, it was impossible for them in any way to attend to the whole, and to all of its parts. Therefore they gave themselves, according to their duty, mostly to those parts of their work which were incomparably more excellent and necessary than the other — namely, preaching the word and prayer. But there was such a defect in this *other* part — of ministration to the poor — as unavoidably accompanies the actings of human nature, when it is not able to apply itself constantly to things of diverse natures at the same time. And as is the way of all, those who were concerned in it, quickly expressed their resentment

of neglect, in a somewhat undue order; there was, verse 1, “a murmuring” about it. The apostles thereupon declared that the principal part of the work of the ministry in the church, namely, the word and prayer, was sufficient for them to constantly attend to. Afterward, indeed, men began to think that they could do *everything* in the church themselves; but that was when they began to do *nothing* in a due manner. The apostles chose as their duty, the work of prayer and preaching — to which they would and ought to give themselves entirely. And for the sake of that work, they would deposit the care of other things in other hands. They are a strange kind of successors to the apostles, who would lay aside that work which the apostles determined belong to them, principally and in the first place, in order to apply themselves to anything else whatever.

Yet the apostles did not utterly forego in this the care of providing for the poor, which being originally committed to them by Jesus Christ, they would not divest themselves wholly of it. But by the direction of the Holy Ghost, they provided such assistance in the work that for the future it might require no more of their time or pains than what they should spare from their principal employment. And the same care is still incumbent on the ordinary pastors and elders of the churches, so long as executing it does not interfere with their principal work and duty; a duty from which those who understand it correctly can spare but little of their time and strength.

Hereupon the apostles, by the authority of Christ and the direction of the Holy Spirit — whose infallible guidance they were under in all the general concerns of the church — instituted the office of deacons to discharge this necessary and important duty in the church, a duty which they could not attend to themselves. And though the Lord Christ had in a special way committed the care of the poor to the disciples, there was now a declaration of his mind and will *in what way and by what means* he would have them provided for.

What they designed was *the institution of a new office*, and not just a present supply *in a work of business*. For the delimitation of a special ecclesiastic work, with the designation of persons to do that work, with authority to discharge it, who are set over this business with a separation to it, completely constitutes an *office*; nor is anything more required for it.

But there are three things that concur and are required to minister to the poor of the church —

1. The love, charity, bounty, and benevolence of the members of the church, in contribution to that ministration;
2. The care and oversight of its discharge; and,
3. The actual exercise and application of it;

Only the last belongs to the office of the deacons, and neither of the first two is discharged by the institution of that office. For the first is a duty of both the light and law of nature; and in its moral part, it is enforced by many special commands of Christ — so that nothing can absolve men from their obligation to it. The office and work of the deacons is to excite, direct, and help them in the exercise of that grace and discharge of the duty that is incumbent on them. Nor is any man, by entrusting a due proportion of his good things into the hands of the deacons for its distribution, absolved by that from his own *personal* discharge of it also. For being a moral duty required in the law of nature, it receives particular obligations to a present exercise by such circumstances as nature and providence suggest. The care of the whole work is also, as was said, still incumbent on the pastors and elders of the church; only its ordinary *execution* is committed to the deacons.

Nor was this a *temporary institution only* for that season — which would make the officers who were appointed *extraordinary*. But the office was to abide in the church throughout all generations; for —

1. The *work itself, as a* distinct work of ministry in the church, was never to cease; it was to abide forever: “The poor you will always have with you.”
2. The *reason for its institution* is perpetual; namely, that the pastors of the churches are not sufficient in themselves to attend to the whole work of praying, preaching, and *also* this ministration.
3. They are afterward, not only in this church at Jerusalem, but in all the churches of the Gentiles, reckoned among the *fixed officers* of the church, as in Phi 1:1.¹³³ And,
4. Direction is given for their *continuation* in all churches, with a prescription for the qualifications of the persons to be chosen and called to this office, 1Tim 3:8-10, 12, 13.¹³⁴

5. The way of their call is directed, and an *office* is committed to them: “Let them be first proved, and then let them use the office of a deacon.”

6. A *promise of acceptance* is annexed to the diligent discharge of this office, verse 13.

Hence there were those who afterward utterly perverted all church-order, taking out of the hands and care of the deacons that work which was committed to them by the Holy Ghost in the apostles, and for which end alone their office was instituted in the church. They assigned other work to them, to which they are not called or appointed, and yet they thought it fit to continue the name and the pretense of such an office, because it was evidently instituted for continuation. When all things were swelling with pride and ambition in the church, none of its officers were content with their primitive institution. And so, striving by various degrees to have something high and lofty in name, there arose from the name of this office, the meteor of an archdeacon [vested] with strange power and authority never heard of in the church for many ages. This belongs to the mystery of iniquity, to which neither the Scripture nor the practice of the primitive churches gives the least countenance. But some think it is not inconsistent even to promote themselves in matters of church order and constitution.

This office of *deacons* is an office of *service*, which does not give any authority or power in the rule of the church. But being an office, it gives authority with respect to its special work, under a general notion of authority. That is, it gives a right to attend to it in a particular manner, and to perform the things that belong to it. *But this right is confined to the particular church to which they belong.* They are to make their collections from the members of that church, and they are to administer them to the members of that church. Extraordinary collections from or for other churches are to be made and disposed by the elders, Act 11:30.¹³⁵

The reason for the institution of this office was, in general, to free the pastors of the churches who labor in the word and doctrine, from avocations ¹³⁶ by outward things, such as those in which the church is concerned. It belongs to the deacons not only to take care of and provide for the poor, but to manage all other affairs of the church of the same kind; such as providing for the place of church-assemblies, the elements for the sacraments, collecting, keeping, and disposing of the stock of the church for the

maintenance of its officers and incidences, especially in time of trouble or persecution. For this, they are obliged to attend the elders on all occasions, to perform the duty of the church towards them, and to receive directions from them. This was the constant practice of the church in the primitive times, until the avarice and ambition of the superior clergy restricted all alms and donations to themselves. The beginning and progress of this is excellently described and traced by Paulus Sarpus in his treatise on beneficiary matters.

That maintenance of the poor which they are to distribute, is to be collected by the voluntary contributions of the church, to be made ordinarily every first day of the week, and as occasion requires in an extraordinary circumstance (1Cor 16:1-2).¹³⁷ And this contribution of the church ought to be —

1. In a way of *bounty*, not sparingly, 2Cor 9:5-7;¹³⁸
2. In a way of *equality*, according to men's abilities, 2Cor 8:13-14;¹³⁹
3. With respect to *present successes* and thriving in affairs, of which a portion is due to God, "As God has prospered him," 1Cor 16:2;¹⁴⁰
4. With *willingness* and freedom, 2Cor 8:12.¹⁴¹

This is why it belongs to the deacons, in the discharge of their office —

1. To acquaint the church with the present necessity of the poor;
2. To stir up the particular members of it to a free contribution, according to their ability;
3. To admonish those who are negligent in this, who do not give according to their proportion; and to acquaint the elders of the church with those who persist in neglecting their duty.

The consideration of the state of the poor to whom the contributions of the church are to be administered, belongs to the discharge of this office; such as —

1. That they are *poor indeed*, and do not pretend to be poor for advantage;
2. What the *degrees* of their poverty are with respect to their relations and circumstances, that they may have suitable supplies;¹⁴²

3. That in other things, they walk according to rule;¹⁴³
4. In particular, that they *work and labor* according to their ability, for “he who will not labor must not eat” at the public charge;¹⁴⁴
5. To comfort, counsel, and exhort them to *patience*, submission, contentment with their condition, and thankfulness — all of which might be enlarged and confirmed, except that they are obvious.

The qualifications of persons to be called to this office are distinctly laid down by the apostle in 1Tim 3:8-13.¹⁴⁵ Upon their trial, knowledge, and approval with respect to these qualifications, their call to this office consists of —

1. In the *choice* of the church;
2. In a *separation* to it by prayer and imposition of hands, Act 6:3, 5, 6.¹⁴⁶

And the adjuncts of their ministration are —

1. *Mercy*, to represent the tenderness of Christ towards the poor of the flock, Rom 12:8.¹⁴⁷
2. *Cheerfulness*, to relieve the spirits of those who receive benevolences, against thoughts of being troublesome and burdensome to others.
3. *Diligence* and faithfulness, by which they “purchase for themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”
1Tim 3.13

It remains only to inquire into a few things relating to this office, and to those who are called to it; such as —

1. What is the meaning of the apostle where he affirms that the deacons, in the discharge of their office, 1Tim 3:13,¹⁴⁸ “purchase (or procure) for themselves a good degree.” This is “a step, a degree, a seat that is a little exalted;” and metaphorically it is applied to denote dignity and authority. This good degree which deacons may obtain (in the judgment of most) is the office of presbytery. They will be promoted to this in the church: from deacons they will be made presbyters. I cannot comply with this interpretation of the words: for —

(1.) The office of presbytery is called “a good work;” ¹⁴⁹ but nowhere called “a good degree.” ¹⁵⁰

(2.) The difference between a deacon and a presbyter is not in *degree* but in *order*. A deacon who is made a presbyter has not advanced to a further degree in his own order, but he leaves it for another.

(3.) The diligent discharge of the work of a deacon is not a due preparation for the office of the presbytery, but a hinderance of it: for it lies wholly in providing and disposing of earthly things, in serving the tables of the church, and those are private, of the poor. But preparation for the ministry consists in a man’s giving himself to study, prayer, and meditation.

I will only give my conjecture on the words. The apostle seems to me to speak to church-order, with decency in it, in both of these expressions, “Purchase for themselves a good degree,” and, “Great confidence in the faith.” It has the same meaning as a seat raised in an assembly to hear or speak.¹⁵¹ So says the school on Soph. — Ed. Tyr. 142:

“The place where the assembly (or church) met was divided round about with seats in degrees, some above others, where all that met might without trouble hear him that stood in the midst as they sat.” ¹⁵²

And countenance is given to this by what is observed concerning the custom of sitting in the Jewish synagogues. So Ambrose writes:

“It is the tradition (or order) of the synagogue, that the elders in dignity (or office) should discourse sitting in chairs; the next order on form (or benches); and the last on the floor.” ¹⁵³

So says Philo before him:

“When we meet in sacred places,” places of divine worship, “the younger sort, according to their quality, sit in orders under the elders.” ¹⁵⁴

And James the apostle speaks to this in the primitive assemblies of the Christian Jew; for, reproving their partiality in regarding men’s

personage, preferring the rich immoderately before the poor, he gives an instance in allocating seats to them in their assemblies. They said to the rich man, “Sit here in a good place,” ¹⁵⁵ — that is, “in the best degree” ¹⁵⁶ — and to the poor, “Stand there,” on the floor, or “Sit at my footstool,” without respect to those other qualifications by which they were to be distinguished. This is why, having respect to church-assemblies and the order to be observed in them, the apostle uses the phrase *kalos bathmos* here. His intent may be to signify no more than a place of some eminence in the church-assemblies which is due to such deacons, where with boldness and confidence they may assist in the management of the affairs of the church — which belongs to the profession of faith which is in Christ Jesus.

If any rather think that both expressions signify an increase in gifts and grace — which is a certain consequence of men’s faithful discharge of their office in the church, and in which many deacons of old were eminent unto martyrdom — I will not contend against it.

2. There are qualifications expressly required in the wives of deacons, such as, they should be “grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things,” 1Tim 3:11. These are to be considered before the husband’s call to office. Supposing that their wives fall from the faith — such as becoming Papists, Socinians, or Quakers — may their husbands continue in office?

Ans. 1. The one who faithfully discharges his office may be continued in it, yes, even if his wife should be actually excommunicated from the church. Every one of us must give an account of *himself* to the Lord. He does not reject us for what we cannot remedy. The sinning person shall bear his own judgment.

Ans. 2. Such a deacon ought to take care, by virtue of his *authority* as a husband, that as little offense as possible may be given to the church by his wife, when she gains the reputation of being a slanderer, which is inseparable from such apostates. ¹⁵⁷

3. May a deacon be wholly dismissed from his office, after he has been solemnly set apart to it by prayer?

Ans. 1. The very end of the office is only for the convenience of the church and its accommodation; thus the continuation of men

in this office is to be regulated by the church. And if the church at any time does not stand in need of the ministry of this or that person, they may, *at his desire*, discharge him from his office.

Ans. 2. Things may so fall out with men as to their outward circumstances, with respect to either their persons in bodily distempers and infirmities, or their condition in the world, such that they are *not able* to attend to the due discharge of this office any longer; in which case they ought to be released.

Ans. 3. A man may be solemnly set apart to a work and duty by prayer for a *limited season*, suppose for a year only; therefore this does not preclude a man, on just reasons, being dismissed at *any* time from his office, even though he has been set apart to it.

Ans. 4. A deacon, by unfaithfulness and other offenses, may *forfeit* his office and be justly excluded from it, losing all his right to it and interest in it; and therefore, on just reasons, he may be wholly dismissed from it.

Ans. 5. For anyone to *desert* his office, through frowardness, [158](#) covetousness, sloth, or negligence, is an offense and scandal which the church ought to take notice of.

Ans. 6. Someone who desires dismissal from his office ought to give an account of his desires and the reasons for them to the church, so that the ministry which he held may be duly supplied, and love may be continued between him and the church.

4. How many deacons may there be in one congregation?

Ans. As many as they stand in need of for the ends of that ministry; and they may be at all times increased as the state of the church requires; and it is fitting that there should always be as many as needed, so that none of the poor are neglected in the daily ministrations, and so that the work will not be made burdensome to themselves.

5. What is the duty of the deacons towards the elders of the church?

Ans. Though the care of the whole church, in all its concerns, is principally committed to the pastors, teachers, and ruling elders, it

is the duty of the deacons, in the discharge of their office —

1. To acquaint them from time to time with the state of the church, and especially of the poor, so far as it falls under their inspection;

2. To seek and take their advice in matters of greater importance relating to their office;

3. To assist them in all the outward concerns of the church.

6. May deacons preach the word and baptize authoritatively by virtue of their office?

Ans. 1. The deacons, whose office is instituted in Acts 6, and whose qualifications are fixed in 1Tim 3, have no call to or ministerial power in these things. The limitation of their office, work, and power is so express that will not allow for any debate.

Ans. 2. Persons once called to this office might of old, in an *extraordinary* manner, and may at present, in an *ordinary* way, be called to the preaching of the word; but they were not then, and they cannot now be authorized to it by virtue of this office [alone].

Ans. 3. If a *new office* is erected under the name of deacons, it is in the will of those by whom it is erected to assign what power to it they please.

Notes

[←1]

Works of John Owen, vol. 16, 1850-53 edition, William Goold, ed.

[←2]

Hardihood: willing to undertake things that involve risk or danger.

[←3]

Animadversions: Harsh criticism or disapproval.

[←4]

A cure is a *curate*, the territory or neighborhood over which the pastorate exercises care for its people.

[←5]

Prelacy: one man (an *archbishop*), or a group of men (a *classis*), is given jurisdiction over a number of churches.

[←6]

Owen is not saying that the congregations should meet as one, but that their elders should. –
WHG

[←7]

Cockatrice: a mythological monster hatched by a reptile from a cock's egg; able to kill with a glance.

[←8]

Isa 11:2-3 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. ³ His delight *is* in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; **Isa 61:1-3** “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound; ² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, ³ To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” **Joh 3:34** "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. **Luk 4:14** Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee...

[←9]

Works, vol. 4, “Two Discourses Concerning the Holy Spirit and His Work,” esp. chaps. 7 and 8.

[←10](#)

Isa 40:11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry *them* in His bosom, *And* gently lead those who are with young.

[← 11](#)

Heb 5:4 And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

[←12](#)

mb,l; Wbh

[←13]

ou[tw kai< nu~n gi>nesqai e]dei.

[←14](#)

Ceirotonh>santev aujtoi~v preszute>rouv kat jejkklhsi>an, proseuxa>menoi meta<nhsteiw~n.

[←15](#)

Hysterology: A figure of speech by which the ordinary course of thought is inverted, and the last is put first.

[←16](#)

William Tyndale or Tindal (1494-1536), whose English translation of the NT was the basis of the KJV. – WHG

[←17]

In Titus 1.5, the Greek for “appoint” is καταστήσῃς (*katasteses*, to set or put in place). It doesn’t say how. The sense is to *get elders appointed*. The Greek is *subjunctive*, meaning it’s a passive or contingent action. Owen implies that it was done by a show of hands, as in Acts 14.23. – WHG

[←18](#)

The LXX uses this in Isa 58:9, where they render the Hebrew $\text{לָמַד} [\text{Bx}]_a$, “putting forth the finger,” in an bad sense, by χειροτονία (*chaironesia*). χειροτονείν (*cheirotonein*), which is the same as ταχειραίρειν (*tas cheiras airein*).

[←19](#)

As Aristophanes witnesses: {Omww de< ceironhte>on jExwmisa>saiv to<n e[teron
braci>ona. — Ecclesiastes 266.

[←20]

This passage is not in the first Philippic, though in that speech *ceirotone>w* occurs frequently in the sense referred to. Owen seems to have found this sentence in Stephens, who does not specify where it actually occurs in Demosthenes. The following expressions, however, are to be found in it, and are sufficient authority for the statement of our author: *Oujk ejceirotonei~te de< ejx uJmw~n aujtw~n de>ka taxia>rcouv... Eijv th<najgora<n ceirotonei~te tou<v taxia>rcouv.* — Ed.

[←21]

Ou]te boulh~v, ou]te dh>mou ceirotonh>santov aujto>n. Ceirotoni>a was the act of choosing; whose effect was yh>fisma (*yephisma*) the determining vote or suffrage. “*Porrexerunt manus: psephisma natum est,*” says Cicero, speaking of the manner of the Greeks, Pro Flacco, 7. And when there was a division in choice, it was determined by the greater suffrage (majority): Thucyd. lib. 3 cap. 49 Kai< ejge>nonto ejn th~| ceirotoni>a| ajgcw>maloi? ejkra>thse de< hJ tou~ Diodo>tou. As many instances of this nature may be produced as there are reports of calling men unto magistracy by election in the Greek historians; and all the further compositions of the word signify to *choose*, *confirm*, or *abrogate*, by common suffrage.

[←22](#)

Ceirotonhqeiv uJpo tw~n ejkklhsiw~n sune>kdhmov hJmw~n.

[←23](#)

Augustine of Hippo (354-430).

[←24](#)

Augustine, *Tractat.* 124. in Johan.

[←25](#)

1Cor 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. **2Cor 2:6** This punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority *is* sufficient for such a man.

[←26](#)

Cyprian, *Epistle 67*, par. 3. – WHG

[←27](#)

Any such degeneracy is a deficiency of the elders, who are responsible to equip and edify the saints. – WHG

[←28]

Just., lib. 1 cap. 1. *“Principio rerum, gentium nationumque imperium penes reges erat; quos ad fastigium hujus majestatis, non ambitio popularis, sed spectata inter bonos moderatio provehebat,”*

[←29](#)

“Praesident probati quique seniores, honorem istum non pretio, sed testimonio adepti,”

[←30](#)

Regular: in accordance with a fixed order, standard, pattern, procedure, or principle.

[←31](#)

suneudokhsa>shv th~v ejkklhsi>av pa>shv.

[←32](#)

Epist. ad Philadelph., cap. 10, Pre>pon ejsti<n uJmi~n, wJv ejkklhsi>a| Qeou~, ceirotonh>sai
ejpi>skopon.

[←33](#)

Tertull. Apol., “Praesident probati quique seniores, honorem istum non pretio, sed testimonio adepti,”

[←34]

“Nec sibi plebs blandiatur, quasi immunis esse a contagio delicti possit cure sacerdote peccatore communicans, et ad injustum et citum praepositi sui episcopatum consensum suum commodans.... Propter quod plebs obsequens praeceptis Dominicis et Deum metuens, a peccatore praeposito separare se debet, nec se ad sacrilegi sacerdotis sacrificia miscere; quando ipsa maxime habeat potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes vel indignos recusandi, quod et ipsum videmus de divina autoritate descendere;”

[←35]

“Quod postea secundum divina magisteria observatur in Actis Apostolorum, quando in ordinando in locum Judae apostolo, Petrus ad plebem loquitur. ‘Surrexit,’ inquit, ‘Petrus in medio discentium, fuit autem turba hominum forte centum viginti.’ Nec hoc in episcoporum tantum et sacerdotum, sed in diaconorum ordinationibus observasse apostolos animadvertimus de quo et ipso in actis eorum scriptum est. ‘Et convocarunt,’ inquit, ‘illi duodecim totam plebem discipulorum, et dixerunt eis,’” etc.;

[←36](#)

“de universe fraternitatis suffragio.”

[←37]

*“Diligenter de traditione divina, et apostolica observatione servandum estet tenendum apud
nes quoque et fete per universas provincias tenetur;”*

[←38](#)

A reply by a pope to an inquiry concerning a point of law or morality.

[←39](#)

Probably David Blondel (1591-1655). – WHG

[←40]

Jus patronatus: the right of patronage. In Roman Catholic canon law, this is a set of rights and obligations of someone, known as the *patron*, in connection with a gift of land or of a paid clerical office (a *benefice*). – WHG

[←41](#)

In other words, there is nothing magical in the laying on of hands; it is a sign, nothing more. –
WHG

[←42](#)

John 21:15-17 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”

[←43](#)

Assiduity: constant diligence and attention.

[←44](#)

Acts 20:27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God; **1Cor 2:4-7** And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. ⁶ However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory; **Eph 3:8-11** To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord;

[←45](#)

Eph 1:15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.

[←46](#)

Jas 5:16; Joh 17:20; Exo 32:11; Deu 9:18; Lev 16:24; 1Sam 12:23; 2Cor 13:7, 9; Eph 1:15-19,3:14; Phi 1:4; Col 1:3; and 2The 1:11.

[←47](#)

Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ... **1Cor 12:27** Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. ²⁸ And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

[←48]

1Cor 4:1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
1Tim 3:15 but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. **Mat 24:45** Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?

[←49](#)

Acts 20:28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **1Pet 5:2** Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.

1Tim 1:3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia-- remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, ⁴ nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. **1Tim 4:6** If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ⁷ But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. **1Tim 4:16** Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. **1Tim 6:20** O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. **2Tim 1:14** That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. **2Tim 2:25** ...in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth... **2Tim 3:14** But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[←51](#)

Acts 20:28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

[←52](#)

1Cor 14:24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. ²⁵ And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you. **Phil 1:14, 15, 18** ...and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much bolder to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will... ¹⁸ What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. **1Pet 4:10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

[←53](#)

1Cor 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

[←54]

With respect to calling the members of the larger church; 'catholic' here means *as a whole* or *entire*. – WHG

[←55]

Refers to the Roman Catholic tradition of “confession in the ear” (confessional). To read about such abuses, see William Tyndale’s [The Obedience of a Christian Man](#), 1528, “Of Confession,” p. 57ff. – WHG

[←56](#)

1Tim 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³ not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴ one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶ not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil. ⁷ Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. **Titus 2:6** Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷ in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, ⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. ⁹ *Exhort* bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things*, not answering back...

[←57](#)

Benefice: an endowed church office giving income to its holder.

[←58](#)

To *unchurch* is to separate from the church; to excommunicate, or withdraw from communion with them.

[←59](#)

1 Pet 4:10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. **1Cor 14:12** Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel.

[←60](#)

Acts 13:1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.

[←61](#)

1Cor 16:3 And when I come, whomever you approve by *your* letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. **2Cor 3:1** Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you? **3John 1:9** I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

[←62](#)

Acts 14:23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. **Titus 1:5** For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.

[←63](#)

Acts 20:28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **Phil 1:1** Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons; **Rev 2:2** "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

[←64](#)

Epist. *Conc. Ephesians* 1, ad Synod. in Pamphyl.

[←65](#)

Interdict: to command against; prohibit or forbid.

[←66](#)

Conc. Nicae. can. 15, 16; Chalced., can. 5, 20.

[←67]

In 379, the synod at Antioch, under-archbishop Meletios, asked Gregory to go to Constantinople to convince that city to embrace Nicene orthodoxy. He gave five discourses on Nicene doctrine, explaining the nature of the Trinity and the unity of the Godhead, against the *Arian* and *Apollinarian* heresies (*subordinationism* and *monophysitism*). – WHG

[←68](#)

Orat. 52, et Vit. Greg. Nazian.

[←69](#)

Mat 23:8 "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

[←70](#)

Pantaenus (d. 200) – a Greek theologian in the Catechetical School of Alexandria from around AD 180. This school was the earliest catechetical school, and became influential in the development of Christian theology. – WHG

[←71](#)

1Co 14:5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. **1Co 14:24-25** But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. ²⁵ And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

[←72](#)

1Pet 4:10-11 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...

[←73](#)

Acts 8:4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. **Act 18:26** So [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. **1Co 14:29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.

[←74](#)

Joh 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "*Rabboni!*" (which is to say, *Teacher*).

[←75](#)

Mar 10:51 "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "*Rabboni*, that I may receive my sight."

[←76](#)

So given in the textus receptus. Critical editions of the new Testament now give rJazzouni> — ED.

[←77]

Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers... **1Cor 12:28** And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

[←78](#)

Act 13:1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

[←79](#)

Rom 12:7 or ministry, *let us use it in our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

[←80](#)

These were *apologists*, as in Act 19.33 and 1Pet 3.15: “give a defense,” Gr. *apologia*. These exhortations are given to all, and not only to officers of the church. It’s not exclusive: Tit 1.9, a bishop “must hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” – WHG

[←81](#)

Gal 6:6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

[←82](#)

Gr. – “and he himself gave some as apostles [*tous men apostolous – indeed the apostles*], some to be prophets [*tous de prophetas – and the prophets*], and some as evangelists [*tous de euaggelistas – and the evangelists*], and some to be pastors and teachers [*tous **de** poimenas **kai** didaskalous – and (de) the pastors and (kai) teachers*]. Owen says in effect, there should be a comma inserted: “and the pastors, and [also] teachers.” This is indicated by the change in the connector from “*de*” to “*kai*,” seeing that both can be translated “and.” Why else the change? – WHG

[←83](#)

1Cor 12:28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

Act 13:1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain *prophets and teachers*: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

[←84](#)

Acts 13:1-2 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain *prophets and teachers*. As they ministered (*leitourgeo*) to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” [The word *leitourgeo* means to provide a service or do a work.] – WHG]

[←85](#)

1Cor 4:15 For though you might have ten thousand instructors (*pedagogy*) in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

[←86](#)

Though they must still be “apt to teach,” and therefore may occasionally preach. – WHG

[←87](#)

That is, a pastor or teacher must first pastor and teach in a particular church, and only then “at large.” – WHG

[←88](#)

Pro 26.17 LXX, “makes himself a judge (ruler) over strangers,” (a sarcastic use of the word). –
WHG

[←89](#)

As churches gathered together within a city or region, administrators were added in the form of a political hierarchy, ostensibly to organize its activities, validate its ordinations, preserve its sacraments, and protect its teachings. - WHG

[←90](#)

1Tim 4:12-16 “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity... give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you... Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

[←91](#)

1Pet 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a **fellow elder** and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers** (*episkopos*), not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords (*kata-kurieuo*) over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

[←92](#)

That is, *tangential*; acting on behalf of the congregation, rather than Christ.

[←93]

Jejune: insufficient to meet the need, or inadequate to prove the point.

[←94](#)

OiJ kalw~v proestw~tev preszu>teroi diplh~v timh~v ajxiou>sqwsan, ma>lista oiJ kopiw~ntev ejn lo>gw| kai< didaskali>a| . Proi`>sthmi, or proi`>tamai, is “praesum, praesideo,” to preside, to rule: “Praesident probati seniores,” Tertul. And the bishop or pastor in Justin Martyr is oJ proestw>v. So is the word constantly used in the New Testament: Rom 12:8, jO proi`sta>menov, — “That rules;” 1The 5:12, Proi`stame>nouv uJmw~n, — “Who are over you,” that is, in a place of rule;

[←95](#)

1Tim 3:4 one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); **1Ti 3:12** Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well.

Prostasi>a is the whole presidency in the church with respect to its rule. Translators agree in the reading of these words: so the Hebrew of Munster, ghonili μybiyfiyfe rv,a} hd; [eh;Ayneq]zi — “*The elders* of the congregation who well discharge their rule or conduct;” so the Syriac, ^yleyai avey]Vqi, — “Those elders;” “Qui bene praesunt presbyteri,” Vulg. Lat.; “Seniori che governano bene,” Ital. All agree that it is the governors and government of the church in general that are here intended. Ma>lista is the word most controverted; all translators esteem it distinctive: Hebrews hlo[;w], “eminently;” Syr. tyair;ytiy’ “chiefly, principally;” “maxime;” oiJ kopiw~ntev, my[igewOYh’, — “who labor painfully,” labor to weariness, travail in the *word and doctrine*.

[←97](#)

Tit 3:8, 14 “those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.”

[←98]

Analogy of faith — WCF (1.9): “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” – WHG

[←99](#)

jOduw>menoi ma>lista ejpi< tw~| lo>gw.

[←100](#)

ma>lista de< pro<v tou<v oijkei>ouv th~v pi>stewv.

[←101](#)

ma>lista de< oiJ ejk th~v Kai>sarov oijki>av.

[←102](#)

Eij de> tiv tw~n iJdi>wn, kai< ma>lista tw~n oijkei>wn ouj pronoei~.

[←103](#)

ma>lista ta<v memzra>nav.

[←104](#)

ma>lista de< tou<v ojpi>sw sarko>v, etc.

[←105](#)

File>ortoi de< fu>sei Su>roi? w=n ma>lista oiJ th<n jAntio>ceian katoikou~ntev, k. t. l.

[←106](#)

Convertible: equivalent or interchangeable.

[←107](#)

[Ekastov de< to<n i]dion misqo<n lh>yetai kata< to<n i]dion ko>pon.

[←108](#)

kata< to<n i]dion ko>pon.

[←109](#)

a]lloi kekopia>kasi, kai< uJmei~v eijv to<n ko>pon aujtw~n ei+selhlu>qate.

[←110](#)

h[tiv polla< ejkopi>ase.

[←111](#)

ta<v kopiw>sav ejn Kuri>w.

[←112]

h[tiv polla< ejkopi>asen ejn Kuri>w.

[←113](#)

tou<v kopiw~ntav ejn uJmi~n.

[←114](#)

oJ proi`sta>menov.

[←115](#)

ca>risma dia>foron.

[←116](#)

]Econtev cari>smata dia>fora.

[←117](#)
ejn spoudh.

[←118](#)

oJ proi`sta>menov.

[←119](#)

profhteia and diakonia.

[←120](#)

Ei]te profhtei>an, kata< th<n ajnalogi>an th~v pi>stewv.

[←121](#)

Proportion of faith, like *analogy of faith*, means that no words or expressions in Scripture are to be isolated or interpreted in a way that is contrary to Scripture's general teaching. – WHG

[←122](#)

]Econtev cari>smata.

[←123](#)

JO dida>skwn, oJ parakalw~n, oJ proi`sta>menov.

[←124](#)
ejn spoudh.

[←125](#)

That is, performing all these duties is normally beyond what one person can do, or is gifted for. Thus they must be distributed among a plurality of elders, each according to his gifts, as distributed by the Holy Spirit, 1Cor 12.11. – WHG

[←126](#)

That is, the king or queen is considered the head of the church. – WHG

[←127](#)

Works, vol. 4, “Two Discourses Concerning the Holy Spirit and His Work,” esp. chaps. 7 and 8.

[←128](#)

The figure is “three hundred *denarii*.” A *denarius* was a day’s wages; so this was nearly a year’s wages - WHG.

[←129](#)

It is difficult to explain this estimate by our author of the value of three hundred denarii. According to the received valuation of Roman money, the sum could not have exceeded 9 pounds, 7s. 6d. of our money. — ED.

[←130](#)

Mat 26.8; Mar 14.4;

[←131](#)

1Thes 1:3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father.

[←132](#)

Act 6:1-6 Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint [*a murmuring*] against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ² Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

[←133](#)

Phi 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops *and deacons*:

[←134](#)

1Ti 3:8-10, 12, 13 ⁸ Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. ¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless... ¹² Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well. ¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

[←135](#)

Act 11:28-30 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. ²⁹ Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. ³⁰ This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

[←136](#)

An auxiliary activity.

[←137](#)

1Cor 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ² On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

[←138](#)

2Cor 9:5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation. ⁶ But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ *So let* each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

[←139](#)

2Cor 8:13 For *I do* not *mean* that others should be eased and you burdened; ¹⁴ but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that their abundance also may *supply* your lack-- that there may be equality.

[←140](#)

1Cor 16:2 On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

[←141](#)

2Cor 8:12 For if there is first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to what one has, *and* not according to what he does not have.

[←142](#)

1Ti 5:4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. **1Tim 5:16** If any man or woman that believes has widows, let them relieve them; do not let the church be charged, so that it may relieve those who are widows indeed.

[←143](#)

e.g., **1Ti 5:5** Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. **2Th 3:11-12** For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. ¹² Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

[←144](#)

2Thes 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

[←145](#)

1Tim 3:8 Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. ¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless. ¹¹ Likewise *their* wives [*literally, "the women"*] *must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well. ¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

[←146](#)

Act 6:3 "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ... ⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

[←147](#)

Rom 12:8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

[←148](#)

baqmo<n eJautoi~v kalo<n peripoiou~ntai (*bathmon eantois kalon peripoioountai*).

[←149](#)

kalo<n e]rgon (*kalon ergon*).

[←150](#)

kalo<v baqmo>v (*kalos bathmos*).

[←151]

kalo<v baqmo>v (*kalos bathmos*) has the same meaning as baqmi>v, *bathmis*.

[←152]

JO to>pov e]nqa hJ ejkklhsi>a ejgi>neto, baqmi>sin h=n ku>klw| dieilhmme>nov, a]llaiv ejp
j a]llaiv? e]nqa hJ ejkklhsi>a ejgi>neto, baqmi>v h+n ku>klw| dieilhmme>nov, a]llaiv ejp j
a]llaiv? e]nqa oiJ sunelqo>ntev pa>ntev kaqh>menoi ajnempodi>stvw hjkrow`nto tou~
iJstame>nou ejn me>sw|?

[←153](#)

“Traditio est synagogae, ut sedentes disputarent, soniores dignitate in cathedris, subsequentes in subseiliis, novissimi in pavimento;”

[←154](#)

Eijv iJerou<v ajfiknou>menoi to>pouv kaq j hJliki>av ejn ta>xesin uJpo< preszute>roiv ne>oi
kaqi>zontai?

[←155](#)

“Su< ka>qou w=de kalw~v,”

[←156](#)

ba>qmw| kalw|~ (*bathmoo kaloo*).

[←157](#)

Thus, if a deacon's wife joins the Papists, Socinians, or Quakers, she necessarily believes her husband is in error, which is a slander against his name. As her husband, he must ensure she does not then denigrate the church. – WHG

[←158](#)

Frowardness: habitually disposed to disobedience and opposition.

Table of Contents

PREFATORY NOTE.

CHAPTER 4. OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER 5. OF PASTORS

CHAPTER 6. OF TEACHERS

CHAPTER 7. OF RULING ELDERS.

CHAPTER 8. DUTY OF RULING ELDERS.

CHAPTER 9. OF DEACONS.