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John Gill's

A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY

Book 2—Chapter 3

**OF THE OFFICERS OF A CHURCH,
PARTICULARLY PASTORS**

Having treated of a church, as "essentially" considered, with respect to its matter and form, I shall now proceed to consider it,

2. "Organically," or as an organized church, a corporate body, having its proper officers. In the first churches there were officers both extraordinary and ordinary; the extraordinary officers were apostles, prophets, and evangelists.

2a. "Apostles," (1 Cor. 12:28). These had the "first" and chief place in the church, and the signs of the apostles were found with them: they had their call and mission from Christ, and were not of men, nor by men, but by Jesus Christ; and as they had their mission and commission immediately from Christ, so their doctrine; they neither received it from men, nor were taught it, but had it by the revelation of Christ; they were infallibly guided into all truth by the inspiration of the Spirit, and had the power of working miracles, in confirmation of all this; they went out by authority everywhere, preaching the gospel, to the conversion of multitudes; and were the first planters of churches, which others watered; they were not limited to any particular church, but had the care of, and presided in all the churches wherever they came. This office is now ceased, the apostles have no successors in it: not such who are called lord bishops; for as the apostles had not their pompous titles, nor their grandeur, nor their wealth, so neither have these lordly bishops their gifts, power, and authority; they have neither mission nor commission, nor work similar to theirs.

2b. There were set in the churches, "secondarily, prophets," (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11) who had extraordinary gifts for explaining the word of God; for instruction

and confirmation in the truths of it; and had the gift of tongues, to preach in them to all nations; such were in the church at Antioch, and such were Silas and Judas (Acts 13:1, 15:22), and who also had the gift of foretelling future events; as Agabus, and others, who were of great use to the churches in those times (Acts 11:28, 21:10). This office is also no more; only the ordinary gift of interpreting the scriptures is sometimes called "prophesying," and those who have it "prophets".

2c. "Evangelists". This name is sometimes given to the writers of the four gospels; two of which were apostles, Matthew and John; the other two, evangelists, Mark and Luke: evangelists were companions of the apostles in their travels, assistants to them in their work, and who were sent by them here and there, with messages from them to the churches, where they had been, and to finish what they had begun; for which purpose they were sometimes left in certain places; but not to reside and continue there. This office is now extinct; only that every truly gospel preacher may be called an evangelist, or evangelizer. The ordinary officers of the church are pastors and deacons, and these only; though antichrist has introduced a rabble of other officers, the scripture knows nothing of.

1. Pastors: these are shepherds under Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls; who take the care of the flock, and feed it, as their name signifies; such were promised to be given under the gospel dispensation; and such Christ has given to his churches (Jer. 3:15; Eph. 4:11), and still gives; to whom he says, as he did to Peter, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep," (John 21:15, 16). Who,

1a. Are the same with "teachers," according to Ephesians 4:11 "Some pastors and teachers;" not "some pastors" and "some teachers," as if they were different; but "and teachers," the $\kappa\alpha\iota$ or and, being exegetical, explaining what is meant by pastors, even such who are teachers, to instruct in the knowledge of divine things; which is the pastor's work, to feed men with knowledge and understanding; and it may be observed, that in 1 Corinthians 12:28 where each of the officers of the church are enumerated, mention is made of "teachers," but "pastors" omitted, because they are the same; for they are not to be distinguished with respect to the place where they perform their work, as if the office of pastors was in the church, the flock they are to feed; but teachers or doctors in the school; whereas, it is certain, that a teacher is an officer in the church, as well as pastor (1 Cor. 12:28), nor are they to be distinguished as two distinct officers in the church, because of the subject of their ministry; the one, the pastor attending to exhortation, to things practical, and the teacher to things doctrinal, asserting, explaining, and defending the doctrines of the gospel, and refuting errors; since both belong to one and the same: if these were distinct, it should seem rather that teachers design gifted brethren, called to minister the word, but not to office power; and are only assistants to pastors in preaching, but not in the administration of the ordinances; yet it is pretty plain, that those who have a commission to teach, have also a commission to baptize, and to attend to whatsoever Christ has commanded; yea, it may be observed, that even extraordinary officers are called "teachers;" as apostles and prophets (Acts 13:1; 1 Tim. 2:7).

1b. These pastors and teachers are the same with "bishops," or overseers, whose business it is to feed the flock, they have the episcopacy or oversight of, which is the work pastors are to do; which office of a bishop is a good work; and is the only office in the church distinct from that of deacon,(1 Tim. 3:1, 8; Phil. 1:1).

1c. And these bishops are the same with "elders"; when the apostle Paul had called together at Miletus the elders of the church at Ephesus, he addressed them as "overseers," επισκοπους, "bishops," (Acts 20:17, 28) and when he says, he left Titus in Crete, to ordain elders in every city, he proceeds to give the qualifications of an elder, under the name of a bishop; "A bishop must be blameless," &c. plainly suggesting, that an elder and a bishop are the same (Titus 1:5-7) and the apostle Peter exhorts the "elders," to "feed the flock of God, taking the oversight," επισκοπησας, acting the part of a bishop, or performing the office of one (1 Peter 5:1, 2).

1d. These pastors, teachers, bishops, and elders, are called rulers, guides, and governors. A pastor, or shepherd, is the governor and guide of his flock; a teacher, and a ruling elder are the same (1 Tim. 5:17). One qualification of a bishop is, that he know how to rule his own house; or how shall he take care of the church of God, to rule that well, which is a considerable branch of his office? (1 Tim. 3:1, 4, 5) these, indeed, are not to lord it over God's heritage, or rule according to their own wills, in an arbitrary manner; but according to the laws of Christ, as King of saints; and then they are to be respected and obeyed; "Remember them that have the rule over you, and obey them;" for they are over the churches in the Lord, and under him as the great Lawgiver in his house; and though they are described as such who have the rule over churches, and are guides to them (Heb. 13:7, 17) yet they are the churches servants, for Jesus's sake (2 Cor. 4:5).

1e. These are sometimes called the angels of the churches; so the pastors, elders, bishops, or overseers of the seven churches of Asia, are called the angels of the seven churches; and the pastor, elder, bishop, or overseer of the church at Ephesus, the angel of the church at Ephesus (Rev. 1:20, 2:1), so called because of their office, being sent of God, and employed by him in carrying messages of grace to the churches, and publishing the good tidings of salvation.

1f. They are said to be "ministers of Christ," or his "under rowers," as the word υπηρετας signifies (1 Cor. 4:1), the church is the ship or boat, which they work; Christ is the pilot, who is at the helm, under whom, and by whose direction, they row; and the oars they row with are the word, ordinances, and discipline they administer. And in the same place,

1g. They are called, "Stewards of the mysteries of God;" and sometimes, "Good stewards of the manifold Grace of God;" that is, of the more sublime truths of the gospel, and the various doctrines of divine grace (1 Peter 4:10) so a bishop or elder is called a "steward of God," (Titus 1:7) a steward in his house or family, to give to everyone in it their portion of meat in due season: and which office requires wisdom

and faithfulness, to execute it aright (Luke 12:42; 1 Cor. 4:2). Concerning these persons may be observed,

2. The qualifications of them for their office; which, as it is a "good office," the necessary qualifications should be found in those who are put into it, and which the apostle directs to (1 Tim. 3:1; &c). Some of which,

2a. Respect the internal and spiritual character and accomplishments of a bishop or elder. As,

2a1. He must not be a novice; which does not mean a young man; for such an one was Timothy himself, to whom the apostle writes, who was more than an ordinary officer, even an evangelist; hence he says, "Let no man despise thy youth," (1 Tim. 4:12) but the word νεοφυτος, translated "novice," signifies, "one newly planted", that is, in the church of God; there must be time, after such a plant is planted, to observe whether it has taken good root, and how it grows and thrives, and, whether a plant of Christ's heavenly Father's planting. A bishop or elder should be first of some standing in the church, before he is called to such an office, that his gifts, grace, and conduct may be known, "lest being lifted up with pride," elated with the high station he is advanced to, and with the gifts he is supposed to have, "he fall into the condemnation of the devil;" fall by pride as he did, and under the same sentence, and be degraded from his office.

2a2. He must have a competency of knowledge and understanding in divine things; for a pastor is to feed men with knowledge and understanding; and therefore must have a good share of it himself, that so he may be "able to teach others also," (2 Tim. 2:2) this is a principal part of his work, to teach and instruct men in the knowledge of evangelical truths; in which he should be assiduous; "He that teacheth, on teaching," (Rom. 12:7) and for this he must have a ministerial gift; which is not natural parts, nor human learning, nor grace in common with other Christians; which, though all needful and useful, yet neither of them separately, nor all together, will qualify a man to be a public teacher of the word. He must have a special and peculiar gift from Christ; such as he received at his ascension, and gives to men, to ordinary ministers of the word; and it was according to the measure of such a gift, though a large one, the apostle Paul himself was made a minister of the gospel, and to such a gift he ascribes his being one (Eph. 3:7, 8, 4:7, 8).

2a3. He must not only be able to teach, but he must be "apt to teach;" which aptitude lies in a good degree of elocution, and a free utterance of speech; for it is of little avail what is a man's capacity, what the thoughts of his mind, and what stock of knowledge he has, unless he can clothe his ideas with proper words to convey the understanding of them to others; the royal preacher "sought to find out acceptable words;" such as were suitable to express his meaning, and to give delight and pleasure, as well as yield profit to them that heard him; and especially the taught words of the Holy Ghost are to be made use of. Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, well versed in them, and which greatly improved his gift of

elocution; a good textuary makes a good preacher; a free and ready utterance is necessary; such an one is like the scribe and householder (Matthew 13:52). The apostle Paul himself desired the Ephesians to pray for him, "that utterance might be given him," (Eph. 6:19).

2b. There are other qualifications of a bishop or pastor, which respect his domestic character. He must be "the husband of one wife": this does not oblige a bishop or elder to be a married man; nor restrain from a second marriage after the decease of his wife; only that he should have but one wife at a time. Polygamy having been much in use among Jews and Gentiles, the first Christians were not easily brought off of that practice; however, the apostle thought fit to enjoin that a bishop or pastor should not practise it, that he might not set an example of it, which might serve to countenance and continue it; there were some peculiar laws respecting the marriage of the high priest among the Jews, and by which it seems he was to have but one wife (Lev. 21:13, 14), and much the same laws are directed to for priests or ministers of the word, under the gospel dispensation (Ezek. 44:22) also a bishop or elder must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity," or reverence of him; obedient to his commands, and who behave respectably to him; and especially he should be careful to lay his commands upon them to keep the ways of the Lord, and to restrain them from vices, and severely reprove them for them; in which good old Eli was deficient, and therefore blamed and corrected for it: the apostle gives a good and strong reason why a bishop or elder should have this qualification; "For," says he, "if a man know not how to rule his own house," or family, "how shall he take care of the house of God?"

2c. There are other qualifications, which respect his personal character, conduct, and behaviour. As,

2c1. That he must be "blameless" in his conversation. Song the priest under the law were to have no blemish on them, nor any natural defect in them (Lev. 21:17-23), though they were men encompassed with moral infirmities. And this rule, respecting a bishop or pastor of a church, does not imply that he must be perfect and without sin, only that he should not be guilty of any scandalous sin, and especially should not live in any known sin; otherwise there is no man, not the best of men, without sin; no, not in the highest office; the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New, were men of like passions with others.

2c2. Such an one must be "of good behaviour, and must have a good report with them that are without;" he should have a good report of all men, as Demetrius had; not only of the church and its members, of those that are within, to whom he is to be "an example in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," (1 Tim. 4:12) but of those without the church, the men of the world; that the ministry be not blamed and had in contempt, the ways of God, and doctrines of Christ, evil spoken of, and the ministers usefulness to the souls of men hindered.

2c3. He must not be given to any vice; "Not given to wine," that is, to excessive drinking of it; otherwise it is no more criminal to drink that than to drink water; and Timothy is advised by the apostle to refrain from drinking water, and to make use of wine for his health's sake (1 Tim. 5:23), or given to quarrels; he must be "no striker," neither with his fist nor with his tongue; no calumniator, no "brawler," not litigious and contentious; but "patient," and bear all reproaches, indignities, and insults; "not greedy of, nor given to filthy lucre," should not enter on his work and take upon him such an office, with a lucrative view; nor be "covetous," but "given to hospitality;" not insatiably desirous of wealth and riches, and making use of any unlawful way to obtain them; but should, according to his abilities, be liberal in relieving the poor and necessitous; and in entertaining Christian strangers and travellers, when well recommended; and by all this set a good example to others; and for which he should be supplied by the church to whom he ministers.

2c4. A bishop, elder, or pastor, should be "vigilant;" watch over himself and his flock, and take heed to both: to himself; to his doctrine, that it be sound, pure, and incorrupt, and according to the word of God; and to his conversation, that it be as becomes the gospel of Christ; to his flock, to feed them with wholesome food, to lead and direct them to good pastures, and to preserve them from wolves, from false teachers, that lie in wait to deceive; he is to watch for the souls of men, for their spiritual good and welfare, as one that must give an account with joy, and not with grief; and he should be "sober" and modest, wise and prudent, and "think soberly of himself," (Rom. 12:3). I proceed to consider,

3. How any come into such an office, and are instated into it.

3a. First, there must be a call to the ministry of the word, both inward and outward, previous to this office; no man, under the law, "took to himself the honour" of the priest's office, but he that was "called of God, as was Aaron," (Heb. 5:4, 5) nor ought any man to take upon him the office of a prophet, or minister of the word, without a call; there were some in the times of Jeremiah complained of by the Lord, who were not sent nor spoken to by him; and yet "prophesied" (Jer. 23:21).

3a1. An internal call; which lies in gifts bestowed, and in the furniture of a man's mind, and in the disposition of it to make use of them in the service of God; for God never calls a man to any service but he gives him abilities for it; which, when a man is sensible of, and is satisfied God has bestowed a gift upon him, he cannot be easy to wrap up his talent in a napkin, but is desirous of making use of it in a public manner; not by a mere impulse, through vanity of mind, and with ambitious views, and sordid ends; but from a principle of love to the souls of men, and to the glory of God; this is the internal call, of which a man's gifts are an evidence to himself and others.

3a2. The outward call is not immediately by Christ, as the twelve disciples were called, and sent forth by him to preach the gospel; and particularly, as the apostle Paul was called to be an apostle; not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ

and God the Father, but mediately by the church; it being by some means or another made known to the church, that such an one is thought to have a gift for public usefulness, the church calls him to exercise it before them, and submit it to their examination and trial; and having sufficiently tried it, and being satisfied of it, the church calls and sends him forth in the name of Christ, to preach the gospel, where he may be directed in providence to do it; and being thus called and sent forth, he is eligible to the office of a pastor of a church who shall think fit to choose him.

3b. Secondly, the procedure of instating him into the office of a pastor, or the ordination of him, is in this manner.

3b1. He must be a member of a church, to whom he is to be ordained as a pastor. Song an extraordinary officer, an apostle, was chosen and ordained to be one, in the room of Judas, from among the disciples who had accompanied Christ and his apostles from the baptism of John; and so inferior officers, deacons, were selected out of the church, and appointed to that office (Acts 1:21-23, 6:3, 5), so Epaphras, a faithful minister of Christ for the church at Colosse, is said to be "one of you," a member of that church (Col. 1:7, 4:12) one that is not a member of the church, cannot be a pastor of it.

3b2. His qualifications, such as before observed, must be known by the members of a church, and must be proved and approved of by them; yea, they must be satisfied that he has gifts for "their" edification; for a man may have gifts for the edification of one church, which are not for the edification of another; and this should be known, previous to their choice and call of him.

3b3. After sufficient trial and due consideration of his gifts, to satisfaction, and after seeking the Lord by prayer, for everything is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, the church proceeds to the choice and call of him to be their pastor; for every church has a right and power to choose its own officers, pastors, and deacons.

3b4. This choice and call being signified to him, he taking proper time, and seeking the Lord also, accepts thereof, and shows a readiness and willingness to take the "oversight" of them (1 Peter 5:2), for there must be a mutual consent and agreement in this affair.

3b5. To the public instating of him into his office, it is necessary there should be a recognition and repetition both of the church's choice and call of him, and of his acceptance of it, for the confirmation thereof, and for the satisfaction of ministers, and churches in communion; who meet to see their order, and to assist, especially the former, by prayer for them, and by giving a word of exhortation to them, if desired.

3b6. As every civil society has a right to choose, appoint, and ordain their own officers; as all cities and towns corporate, their mayors or provosts, aldermen,

burgesses, &c. so churches, which are religious societies, have a right to choose and ordain their own officers, and which are ordained, αυτοις, "for them," and for them "only;" that is, for each particular church, and not another (Acts 14:23).

3b7. The election and call of them, with their acceptance, is ordination. The essence of ordination lies in the voluntary choice and call of the people, and in the voluntary acceptance of that call by the person chosen and called; for this affair must be by mutual consent and agreement, which joins them together as pastor and people. And this is done among themselves; and public ordination, so called, is no other than a declaration of that. Election and ordination are spoken of as the same; the latter is expressed and explained by the former. It is said of Christ, that he "ordained twelve," (Mark 3:14) that is, he chose them to the office of apostleship, as he himself explains it (John 6:70; see Acts 1:2). Paul and Barnabas are said to "ordain elders in every church," (Acts 14:23) or to choose them; that is, they gave orders and directions to every church, as to the choice of elders over them; for sometimes persons are said to do that which they give orders and directions for doing, as Moses and Solomon, with respect to building the tabernacle and temple, though done by others; and Moses particularly is said to choose the judges (Ex. 18:25), the choice being made under his direction and guidance. The word that is used in Acts 14:23 is translated chosen, 2 Corinthians 8:19, where the apostle speaks of a brother, χειροτουηθεις, "who was chosen of the churches to travel with us;" and is so rendered when ascribed to God (Acts 10:41).

3b8. This choice and ordination in primitive times, was made two ways; by casting lots and by giving votes, signified by stretching out of hands. Matthias was chosen and ordained to be an apostle in the room of Judas, by casting lots; that being an extraordinary office, required an immediate interposition of the divine Being; a lot being nothing more nor less than an appeal to God for the, decision of an affair. But ordinary officers, as elders and pastors of churches, were chosen and ordained by the votes of the people, expressed by stretching out their hands; thus it is said of the apostles (Acts 14:23) "When they had ordained them elders in every church," χειροτονησαντες, by taking the suffrages and votes of the members of the churches, shown by the stretching out of their hands, as the word signifies; and which they directed them to, and upon it declared the elders duly elected and ordained. Song Clemens Romanus, who lived at the latter end of the apostolic age, says, the apostles appointed proper persons to the office of the ministry, "with the consent or choice of the whole church;" and this practice continued to the third century; in which century Cyprian was chosen bishop of Carthage, by the suffrage of the people; and so he says was Cornelius, bishop of Rome, in the same age; as was Fabianus, before him: the council of Nice, in the beginning of the fourth century, in their synodical epistle, to the churches in Egypt, ordered, that when any were removed by death, their places should be filled up by others, provided they were worthy, and such as the people chose; the bishop of Alexandria agreeing to and confirming the choice: in the same century Martin was chosen bishop of Tours, by a vast concourse of the people: indeed, the council at Laodicea, Can. XIII. in this century, ordered, that from thenceforward the people should not be allowed to choose their own ministers;

which shows it had been practised before: yea, after, in the "fifth" century, Austin, in his old age, recommended to the people Eradius, to be his successor; which they showed their approbation of by their loud and repeated acclamations. But,

3b9. Though there was χειροτονια, "a stretching out of the hands;" yet there was no χειροθεσια, "imposition of hands," used at the ordination; neither of extraordinary officers, as apostles; nor of ordinary pastors or elders of churches, in the times of Christ and his apostles.

3b9a. Christ ordained the twelve apostles himself; but we read not a word of his laying his hands upon them, when he ordained them; nor on the seventy disciples, when he appointed them, and sent them forth into every city. Matthias was chosen and ordained an apostle in the room of Judas, upon a lot being cast by the church, which fell upon him; and upon counting the lots he was numbered, συγκατεψηφισθη, "chosen," or by the number of lots declared to be chosen, and so took his place, and was reckoned with the apostles; but no mention is made of any hands being laid on him (see Acts 1:22-26).

3b9b. The apostles are said to "ordain elders in every church," not by laying their hands upon them, but by taking the votes of the people, on the stretching out of their hands; when they declared the elders duly elected and ordained, as before observed. The apostle Paul directed Titus (Titus 1:5), to "ordain elders in every city;" that is, in such sort and manner as he and Barnabas had done in the above instance; but gave him no orders and instructions to lay hands upon them; which he would not have omitted, had it been material, and so essential to ordination as some make it to be: and if he was to ordain elders by the laying on of his hands, then not by the hands of a presbytery, since he was a single person; and if this was to be done by him as a bishop, which some say he was, though the subscription of the epistle to him not being genuine, which asserts it, is no proof of it, it would justify ordination by a diocesan bishop.

3b9c. No instance can be given of hands being laid on any ordinary minister, pastor or elder, at his ordination; nor, indeed, of hands being laid on any, upon whatsoever account, but by extraordinary persons; nor by them upon any ministers, but extraordinary ones; and even then not at and for the ordination of them. The instance in Acts 13:1-3 is no proof of laying on of hands at the ordination of a pastor or elder of a church; Paul and Barnabas were extraordinary persons, apostolical men, and were never ordained pastors or elders to any particular church; nor is there the least hint given of any such ordination of them at that time; nor was this the first time of the separation of them to the sacred office of the ministry: they had been in it, and had exercised it long before, and in as public a manner as afterwards: and what they were now separated to was some peculiar and extraordinary work and service the Holy Ghost had for them to do in foreign parts, whither they travelled; and the persons who were directed by him to separate them to it, were extraordinary ones also; and their, prayers for them, with the rite of imposition of hands, seem only to express their good wishes for a prosperous success

in their work: and it may be observed, that this rite was used, not "at," but "after" the separation of them to the work and service into which they were appointed, and after fasting and prayer for them: this was the last act done, just when upon their departure; for so it is said, "And when they had fasted and prayed," και επιθεντες τας χειρας αυτοις, "then putting hands upon them, they sent them away," or dismissed them with this token, or sign of their good wishes for them. The apostle Paul, indeed, speaks of the hands of the presbytery being laid upon Timothy (1 Tim. 4:14), but it should be observed, that Timothy was an extraordinary officer in the church, an evangelist, and was not chosen or ordained a pastor of any particular church; nor did he reside in anyone place for any length of time; the subscription of the "second" epistle to him being not to be depended upon as genuine, no more than of that to Titus; and therefore he can be no instance of imposition of hands at the ordination of any ordinary, elder, or pastor of a church; and who the presbytery were who laid hands on him, be it upon what account it may, they must be extraordinary persons through whose hands an extraordinary gift was conveyed: we are sure the apostle Paul was one, since he expressly speaks of a gift which Timothy had "by the putting on of his hands;" and it can scarcely be thought that any other should join with herein but an apostolical man; very probably Silas (see Acts 16:1, 19). However, upon the whole, it appears to be an extraordinary affair transacted by extraordinary persons, on an extraordinary one, and by it an extraordinary gift was conveyed; which no man of modesty will assume to himself a power of conveying: And let it be observed, it was not an "office," but a "gift," which was conveyed this way (see 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).

3b9d. The hands of ministers being now empty, and they having no gifts to convey through the use of this rite, of course it ought to cease, and should; it not appearing to have been used but by extraordinary persons on any account; upon which, at least for the most part, if not always, extraordinary things followed.

3b9e. To say that this rite is now used at the ordination of a pastor to point him out to the assembly, is exceeding trifling: the church needs it not, having before chosen and called him, and he having accepted their call in a more private way: and it is needless to others met together publicly to observe the order of the procedure; since usually the members of the church are desired to recognize their choice and call of their pastor, and he is desired to renew his acceptance, and frequently he makes a confession of his faith; and after all this, to use this rite to point him out to the people, is such a piece of weakness for which no excuse can be made.

Should it be urged, that imposition of hands was used at the ordination of deacons, and then why not at the ordination of elders or pastors of churches, which is an higher office? It may be answered, that the church, as directed, chose out from among them seven men, so and so qualified (Acts 6:1-7), in which choice the essence of ordination lay; whom they presented to the apostles, who, approving their choice, confirmed it, and "constituted" and settled them in their office, as they proposed (Acts 6:3), and the rite of imposition of hands was used after this, and even after prayer for them; for it is said, "When they had prayed," not while they were

praying, as the custom is now, "they laid their hands on them;" which, done for what end soever, was done by extraordinary persons, the apostles, and it may be for extraordinary service; and so no rule to ordinary ministers in the ordination of persons to an ordinary office; and it may be, it was done by way of benediction, wishing them happiness and success in their office, for which this rite was used among the Jews, and for the confirmation of this office, it not being the immediate institution of Christ, but of the apostles: and the use of it seems to be temporary, since we have no other instance of it on such an account; nor any injunction of it, nor any direction for it; nor is it made mention of by the apostle, when he treats of the office of deacons, their qualifications, the proving and instalment of them into their office, and their use of it (1 Tim. 3:10), nor does it appear that there was afterwards any ordination of deacons, by imposition of hands, until the fourth century, when church offices and church officers were both magnified and multiplied. Besides, if the seven persons spoken of in Acts 6:1-6 were "extraordinarily" and "pro tempore" appointed to take care of the poor, and of the widows in the first church at Jerusalem, and particularly of the Grecian widows in it, to answer their present exigency; and were different from the ordinary deacons of the churches, afterwards spoken of in Paul's epistles, which is the sense of Vitringa who observes, that these men are never called "deacons," only described by their number the "Seven," as in Acts 21:8 that their work was not similar to that of ordinary deacons, their "ministration" being not monthly, nor weekly, but daily, and of an extraordinary kind; for they succeeded the apostles in the care of the secular affairs of the church; they had all the estates, and the whole substance of the community, which was made one common stock in their hands, to dispose of to them as they needed; which was a very extraordinary and uncommon piece of service; though their destination was more peculiar to the care of the Grecian widows; and these seven men appear by their names to be all of them Greeks, or Jewish proselytes from the Greeks, as one of them most certainly was; and had it not been for the murmuring of the Greeks, no such appointment would have been made; nor does it appear that they continued in their office, but when this was over, it ceased; and some of them, at least, were afterwards employed in other ministerial services, and elsewhere: now if this was the case, which is not easy to be disproved, we have no scripture instance of the imposition of hands at the ordination of ordinary deacons; nor any instruction and direction for it. I go on to consider,

4. The work of such persons, who are instated into the office of pastors of churches.

4a. First, the chief and principal of their work is to feed the church of God committed to their care; they have the name of pastors, "a pascendo," from feeding; Christ the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, feeds his flock like a shepherd; and so it is the business of all under shepherds to feed their respective flocks (1 Peter 5:2).

4a1. First, whom they are to feed.

4a1a. Not dogs that worry the flock; but the flock itself. The "childrens' bread," that which is fit and suitable food for them, is not to be taken and "cast to dogs;" that which is holy is not to be given to them; the holy word of God, its precious truths and promises, do not belong to them; nor are the holy ordinances to be administered to them; "without are dogs," they are without the church, out of the flock, and so do not belong to the care and feeding of the pastors or shepherds.

4a1b. Nor swine; such who for the impurity of their hearts and lives, wallowing in the filth of sin, are comparable to these creatures; and which are creatures that never look upwards, but downwards to the earth, and so fit emblems of those who mind earth and earthly things, and feed on them. The prodigal was sent by the citizen of the country, the legal preacher, to whom he joined himself, into his fields to feed swine; but pastors of churches are not swineherds, but shepherds.

4a1c. Nor the world's goats; the Lord judges and distinguishes between cattle and cattle, the sheep and the goats; though these are sometimes folded together, he threatens to punish the goats, which will be done at the second coming of Christ, when he will divide the sheep from the goats, and set the one on his right hand and the other on his left; when the latter shall go into everlasting punishment, and the former into life eternal.

4a1d. They are Christ's sheep and lambs, that pastors of churches are to feed, according to the directions given by Christ to Peter; "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs," (John 21:15-17) such whom Christ has an interest and property in, through the Father's gift of them to him, and through his laying down his life for them (John 10:15, 29), and which is an argument why pastors should be careful and diligent to feed them, because they are Christ's; "My lambs, my sheep;" both are to be fed; the tender lambs, otherwise newborn babes, little children, as well as the grown sheep, otherwise young men and fathers. Christ, the great Shepherd, has set an example of diligence and tenderness (Isa. 40:11). So that,

4a1e. All the flock, the whole flock, is to be taken heed unto, and taken care of by pastors and shepherds, "over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, or bishops;" and for which reason they should be careful of them; and another follows, "to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood;" and therefore of great value and great care should be taken of it to feed it.

4a2. Secondly, what they are to feed the church or flock of God with?

4a2a. Not with chaff and husks, or what is comparable to them (Jer. 23:28), chaff is light, has no substance in it, and yields no nourishment, and is not fit for food; as bread made of wheat is, and denotes the solid and substantial doctrines of the gospel, with which the souls of men are to be fed. Husks are food for swine, but not for sheep; the externals of religion satisfy some minds, but not truly gracious souls, they cannot live upon these.

4a2b. Pastors of churches are to feed their flocks with such food as is suitable to lambs and sheep; milk is for tender lambs, for newborn babes, who desire the sincere milk of the word. Milk designs the more plain and easy truths of the gospel, which are suited to tender minds; strong meat, the more sublime doctrines of it, fitter for those of full age, more grown Christians, who have a better exercise of their spiritual senses, and can discern things that differ (1 Peter 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:14).

4a2c. Sound doctrine, salutary truths, the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus, are what pastors are to teach and feed souls with; these are nourishing, when unsound doctrines, the unwholesome words of false teachers, eat as do a canker.

4a2d. The word of God in general, and especially the gospel part of it, is food for souls, and is esteemed by them more than their necessary food; being that to their souls, what the richest and choicest food is to their bodies; they find it and eat it, and it is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts; it is sweeter to their taste than the honey or the honeycomb.

4a2e. Pastors are promised and given to the churches, to feed them "with knowledge and understanding," (Jer. 3:15) which may denote both the matter they are to feed them with, and the manner in which they are to do it.

4a2e1. The matter or things they are to feed souls with, are things worthy to be known; not trifling things, matters of curiosity, and of no importance, which are vain and unprofitable, and serve to gender strife, and tend not to godly edification: not philosophy and vain deceit, or science falsely so called; nor mere human knowledge, or knowledge of natural things; but divine knowledge, knowledge of divine things; which, though a minister cannot give; he may teach and instruct; for it is the Lord that gives understanding in all things; it is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation who leads men into the knowledge of Christ; and it is the Son of God himself who gives men an understanding to know him that is true; yet ministers are instruments of bringing men into an acquaintance with divine things, and of their improvement in the knowledge of them; the light of divine truths shines in their hearts, that they may be able to communicate, in a ministerial way, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," of the glory of his divine perfections, displayed "in the face or person," and in the work and office "of Jesus Christ". Their work is to preach Christ, and him crucified; and they determine to know, that is, to make known, none but him, as the Saviour of lost sinners; and they are the servants of the most high God, which show unto men the way of salvation by Christ; and direct souls to him, who inquire, What shall we do to be saved? yea, they may be said "to give knowledge of salvation," as John the Baptist is said to do, being instruments of conveying the knowledge of it to men; so likewise they feed men with the knowledge and understanding of gospel truths; as they have knowledge of the mysteries of Christ themselves, they impart it to others; as they have freely received, they freely give, and keep back nothing that may be profitable, but declare the whole counsel of God; and such knowledge is food to the mind as bread is to the body.

4a2e2. This phrase, "With knowledge and understanding," may signify the manner in which pastors are to feed the souls of men, wisely and prudently; which they do when, as wise and faithful stewards, they give to everyone their portion of meat in due season, and feed them in proportion to their age and capacity; give milk to babes, and meat to strong men.

4a3. Thirdly, by what means they are to feed and do feed the churches of Christ, over which they are set.

4a3a. By the ministry of the word, or by the preaching of the gospel; which is the means appointed of God for the gathering in his elect ones, for the perfecting the number of them in conversion, and for the edification of the body, the church, and all its members; for their growth in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, and of all divine things: an unpreaching pastor, bishop, or elder, is a contradiction in terms; and such are like those described by the prophet as blind and ignorant watchmen, dumb dogs that cannot bark, shepherds that cannot understand; who everyone look for their gain from their quarter, though they do not the duty of their office. But,

4a3a1. Such feed the flock, who do their work aright; give themselves up to the ministry of the word, neglect all other services, at least as much as may be, that they may not be entangled with them, and be diverted by them, from their grand employment; to which they have devoted themselves, for the glory of God and the good of souls. Such give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine; and meditate on these things, and give themselves wholly to them, that their profiting may appear to all, and their usefulness to many.

4a3a2. They addict themselves to the study of the sacred scriptures more particularly; and endeavour to bring forth from thence things new and old, which may be for the use of edifying; they study to show themselves approved of God, skilful workmen, who need not be ashamed of their ministrations, rightly dividing the word, which will not fail of feeding, more or less, the souls of men; as they have the word of God, the knowledge and experience of it, they are faithful to dispense it as stewards of the mysteries of God; of whom it is required, that they be both faithful and wise.

4a3a3. They are assiduous and constant in this work; they, as the apostles of Christ, give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word; do not preach a sermon only now and then, but preach the word constantly, and are instant in season and out of season; and take every opportunity of feeding and of doing good to the souls of men; they are constant and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; knowing that their labour is not in vain in the Lord.

4a3a4. They not only give themselves up to this work, and are studious and constant in it, but labour therein; they are not loiterers, but labourers in the Lord's vineyard; and are labourers together with him, and are approved by him; and their labours

are blessed and succeeded among men, and they receive honour from them, of which they are worthy (1 Tim. 5:17).

4a3a5. They are careful to preach the pure and whole gospel of Christ; they study a consistence in their ministry, that it be not yea and nay, and contradict itself; they are not of them who corrupt the word with human doctrines and the inventions of men; but speak it with all sincerity, renouncing all arts of dishonesty, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; keeping back no part of divine truths, but declaring the whole of what is revealed in the word of God, so far as they have knowledge of it; and such are more or less blessed for the feeding the flock and church of God.

4a3b. Pastors of churches feed souls by the administration of ordinances; these are the goodness and fatness of the house of God, with which the saints are richly fed, and abundantly filled and satisfied; these are the provisions of Zion, which the Lord blesses; these are breasts of consolation, out of which gracious souls suck, and are delighted and refreshed; these are green pastures, into which the shepherds of Israel lead their flocks and feed them.

4a3c. This act of feeding includes the whole work, and every part of the work of a shepherd or pastor to his flock, doing all good offices to them, and all the service they can for them; such as seeking the lost sheep, bringing again that which was driven away, binding up that which was broken, and strengthening the sick (Ezek. 34:16), preserving them from the lion and the bear, and from grievous wolves, false teachers, who will not spare the flock; watching over them even in the night seasons, when needful; watching for their souls, the good and welfare of them, as those who must give an account of them; being diligent to know the state of the flock, and ready to administer all relief to them in their power, by comforting the feeble minded, and supporting the weak.

4a3d. A concern for the spiritual good of the flock the pastor has the care of, appears by his constant, fervent, and earnest prayers for it; for this is one part of the work they give themselves up unto, along with the ministry of the word, namely, prayer; particularly for those to whom they minister, that the word preached by them might be blessed unto them, and be food for their souls; thus we find the apostle Paul, in all his epistles, makes mention of his prayers for all the churches, and the members of them, he having the care of all the churches on him.

4a3e. Pastors may feed the souls of men under their care, not only by their public ministrations, but by their private visits, counsels, instructions, and conversation; so the apostle Paul taught from house to house as well as publicly (Acts 20:20).

4a3f. To all which, love to Christ and to his people is requisite; such only who have a true affection for both, will naturally care for the good of immortal souls, will be willing to spend and be spent for them, and to bear the reproach, and go through the fatigue and trouble which attend such service; hence said Christ to Peter, once,

twice, and thrice, "Lovest thou me?" and at each answer given to the question, enjoined him to feed his lambs and his sheep; suggesting, that only such who loved him were proper persons to take the care of them.

4b. Secondly, another part of the work of pastors, is to rule the church they take the oversight of; the same word in the Greek language which signifies to feed, signifies to rule also (see Matthew 2:6); and kings are sometimes called shepherds; as Cyrus and others; so Agamemnon, in Homer, is called, ποιμεν λαων, "the shepherd of the people". The church of Christ is a kingdom; it is frequently called so in the New Testament; Christ is King of it, set as King of Zion by his divine Father, and is owned as King of saints by his church and people; and ministers of the word, and pastors of churches, are "over them in the Lord;" they are under Christ, and subject to him, but are over the churches by his appointment; hence they are represented as guides, governors, and rulers, as before observed; and obedience to them is required; "Obey them that have the rule over you," (Heb. 13:17). And their pre-eminence in the church appears,

4b1. In giving the lead in divine worship, they go before the congregation in acts of divine service, in public prayer and thanksgiving, and in the ministry of the word (Rev. 4:9, 10, 5:14), and this they do in an authoritative way; they are the mouth of the people to God, and present their prayers and thanksgivings as representing them; and they are the mouth of God to the people, and speak in his name, and are ambassadors in Christ's stead.

4b2. In presiding at church meetings; where they have the conducting of all affairs with order and decency, directing in all acts of discipline, according to the word of God; putting up the votes of the church, giving admonitions, and passing censures, as they may be necessary, by the agreement and consent of the church.

4b3. In receiving and rejecting members; the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the gospel church, as usually understood, are committed to them, to open and shut the doors of the church according to its direction; for though the power of admission and rejection of members is originally in the church, it is executively in the pastors, in the name of the church.

4b4. In taking care of the whole discipline of the church of God, that it is observed, and that the rules respecting it are put into execution; which they are to explain, enforce, and see that they are attended to; they are to show to the house, the church of God, "the form of the house, and the fashion of it;" the nature of it, as to matter, form, power, and order; "and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof;" the rules respecting the reception of members, and the excommunication of them; "and all the ordinances, and all the laws thereof," even everything Christ has commanded and appointed to be observed (Ezek. 43:10, 11). Now the rule and government of pastors of churches is not to be exercised in an arbitrary way; they are not to rule with force and cruelty, as the shepherds of Israel are complained of; they are not to lord it over God's heritage; they have not dominion over their faith,

nor the command of their practice at their wills; they cannot oblige them to receive a doctrine, nor to follow a practice, that is of their own or of human invention: but they are to govern according to the word of God, and the laws and rules which Christ, as King and Head of the church, has given: and when they rule according to these, they may be said to rule well, and should be respected and obeyed, and counted worthy of honour. And this ruling, as well as feeding, should be with knowledge and understanding, in a wise, prudent, and discreet manner; as David, who fed the people of Israel according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with the skilfulness of his hands. I proceed to answer,

5. Some queries relative to the office of pastors.

5a. First, Whether a pastor of one church can officiate as such in another church; or whether he can administer the Lord's Supper, which is a pastoral act, in and to a church of which he is no pastor. I answer, he cannot; that is, it is not lawful for him to do it. As well may it be asked, Whether the lord mayor of London, whose power as such may be thought to be as extensive as any other mayor whatever, can exercise his power, in any branch of his office, in the jurisdiction of the mayor of York or of Bristol, or any other: no officer in a corporation can exercise his office in another corporation; this holds good of every officer in it, from the highest to the lowest. A church of Christ is a body corporate, in a spiritual sense; and its officers can only act as such within it, and within no other. For,

5a1. A man can never act as a pastor, where he is not so much as a member; a man must be a member of a church before he can be a pastor of it, as we have seen. Epaphras, the minister and pastor of the church at Colosse, the apostle Paul, writing to them says, "Who is one of you," that is, one of their society, a member of theirs (Col. 4:12). But where a man is not a member of such a society, he is not one of them; he cannot act as pastor among them, nay he cannot put forth any act or operation, or join in any act as a private member may, and much less act as a pastor; for membership is the foundation, not only of every office, but of every act and operation in a church. "All members," the apostle says, "have not the same office," (Rom. 12:4) but let the office be what it may, they must be members that have it, and they only; they have not all the same function or ministry; as they were not all apostles who were in the primitive churches, so not all pastors, and all deacons, who were in them, and in succeeding churches; yet all who are pastors or deacons, must or should be members; and members have not all the same act or action, and operation, as the word may be rendered, in an office way; though there are some acts indeed which are common to all members, yet they are such which only belong to members, and which pastors of other churches cannot act and exercise, as private members may and do: for instance, they have no vote or suffrage in other churches for the admission of a member, or for the exclusion of any; or in the choice and call of any officer, pastor or deacon: and if they cannot act, or cannot exercise an act, a private member can; then surely they can never act as a pastor, where they have not the power and privilege of a private member!

5a2. As one that is not a member of a church cannot be an officer in it, as a pastor of another church cannot be; then he has no office relation to it, nor has he any office power in it, and therefore cannot exercise in it any act of office power; and, in consequence, cannot administer the Lord's Supper in it, which is an act of office power.

5a3, As well may he exercise other branches of his pastoral office as this; as well may he be a ruling elder in other churches, and preside at their church meetings, and exercise every part of discipline, and the power of the keys, as by some called, and let in and shut out, receive and exclude members, give admonitions, lay on censures, and take them off, as a pastor, in the name of the church; and if he can act as a pastor in two churches, he may in ten, and twenty, and more, and so become a diocesan bishop; yea, an universal bishop or pastor, as the pope at Rome pretends to be; and popery stopped not until it came to that, to establish an universal pastor; and to which such an antichristian practice leads and paves the way: and it is an affectation in some to be thought of more moment and importance than they are; and to grasp at power and authority, and to appear in a character and figure which do not belong to them, if not something else; which tempts them to give into such an unwarrantable practice. For,

5a4. Should it be asked, as it may be reasonably asked, by what authority they do this thing? who or what gives them this authority? What answer can be returned? will they say they have their authority from Christ? this must be had, either immediately from him, as the apostles had for what they did; and then they must be called upon to work miracles in confirmation of it, as they did: or from the word of God and Christ; and then it lies upon them to give proof of it from thence. Neither can a pastor derive his authority froth his own church, of which he is properly pastor; nor from the other, to whom, at their request, he administers the ordinance; neither the consent of the one, nor the desire of the other, can give him sufficient authority so to act: as for his own church, they invested him with office power over themselves, and not over others; further they could not and cannot go: and as for the other church, that has no power to call in the elder or pastor of another church so to act; and if they have no power to call him, he can have no authority to act, as not from his own church, so neither from that: nor will the communion of churches warrant it; for communion of churches does not enlarge the office power of a pastor, limited by the word of God to his own congregation only; this no more subjects the officers of one church to another, than it subjects the particular members of one church to another; in either of which cases there would be nothing but confusion and disorder; one church, by virtue of the communion of churches, might as well censure and cast out the members of another church; as the pastor of one church, by virtue of such communion, act as an officer in another church. Neither his grace nor his gifts can authorize him so to act; for then one that is no officer, only a private brother, might do it; nor will his being an ordained minister in one church give him authority so to act in another church; for elders are only ordained to particular churches, and not to others; the elders ordained by the apostles in every church where such ordinations were, were αυτοις, "for them," and

not others (Acts 14:23). Epaphras was a faithful minister "for you," for the church at Colosse; not for another church (Col. 1:7), the elders of Ephesus were ordered to feed all the flock over which the Holy Ghost made them overseers; but not all the flocks over which they were not overseers: so other elders are directed to feed the flock that was among them, not flocks (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2), the angel of the church at Ephesus was not angel of the church at Smyrna, and so vice versa: ordination fixes a man to a particular church or congregation: and does not make him an universal pastor, which he must be, if there was no boundary to his office. And therefore,

5a5. Such who take upon them to act in such a manner may be truly called, "busybodies in other mens' matters," (1 Peter 4:15) the word there translated, "a busybody," is *αλλοτριοεπισκοπος*, a bishop, in another parish or diocese, which were originally the same, or a pastor in a church, which is not his own; and truly describes such a person we are speaking of, who meddles with a business he has nothing to do with.

5a6. As well may a deacon of one church officiate as such in another, as a pastor of one church officiate in another; for they are both alike chosen by, and ordained to particular churches, and not to others.

5a7. No instance can be given of such a practice in the word of God; there may be instances of members of one church communicating with another church occasionally; so Phoebe, a member of the church at Cenchrea, was to be admitted to communicate with the church at Rome; but then partaking of an ordinance is a privilege arising from the communion of churches; and is only a kind of spiritual hospitality, giving a meal to a traveller; and that by a pastor discharging his office in his own proper place, in his own church: but the administration of an ordinance is an act of office power, which one church cannot give to another, nor a pastor exercise it in another church (Rom. 16:1, 2; see Acts 20:4-7). The instance of the apostle Paul's breaking bread to the disciples at Troas, supposing it to be understood of the ordinance of the supper, is no, proof and example of such a practice; since he was an apostle, and had the care of all the churches upon him, and could administer all ordinances unto them; but to urge and follow his example, is to usurp what is peculiar to apostles, and to confound ordinary and extraordinary ministers together as one; whereas, "Are all apostles?" They are not. Upon the whole, it may justly create a scruple in the minds of such who receive the ordinance in a church where the administrator is not a pastor: either such an one is not clear in it, or he is, that it is his duty to receive it from such hands: if he is not clear in it, but doubts, he is self-condemned; and be it, he is clear in it, he is culpable, since hereby he approves and abets the pastor's unlawful power to administer it, and encourages him in it, and draws upon himself the guilt of his unlawful administration, and of a compliance with an authority assumed by him, but not legally given.

5b. Secondly, another question may be put upon the former, Whether a brother, or private member of a church, may be deputed by the church to administer the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? This may seem to carry in it a better face than the former; since, though he is a non-officer, he is upon a par with a pastor of another church, who is no more an officer in such a church the brother belongs to than he is; and besides, he is a member of the church, which the pastor of another church is not. But the ordinance of the supper cannot be administered authoritatively but by an officer, since it is an act of office power, and must be administered in the name of Christ, by one as a substitute of him; and if the church may delegate and substitute others for the discharge of 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 (Eph. 4:11, 12) and, as Dr. Owen further observes, it would render the ministry only convenient, and not absolutely "necessary" to the church, which is contrary to the institution of it; and such a practice would tend to make a church content without a pastor, and careless and negligent of seeking after one when without one.

5c. Thirdly, another question is, Whether a pastor may move from one congregation to another? The answer is, if it is for worldly advantage, and he has a sufficient provision where he is, he ought not. There are some cases in which it may be lawful for him to move; as when it appears to be for the good of the interest of religion, and of the church of Christ in general; but this should not be without the consent of the church of which he is pastor; nor without the advice of other churches and ministers; and when a church, of which he is pastor, indulges immoralities, or has imbibed erroneous doctrines, from which they cannot be reclaimed; and if there are such divisions in the church as are not to be cured; and especially if the pastor has such a concern in them, that there is no probability of their being healed but by his removal; also when a competent provision is not made for him and his family, but they are not only exposed to want, but the gospel also to the reproach and contempt of the world.

5d. Fourthly, it may be asked, Whether on account of bodily weakness, or a decay of intellectual abilities, a pastor may resign his office, or be desired to desist from his work? the answer is, he may voluntarily lay down his office, with the consent of the church; or he may be desired to drop it, provided, if his case requires it, a provision is made for his temporal subsistence.

5e. Fifthly, if it is a question, whether a pastor of a church may be deposed from his office, and be cast out of the church for immorality or heresy, it may be answered in the affirmative; for he may be admonished and reproved for negligence in the discharge of his office, and be stirred up to it (Col. 4:17), a charge of sin may be brought against him, under proper witnesses, according to the rule (1 Tim. 5:19), an elder or pastor is a brother, and to be dealt with as such, according to Matthew 18:15. Indeed, if the sole power of excommunication lies in the pastor, he cannot be dealt with in such a manner; but that is not the case; it lies in the church, as will be

seen hereafter; to which power a pastor of a church is equally subject as a private member.