

The [Scottish] Directory
FOR
The Public Worship of God

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DEDICATION

CHARLES I. Parl. 3. Sess. 5.

*An ACT of the PARLIAMENT of the KINGDOM of SCOTLAND,
approving and establishing the DIRECTORY for Public Worship.*

AT EDINBURGH, February 6, 1645.

THE Estates of Parliament now convened, in the second session of this first Triennial Parliament, by virtue of the last act of the last Parliament held by his Majesty and the Three Estates, in 1641; after the Public Reading and serious Consideration of the Act under-written by the General Assembly, approving the following Directory for the public worship of God in the Three Kingdoms, lately united by the *Solemn league and Covenant*, together with the Ordinance of the Parliament of England establishing the said Directory, and the Directory itself; do heartily and cheerfully agree to the said Directory, according to the act of the General Assembly approving the same. Which Act, together with the Directory itself; the Estates of Parliament do, without a contrary voice, ratify and approve in all its Heads ¹ and Articles; and do interpose and add the authority of Parliament to the said act of the General Assembly. And do ordain the same to have the Strength and Force of a Law and Act of parliament, and Execution to pass thereupon, for observing the said Directory, according to the said act of the General Assembly to all points.

ALEX. GIBSON, *Cler. Registri.*

Assembly AT EDINBURGH, February 3, 1645, Sess. 10.

*Act of the General Assembly of the Kirk ² of Scotland,
for Establishing and putting in Execution the
Directory for the Public Worship of God.*

WHEREAS a happy unity, and uniformity in religion among the kirks of Christ in these three kingdoms, united under one Sovereign, having been long and earnestly wished for by the godly and well-affected among us, was propounded as a main article of the large treaty, without which band and bulwark, no safe, well-grounded, and lasting peace could be expected; and afterward, with greater strength and maturity, revived in the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms; whereby they stand straitly obliged to endeavour the nearest uniformity in one form of Church government, *Directory of Worship, Confession of Faith, and Form of Catechising*; which has also before, and since our entering into that Covenant, been the Matter of many Supplications and Remonstrances, and sending Commissioners to the King's Majesty; of declarations to the Honourable Houses of the Parliament of *England*, and of letters to the Reverend Assembly of Divines, and others of the ministry of the Kirk of *England*; being also the end of our sending Commissioners from this kirk, as was desired, from this Kirk, with commission to treat Uniformity in the four particulars aforementioned, with such Committees as should be appointed by both Houses of Parliament of *England*, and by the Assembly of Divines sitting at *Westminster*; and beside all this, it being, in Point of Conscience, the chief Motive and End of our adventuring upon manifold and great hazards, for quenching the devouring Flame of the present unnatural and bloody war in *England*,³ though to the Weakening of this kingdom within itself, and the advantage of the Enemy which has invaded it; accounting nothing too dear to us, so that this our Joy be fulfilled. And now this great work being so far advanced, that a *Directory* for the

¹ *Heads*: descriptive headings; i.e., subject, topic, issue, point, theme, or subdivision.

² *Kirk*: Scottish term for *church*.

³ Referring to the English Civil War (1642-1651).

Public Worship of God in all three kingdoms being agreed upon by the Honourable Houses of the parliament of *England*, after Consultation with the Divines of both kingdoms there assembled, and sent to us for our Approbation, that, being also agreed upon by this kirk and kingdom of *Scotland*, it may be in the name of both kingdoms presented to the King, for his royal consent and ratification; the General Assembly, having most seriously considered, revised, and examined the *Directory* aforementioned, after several public readings of it, after much deliberation, both publicly and in private committees, after full liberty given to all to object against it, and earnest invitations of all who have any scruples about it, to make known the same, that they might be satisfied; does unanimously, and without a contrary voice, agree to and approve the following *Directory*, in all its Heads, together with the *Preface* set before it; and requires, decrees, and ordains, That, according to the plain Tenor and Meaning of it, and the intent of the *Preface*, it be carefully and uniformly observed and practised by all the Ministers and others within this Kingdom whom it does concern; which Practice shall be begun, upon intimation given to the several Presbyteries from the printing of this *Directory*, that a printed copy of it be provided and kept for the Use of every kirk in this kingdom; also that each Presbytery have a printed Copy of it for their Use, and take special Notice of the Observation or Neglect of it, in every Congregation within their Bounds, and make known the same to the Provincial or General Assembly, as there shall be Cause. Provided always, that the Clause in the *Directory*, of the administration of the LORD'S Supper, which mentions the Communicants sitting about the Table, or at it, not be interpreted as if, in the judgment of this kirk, it were indifferent, and free for any of the Communicants not to come to, and receive at the table; or as if we approved of the Distributing of the Elements by the Minister to each Communicant, and not by the Communicants among themselves. It is also provided, That this shall be no Prejudice to the Order and Practise of this Kirk, in such Particulars as are appointed by the Books of Discipline, and Acts of General Assemblies, and are not otherwise ordered and appointed in the *Directory*.

Finally, The Assembly does, with much joy and thankfulness, acknowledge the rich Blessing and invaluable Mercy of God, in bringing the so much wished for uniformity in religion to such a happy period, that these kingdoms, once at so great a Distance in the Form of Worship, are now by the Blessing of God brought to a nearer Uniformity than any other Reformed Kirks; which is to us the Answer to our Prayers and a Lighting of our Eyes, and Reviving of our Hearts, in the Midst of our many Sorrows and Sufferings; a taking away, in great Measure, the Reproach of the People of God, to the stopping of the Mouths of malignant and disaffected persons; and an opening to us of a Door of Hope, that God has yet Thoughts of Peace towards us, and not of Evil; to give us an expected End: In the Expectation and Confidence of which we rejoice; beseeching the Lord to preserve these Kingdoms from Heresies, Schisms, Offences, Profaneness, and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine, and the Power of Godliness; and to continue with us, and the Generations following, these his pure and purged ordinances, together with an Increase of the Power and Life thereof, to the Glory of his great Name, the Enlargement of the Kingdom of his Son, the Corroboration of Peace and Love between the Kingdoms, the Unity and Comfort of all his People, and our Edifying one another in Love.

THE DIRECTORY FOR THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

Agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*;
examined and approved, *in the year 1645*,
by the General Assembly of the Church of SCOTLAND;
and ratified by Act of Parliament the same Year.

THE PREFACE.

IN the beginning of the blessed Reformation, our wise and pious ancestors took care to set forth an Order for Redress of many things, which they then, by the word, discovered to be vain erroneous, superstitious, and idolatrous, in the public Worship of God. This occasioned many godly and learned men to rejoice much in the Book of Common Prayer, at that time set forth; because the mass, and the rest of the *Latin* service being removed, the public Worship was celebrated in our own tongue: many of the common people also received benefit by hearing the scriptures read in their own language, which formerly were to them as a book that is sealed.

However, long and sad experience has made it manifest that the Liturgy used in the Church of *England* (notwithstanding all the pains and religious intentions of its Compilers) has proved an offence, not only to many of the godly at home, but also to the reformed Churches abroad. For, not to speak of urging the reading of all the prayers, which very greatly increased the burden of it, the many unprofitable and burdensome ceremonies contained in it have occasioned much mischief by disquieting the consciences of many godly ministers and people who could not yield to them, as well as by depriving them of the ordinances of God, which they might not enjoy without conforming or subscribing to those ceremonies. Sundry good Christians have been, by means of it, kept from the Lord's table; and diverse able and faithful ministers debarred from the exercise of their ministry (to the endangering of many thousand souls, in a time of such scarcity of faithful pastors), and spoiled of their livelihood, to the undoing of them and their families. Prelates, and their faction, have laboured to raise the estimation of it to such a height, as if there were no other worship, or way of worship of God, among us, but only the Service-book; to the great hinderance of the preaching of the word, and (in some places, especially of late) to jostling it out as unnecessary, or at best, as far inferior to the reading of common prayer; which was made no better than an idol by many ignorant and superstitious people, who, pleasing themselves in their presence at that service, and their lip-labour in bearing a part in it, have thereby hardened themselves in their ignorance and carelessness of saving knowledge and true piety.

In the meantime, Papists boasted that the book was a compliance with them in a great part of their service; and so were not a little confirmed in their superstition and idolatry, expecting our return to them, rather than endeavouring the reformation of themselves: in which expectation they were of late very much encouraged, when, upon the pretended warrantableness of imposing the former ceremonies, new ones were daily obtruded upon the Church.

Add to this (which was not foreseen, but since have come to pass) that the Liturgy has been a great means, on the one hand, to make and increase an idle and unedifying ministry, which contented itself with set forms made to their hands by others, without

putting forth themselves to exercise the gift of prayer, with which our Lord *Jesus Christ* pleases to furnish all his servants whom he calls to that office: and on the other hand, it has been (and ever would be, if continued) a matter of endless strife and contention in the Church, and a snare both to many godly and faithful ministers, who have been persecuted and silenced on that occasion, and to others of hopeful parts, many of which have been, and more still would be, diverted from all thoughts of the ministry to other studies; especially in these latter times, in which God grants to his people more and better means for the discovery of error and superstition, and for attaining knowledge in the mysteries of godliness, and gifts in preaching and prayer.

Upon these, and many similar weighty considerations in reference to the whole book in general, and because of diverse particulars contained in it – not from any love for novelty, or intention to disparage our first reformers (of whom we are persuaded that were they now alive, they would join with us in this work, and whom we acknowledge as excellent instruments, raised by God, to begin the purging and building of his house, and desire they may be had by us and posterity in everlasting remembrance, with thankfulness and honour) – but that we may in some measure answer the gracious providence of God, which at this time calls upon us for further reformation, and may satisfy our own consciences, and answer the expectation of other reformed churches, and the desires of many of the godly among ourselves, and with that give some public testimony of our endeavours for uniformity in divine worship, which we have promised in our Solemn League and Covenant; we have, after earnest and frequent calling upon the name of God, and after much consultation, not with flesh and blood, but with his holy word, resolved to lay aside the former Liturgy, with the many rites and ceremonies formerly used in the worship of God; and have agreed upon this following Directory for all the parts of public worship, at ordinary and extraordinary times. In this our care has been to hold forth such things as are of divine institution in every ordinance; and other things we have endeavoured to set forth according to the rules of Christian prudence, agreeable to the general rules of the word of God; our meaning in doing this is only that the general heads, the sense and scope of the prayers, and other parts of public worship, being known to all, there may be a consent of all the churches in those things that contain the substance of the service and worship of God; and the ministers may be hereby directed in their administrations, to keep like soundness in doctrine and prayer, and may, if need be, have some help and furniture, and yet not so as they hereby become slothful and negligent in stirring up the gifts of Christ in them; but that each one, by meditation, by taking heed to himself, and the flock of God committed to him, and by wise observing of the ways of Divine Providence, may be careful to furnish his heart and tongue with further or other materials of prayer and exhortation, as shall be needful upon all occasions.

Of the Assembling of the Congregation, and their Behaviour in the Public Worship of God.

WHEN the congregation is to meet for public worship, the people (having prepared their hearts for it beforehand) should all come and join in it; not absenting themselves from the public ordinance through negligence, or upon pretence of private meetings.

Let all enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner, taking their seats or places without adoration, or bowing themselves towards one place or other.

The congregation being assembled, the minister, after solemnly calling on them to worship the great name of God, is to begin with prayer.

“In all reverence and humility acknowledging the incomprehensible greatness and majesty of the Lord (in whose presence they do then appear in a special manner), and their own vileness and unworthiness to approach so near to him, with their utter inability of themselves to so great a work; and humbly beseeching him for pardon, assistance, and acceptance, in the whole service then to be performed; and for a blessing on that particular portion of his word then to be read: And all in the name and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The public worship being begun, the people are wholly to attend upon it, forbearing to read anything except what the minister is then reading or citing; and abstaining much more from all private whisperings, conferences, greetings, or doing reverence to any person present, or coming in; and also from all gazing, sleeping, and other indecent behaviour which may disturb the minister or people, or hinder themselves or others in the service of God.

If any, through necessity, are hindered from being present at the beginning, they should not, when they come into the congregation, take to their private devotions, but reverently compose themselves to join with the assembly in that ordinance of God which is then in hand.

Of the Public Reading of the Holy Scriptures.

READING of the word in the congregation — being part of the public worship of God (in which we acknowledge our dependence on Him, and subjection to Him), and one means sanctified by Him for edifying his people — is to be performed by the pastors and teachers.

However, those who intend the ministry may occasionally both read the word and exercise their gift in preaching in the congregation, if this is allowed by the presbytery.

All the canonical books of the Old and New Testament (but none of those which are commonly called *Apocrypha*) shall be publicly read in the vulgar tongue, out of the best allowed translation, distinctly, that all may hear and understand.

How large a portion shall be read at once, is left to the wisdom of the minister; but it is convenient, that ordinarily one chapter of each Testament be read at every meeting; and sometimes more, where the chapters are short, or the coherence of matter requires it.

It is requisite that all the canonical books be read over in order, that the people may be better acquainted with the whole body of the scriptures; and ordinarily, where the reading in either Testament ends on one Lord’s day, it is to begin the next.

We commend also the more frequent reading of such scriptures as the who reads thinks best for the edification of his hearers, such as the book of Psalms, and the like.

When the minister who reads judged it necessary to expound any part of what is read, let it not be done until the whole chapter or psalm is ended; and regard is always to be had to the time, so that neither preaching nor other ordinances are straitened or rendered tedious. This rule is to be observed in all other public performances.

Beside public reading of the holy scriptures, every person that can read is to be exhorted to read the scriptures privately (and all others that cannot read, if not disabled by age, or otherwise, are likewise to be exhorted to learn to read) and to have a Bible.

Of Public Prayer before the Sermon.

AFTER reading the word (and singing the psalm) the minister who is to preach is to endeavour to get his own and his hearers' hearts to be rightly affected with their sins, so that they may all mourn in the sense of it before the Lord, and hunger and thirst after the grace of God in Jesus Christ, by proceeding to a more full confession of sin, with shame and holy confusion of face,⁴ and to call upon the Lord to this effect:

“To acknowledge our great sinfulness, *first*, because **original** sin – which (beside the guilt that makes us liable to everlasting damnation) is the seed of all other sins. It has depraved and poisoned all the faculties and powers of soul and body; it defiles our best actions; and if it were not restrained (or our hearts renewed by grace), it would break forth into innumerable transgressions, and the greatest rebellions against the Lord that were ever committed by the vilest of the sons of men. And *next*, by reason of **actual** sins – our own sins, the sins of magistrates, of ministers, and of the whole nation, to which we are accessory in many ways. These sins of ours receive many fearful aggravations, for we have broken all the commandments of the holy, just, and good law of God, doing that which is forbidden, and leaving undone what is enjoined. And that is not only out of ignorance and infirmity, but also more presumptuously – against the light of our minds, the checks of our consciences, and the motions of his own Holy Spirit to the contrary. Thus, we have no cloak for our sins, not only despising the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, but standing out against many invitations and offers of grace in the gospel – not endeavouring as we should to receive Christ into our hearts by faith, or to walk worthy of him in our lives.

“To bewail our blindness of mind, hardness of heart, unbelief, impenitence, security, lukewarmness, and barrenness; our not endeavoring after mortification and newness of life, nor after the exercise of godliness in the power of it. And to bewail that the best of us have not so stedfastly walked with God, kept our garments so unspotted, nor been so zealous of his glory and the good of others, as we should. And to mourn over such other sins as the congregation is particularly guilty of, notwithstanding the manifold and great mercies of our God, the love of Christ, the light of the gospel, and reformation of religion, our own purposes, promises, vows, solemn covenant, and other special obligations, to the contrary.

“To acknowledge and confess that, just as we are convinced of our guilt, so out of a deep sense of it, we judge ourselves unworthy of the smallest benefits, and are most worthy of God's fiercest wrath, and of all the curses of the law, and the heaviest judgments inflicted upon the most rebellious sinners; and we judge that he might most justly take his kingdom and gospel from us, plague us with all sorts of spiritual and temporal judgments in this life, and afterward cast us into utter darkness, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth for evermore.

⁴ *Confusion of face*: i.e., shame-faced – a feeling of embarrassment that leaves you confused.

“Notwithstanding all of this, to draw near to the throne of grace, encouraging ourselves with hope of a gracious answer of our prayers, in the riches and all-sufficiency of that only one oblation, the satisfaction and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of his Father and our Father; and in confidence of the exceeding great and precious promises of mercy and grace in the new covenant through the same Mediator of it, to deprecate the heavy wrath and curse of God, which we are not able to avoid or bear; and humbly and earnestly to supplicate for mercy in the free and full remission of all our sins — and that is only for the bitter sufferings and precious merits of our only Saviour Jesus Christ.

“That the Lord would grant to shed abroad his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; seal unto us by the same Spirit of adoption, the full assurance of our pardon and reconciliation; comfort all who mourn in Zion, speak peace to the wounded and troubled spirit, and bind up the broken-hearted — and as for secure and presumptuous sinners, that he would open their eyes, convince their consciences, and turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they also may receive forgiveness of sin, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus.

“With *remission of sins* through the blood of Christ, to pray for *sanctification* by his Spirit; for the mortification of sin dwelling in and many times tyrannizing over us; for enlivening our dead spirits with the life of God in Christ; for grace to fit and enable us for all duties of our conduct and callings towards God and men; for strength against temptations; for the sanctified use of blessings and crosses; and perseverance in faith and obedience to the end.

“To pray for the propagation of the gospel and kingdom of Christ to all nations — for the conversion of the *Jews*, the fulness of the *Gentiles*, the fall of *Antichrist*, and the hastening of the second coming of our Lord; for the deliverance of the distressed churches abroad from the tyranny of the *antichristian faction*, and from the cruel oppressions and blasphemies of the *Turk*; for the blessing of God upon the reformed churches, especially upon the churches and kingdoms of *Scotland, England, and Ireland*, now more strictly and religiously united in the *Solemn National League and Covenant*; and for our plantations in the remote parts of the world: more particularly for that church and kingdom of which we are members, that God would establish peace and truth in them, the purity of all His ordinances, and the power of godliness; that He would prevent and remove heresy, schism, profaneness, superstition, security, and unfruitfulness under the means of grace; that He would heal all our rents and divisions, and preserve us from the breach of our *Solemn Covenant*.

“To pray for all in authority, especially for the King’s Majesty; that God would make him rich in blessings, both in his person and government; establish his throne in religion and righteousness, save him from evil counsel, and make him a blessed and glorious instrument for the conservation and propagation of the gospel, for the encouragement and protection of those who do well, the terror of all who do evil, and the great good of the whole church, and of all his kingdoms; for the conversion of the Queen, the religious education of the Prince, and the rest of the royal seed; for the comforting of the afflicted Queen of *Bohemia*, sister to our Sovereign; and for the restitution and establishment of the illustrious Prince *Charles*, Elector *Palatine* of the *Rhine*, to all his dominions and dignities; for a blessing upon the High Court of Parliament (when sitting in any of these

kingdoms respectively), the nobility, the subordinate judges and magistrates, the gentry, and all the commonality — for all pastors and teachers, that God would fill them with his Spirit, make them exemplarily holy, sober, just, peaceable, and gracious in their lives; sound, faithful, and powerful in their ministry; and follow all their labours with abundance of success and blessing; and give to all His people pastors according to his own heart; for the universities, and all schools and religious seminaries of church and commonwealth, that they may flourish more and more in learning and piety; for the particular city or congregation, that God would pour out a blessing upon the ministry of the word, sacraments, and discipline, upon the civil government, and all the several families and persons in it; for mercy to the afflicted under any inward or outward distress; for seasonable weather, and fruitful seasons as the time may require; for averting the judgments that we either feel or fear, or are liable to, such as famine, pestilence, the sword, and the like.

“And, with confidence of His mercy to his whole church, and the acceptance of our persons, through the merits and mediation of our High Priest, the Lord Jesus, to profess that it is the desire of our souls to have fellowship with God in the reverend and conscionable use of his holy ordinances; and to that purpose, to pray earnestly for his grace and effectual assistance to the sanctification of his holy sabbath, the Lord’s day, in all its duties, public and private, both to ourselves, and to all other congregations of his people, according to the riches and excellency of the gospel, this day celebrated and enjoyed.

“And because we have been unprofitable hearers in times past, and now cannot by ourselves receive as we should the deep things of God, the mysteries of Jesus Christ (which require a spiritual discerning), to pray that the Lord, who teaches to profit, would graciously please to pour out the Spirit of grace, together with the outward means of it, causing us to attain such a measure of the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and in him, a measure of the things which belong to our peace, that we may account all things as dross in comparison to him; and that, tasting the first-fruits of the glory that is to be revealed, we may long for a more full and perfect communion with him, that where he is, we may be also, and enjoy the fulness of those joys and pleasures which are at his right hand forevermore.

“More particularly, that God would in a special manner furnish his servant (now called to dispense the bread of life to his household) with wisdom, fidelity, zeal, and utterance, that he may divide the word of God aright, to everyone his portion, in evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and power; and that the Lord would circumcise the ears and hearts of the hearers, to hear, love, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls — make them good ground to receive the good seed of the word, and strengthen them against the temptations of Satan, the cares of the world, the hardness of their own hearts, and whatever else may hinder their profitable and saving hearing; that so Christ may be so formed in them, and live in them, that all their thoughts may be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and their hearts established in every good word and work forever.

We judge this to be a convenient order, in the ordinary public prayer; and yet, so as the minister may (as in prudence he thinks fit) defer some part of these petitions till after his

sermon, or offer up to God some of the thanksgivings hereafter appointed, in his prayer before his sermon.

Of the Preaching of the Word.

PREACHING of the word, being the power of God unto salvation, and one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging to the ministry of the gospel, should be so performed, that the workman need not be ashamed, but may save himself, and those that hear him.

It is presupposed (according to the rules for ordination), that the minister of Christ is in some good measure gifted for so weighty a service, by his skill in the original languages, and in those arts and sciences which are handmaids to divinity; by his knowledge in the whole body of theology, but most of all in the holy scriptures, having his senses and heart exercised in them above the common sort of believers; and by the illumination of God's Spirit, and other gifts of edification, which (together with reading and studying the word) he should still seek by prayer and a humble heart, resolving to admit and receive any truth not yet attained, whenever God makes it known to him. All of which he is to make use of and improve in his private preparations, before he delivers in public what he has provided.

Ordinarily, the subject of his sermon is to be some text of scripture, presenting some principle or head of religion, or something suitable to some special or emergent occasion; or he may go on in some chapter, psalm, or book of the holy scripture, as he sees fit.

Let the introduction to his text be brief and perspicuous, drawn from the text itself, or the context, or some parallel place, or general sentence of scripture.

If the text is *long* (as it must sometimes be in histories or parables), let him give a brief sum of it; if the text is *short*, a paraphrase of it if necessary: in both, looking diligently to the scope of the text, and pointing at the chief heads and grounds of doctrine which he is to raise from it.

In analysing and dividing his text, he is to regard more the order of *matter* than of *words*; and he is neither to burden the memory of the hearers in the beginning with too many divisions, nor to trouble their minds with obscure terms of art.⁵

In raising doctrines from the text, his care ought to be, *First*, That the matter be the truth of God. *Secondly*, That it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text, so that the hearers may discern how God teaches it from there. *Thirdly*, That he chiefly insist on those doctrines which are principally intended; and do his utmost for the edification of the hearers.

The doctrine is to be expressed in plain terms; or, if anything in it needs explication, it is to be opened, and the consequence also, from the text being clarified. The parallel places of scripture that confirm the doctrine, are to be plain and pertinent, rather than many, and (if needed) somewhat insisted upon, and applied to the purpose in hand.

The arguments or reasons are to be solid, and as much as possible, convincing. The illustrations, of whatever kind, ought to be full of light, and those which may convey the truth into the hearer's heart with spiritual delight.

⁵ That is, technical terms that might not be understood by the listeners.

If any doubt seems to obviously arise from scripture, reason, or the prejudice of the hearers, it is requisite to remove it by reconciling the seeming differences, answering the reasons, and revealing and taking away the causes of prejudice and mistake. Otherwise, it is not fit to detain the hearers with propounding or answering vain or wicked cavils. Just as these are endless, so propounding and answering them does more to hinder than promote edification.

He is not to rest in general doctrine, however much clarified and confirmed. Rather, he is to bring it home to special use, by application to his hearers. He is to do so, even if it proves to be a work of great difficulty to himself, requiring much prudence, zeal, and meditation; and even if it will be very unpleasant to the natural and corrupt man. He is yet to endeavour to perform it in such a way that his listeners may feel the word of God is alive and powerful, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and in such a way that, if any unbeliever or ignorant person is present, he may have the secrets of his heart made manifest, and give glory to God.

In the use of instruction or information in the knowledge of some truth, which is a consequence from his doctrine, he may (when convenient) confirm it by a few firm arguments from the text in hand, and other places of scripture, or from the nature of that common-place in divinity, of which that truth is a branch.

In confuting false doctrines, he is neither to raise an old heresy from the grave, nor to mention a blasphemous opinion unnecessarily: but, if the people are in danger of an error, he is to confute it soundly, and endeavour to satisfy their judgments and consciences against all objections.

In exhorting them to duties, he is also, as he sees cause, to teach the means that help to perform them.

In dehortation,⁶ reprehension, and public admonition (which require special wisdom), let him, as there is cause, not only reveal the nature and greatness of the sin, along with the misery attending it, but also show the danger that his hearers are in, by being overtaken and surprised by it, together with the remedies and best way to avoid it.

In applying comfort — whether in general against all temptations, or in particular against some special troubles or terrors — he is to carefully answer those objections which a troubled heart and afflicted spirit may suggest to the contrary. It is also sometimes requisite to give some notes about trial. This is very profitable, especially when performed by able and experienced ministers, with circumspection and prudence, and the signs of it are clearly grounded on the holy scripture. By this means, the hearers may be able to examine themselves, as to whether they have attained those graces and performed those duties to which he exhorts; or are guilty of the sin reprehended, and in danger of the judgments threatened; or are those to whom the consolations propounded belong. This is done so that they may accordingly be motivated and excited to duty, humbled for their wants and sins, affected with their danger, and strengthened with comfort, as their condition requires upon examination.

And, just as he does not always need to prosecute every doctrine which lies in his text, so he is to wisely choose such uses as, by his residence and conversing with his flock, he finds

⁶ *Dehortation*: dissuasion; to advise against something.

most needful and seasonable; and among these, those which may most draw their souls to Christ, the fountain of light, holiness, and comfort.

This method is not prescribed as necessary for every man, or upon every text; but only recommended, as being found by experience to be very much blessed by God, and very helpful for the people's understandings and memories.

But the servant of Christ, whatever his method may be, is to perform his whole ministry:

1. *Painfully*, not doing the work of the Lord negligently.
2. *Plainly*, that the least may understand; delivering the truth not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect; also abstaining from an unprofitable use of unknown tongues, strange phrases, and cadences of sounds and words; sparingly citing sentences of ecclesiastical or other human writers, ancient or modern, however elegant they may be.
3. *Faithfully*, looking at the honour of Christ, the conversion, edification, and salvation of the people, not at his own gain or glory; keeping nothing back which may promote those holy ends, giving to everyone his own portion, and bearing indifferent respect to all, without neglecting the least, or sparing the greatest, in their sins.
4. *Wisely*, framing all his doctrines, exhortations, and especially his reproofs, in such a manner as may be most likely to prevail; showing all due respect to each man's person and place, and not mixing his own passion or bitterness.
5. *Gravely*, as becomes the word of God; shunning all gesture, voice, and expressions, that may occasion the corruptions of men to despise him and his ministry.
6. *With loving affection*, so that the people may see all of it coming from his godly zeal, and hearty desire to do them good. And,
7. *As taught of God, and persuaded in his own heart*, that all that he teaches is the truth of Christ; and walking before his flock as an example to them in it; earnestly, both in private and public, recommending his labours to the blessing of God, and watchfully looking to himself and the flock of which the Lord has made him overseer: So shall the doctrine of truth be preserved uncorrupted, many souls converted and built up, and he will himself receive manifold comforts from his labours even in this life — and afterward, the crown of glory laid up for him in the world to come.

Where there are more ministers in a congregation than one, and they have different gifts, each may more especially apply himself to doctrine or exhortation, according to the gift in which he most excels, and as they agree between themselves.

Of Prayer after the Sermon.

THE sermon being ended, the minister is,

“To give thanks for the great love of God, in sending his Son Jesus Christ to us; for the communication of his Holy Spirit; for the light and liberty of the glorious gospel, and the rich and heavenly blessings revealed in it; such as, namely, election, vocation, adoption, justification, sanctification, and the hope of glory; for the admirable goodness of God in freeing the land from antichristian darkness and tyranny, and for all other

national deliverances; for the reformation of religion; for the covenant; and for many temporal blessings.

To pray for the continuance of the gospel, and all its ordinances, in their purity, power, and liberty: to turn the chief and most useful heads of the sermon into some few petitions; and to pray that it may abide in the heart, and bring forth fruit.

To pray for preparation for death and judgment, and watching for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: to entreat of God the forgiveness of the iniquities of our holy things, and the acceptance of our spiritual sacrifice, through the merit and mediation of our great High Priest and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

And because the prayer which Christ taught his disciples is not only a pattern of prayer, but is itself a most comprehensive prayer, we recommend that it also to be used in the prayers of the church. And because, at the administration of the sacraments, and when holding public fasts and days of thanksgiving, and on other special occasions — which may afford matter of special petitions and thanksgivings — it is requisite to express something in our public prayers (just as it is our duty at this time to pray for a blessing upon the Assembly of Divines, the armies by sea and land, for the defence of the King, Parliament, and Kingdom); thus, every minister is to apply himself to those occasions, in his prayer before or after the sermon. But, as for the manner of it, he is left to his liberty, as God directs and enables him to discharge his duty in piety and wisdom.

The prayer ended, let a psalm be sung, if it may be done conveniently. After this (unless some other ordinance of Christ, that concerns the congregation at that time, is to follow) let the minister dismiss the congregation with a solemn blessing.

Of the Administration of the Sacraments:

AND FIRST, OF BAPTISM.

BAPTISM, as it is not to be delayed unnecessarily, so it is not to be administered in any case by any private person, but only by a minister of Christ, called to be the steward of the mysteries of God.

Nor is it to be administered in private places, or privately, but in the place of public worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently see and hear; and not in the places where fonts, in the time of Popery, were unfitly and superstitiously placed.

The child to be baptized after notice given to the minister the day before, is to be presented by the father, or (in case of his necessary absence) by some Christian friend in his place, professing his earnest desire that the child may be baptized.

Before baptism, the minister is to use some words of instruction, touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of this sacrament, showing,

“That it is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ: That it is a seal of the covenant of grace, of our ingrafting into Christ, and of our union with him, of remission of sins, regeneration, adoption, and life eternal: That the water in baptism, represents and signifies both the blood of Christ, which takes away all guilt of sin, original and actual; and the sanctifying virtue of the Spirit of Christ against the dominion of sin, and the corruption of our sinful nature: That baptizing, or sprinkling and washing with water,

signifies the cleansing from sin by the blood and for the merit of Christ, together with the mortification of sin, and rising from sin to newness of life by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ: That the promise is made to believers and their seed; and that the seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the church, have, by their birth, an interest in the covenant, and a right to the seal of it, and to the outward privileges of the church, under the gospel, no less than the children of Abraham did in the time of the Old Testament; the covenant of grace, for substance, being the same; and the grace of God, and the consolation of believers, more plentiful than before: That the Son of God admitted little children into his presence, embracing and blessing them, saying, *For of such is the kingdom of God*: That children, by baptism, are solemnly received into the bosom of the visible church, and united with believers, distinguished from the world and those who are outside; and that all who are baptized in the name of Christ, renounce, and by their baptism are bound to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh: That they are Christians, and federally holy before baptism, and therefore they are baptized: That the inward grace and virtue of baptism is not tied to that very moment of time in which it is administered; and that the fruit and power of it reaches to the whole course of our life; and that outward baptism is not so necessary that, through the lack of it, the infant is in danger of damnation, or the parents guilty, so long as they do not contemn or neglect the ordinance of Christ when and where it may be had.”

In these or the like instructions, the minister is to use his own liberty and godly wisdom, as the ignorance or errors in the doctrine of baptism, and the edification of the people, may require.

He is also to admonish all that are present,

“To look back to their baptism; to repent of their sins against their covenant with God; to stir up their faith; to improve and make right use of their baptism, and of the covenant sealed by it between God and their souls.”

He is to exhort the parent,

“To consider the great mercy of God to him and his child; to bring up the child in the knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion, “and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and to let him know the danger of God’s wrath to himself and child, if he is negligent: requiring his solemn promise for the performance of his duty.”

This being done, prayer is also to be joined with the word of institution, for sanctifying the water to this spiritual use; and the minister is to pray to this or a like effect:

“That the Lord, who has not left us as strangers without the covenant of promise, but called us to the privileges of his ordinances, would graciously grant to sanctify and bless his own ordinance of baptism at this time — that he would join the inward baptism of his Spirit with the outward baptism of water: make this baptism to the infant a seal of adoption, remission of sin, regeneration, and eternal life, and all other promises of the covenant of grace — that the child may be planted into the likeness of the death and resurrection of Christ — and that the body of sin being destroyed in him,⁷ he may serve God in newness of life all his days.”

⁷ Roman Catholics conceive that baptizing an infant cures the imputed sin of Adam, leaving only inherent sin.

Then the minister is to demand the name of the child; which being told him, he is to say (calling the child by his name),

I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

As he pronounces these words, he is to baptize the child with water: as for the manner of doing of it, it is not only lawful but sufficient, and most expedient, to be by pouring or sprinkling water on the face of the child, without adding any other ceremony.

This being done, he is to give thanks and pray, to this or the like purpose:

“Acknowledging with all thankfulness, that the Lord is true and faithful in keeping covenant and mercy: That he is good and gracious, not only in that he numbers us among his saints, but is also pleased to bestow upon our children this singular token and badge of his love in Christ — that in his truth and special providence, he daily brings some into the bosom of his church, to be partakers of his inestimable benefits, purchased by the blood of his dear Son, for the continuance and increase of his church.

And praying that the Lord would still continue, and daily confirm more and more, this unspeakable favour — that he would receive the infant now baptized and solemnly entered into the household of faith, into his fatherly tuition and defence, and remember him with the favour that he shows to his people — that, if he is taken out of this life in his infancy, the Lord, who is rich in mercy, would be pleased to receive him up into glory — and if he lives and attains the years of discretion, that the Lord would so teach him by his word and Spirit, and make his baptism effectual to him, and so uphold him by his divine power and grace, that by faith he may prevail against the devil, the world, and the flesh, till in the end he obtains a full and final victory, and so is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Of the Celebration of the Communion, or Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

THE communion, or supper of the Lord, is to be frequently celebrated; but how often, may be considered and determined by the ministers and other church-governors of each congregation, as they find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge. And, when it is administered, we judge that it is convenient to be done after the morning sermon.

The ignorant and the scandalous are not fit to receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Where this sacrament cannot with convenience be frequently administered, it is requisite that public warning be given the sabbath-day before its administration: and that either then, or on some day of that week, something be taught concerning that ordinance, and the due preparation for it, and participation in it; so that by the diligent use of all means sanctified by God to that end, both in public and private, all may come better prepared to that heavenly feast.

When the day has come for administration, the minister, having ended his sermon and prayer, shall make a short exhortation:

“Expressing the inestimable benefit we have by this sacrament, together with the ends and use of it — setting forth the great necessity of having our comforts and strength renewed by it in our pilgrimage and warfare — how necessary it is that we come to it

with knowledge, faith, repentance, love, and with souls hungering and thirsting after Christ and his benefits — how great the danger is to eat and drink unworthily.”

Next, he is, in the name of Christ, on the one hand, to warn all those who are ignorant, scandalous, profane, or who live in any sin or offence against their knowledge or conscience, that they do not presume to come to that holy table; showing them that someone who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment unto himself. And on the other hand, in a special manner he is to invite and encourage all who labour under the sense of the burden of their sins, and the fear of wrath, and who desire to reach out to a greater progress in grace than they can yet attain to, to come to the Lord’s table; assuring them, in His name, of ease, refreshing, and strength to their weak and wearied souls.

After this exhortation, warning, and invitation, the table having been decently covered beforehand, and so conveniently placed that the communicants may orderly sit around it, or at it, the minister is to begin the action with sanctifying and blessing the elements of bread and wine set before him (the bread in attractive and convenient vessels, so prepared that, being broken by him, and given, it may be distributed among the communicants; the wine also in large cups) having first showed, in a few words, that those elements, otherwise common, are now set apart and sanctified to this holy use, by the word of institution and prayer.

Let the words of institution be read out of the Evangelists, or out of the first Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, Chap. 11:23. *I have received of the Lord, etc.* to the 27th Verse, which the minister may, when he sees requisite, explain and apply.

Let the prayer, thanksgiving, or blessing of the bread and wine, be to this effect:

“With humble and hearty acknowledgment of the greatness of our misery, from which neither man nor angel was able to deliver us, and of our great unworthiness of the least of all God’s mercies; to give thanks to God for all his benefits, and especially for that great benefit of our redemption, the love of God the Father, the sufferings and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, by which we are delivered; and for all means of grace, the word and sacraments; and for this sacrament in particular, by which Christ and all his benefits are applied and sealed to us, which — notwithstanding the denial of them to others — are continued to us in great mercy, after so much and so long an abuse of them all.

To profess that there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ, by whom alone we receive liberty and life, have access to the throne of grace, are admitted to eat and drink at his own table, and are sealed by his Spirit to an assurance of happiness and everlasting life.

To earnestly pray to God, the Father of all mercies, and God of all consolation, to grant his gracious presence, and the effectual working of his Spirit in us — and so, to sanctify these elements both of bread and wine, and to bless his own ordinance, that we may receive by faith the body and blood of Jesus Christ, crucified for us, and so to feed upon him, that he may be one with us, and we may be one with him — that he may live in us, and we in him, and to him who has loved us, and given himself for us.”

He is to endeavour to perform all of this with suitable affections, in response to such a holy action, and to stir up the like in the people.

The elements now being sanctified by the word and prayer, the minister, being at the table, is to take the bread in his hand, and say in these expressions (or the like, used by Christ or his apostle upon this occasion):

“According to the holy institution, command, and example of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, I take this bread, and, having given thanks, break it, and give it to you; (there the minister, who is also to communicate, is to break the bread, and give it to the communicants;) *“Take, eat; this is the body of Christ which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of him.”*”

In like manner the minister is to take the cup, and say, in these expressions (or the like, used by Christ or the apostle on the same occasion):

“According to the institution, command, and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, I take this cup, and give it to you; (here he gives it to the communicants;) *This cup is the new testament in the blood of Christ, which is shed for the remission of the sins of many: drink you all of it.*”

After all have communicated, the minister may, in a few words, put them in mind,

“Of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, held forth in this sacrament; and exhort them to walk worthy of it.”

The minister is to give solemn thanks to God,

“For his rich mercy, and invaluable goodness, granted to them in that sacrament; and to entreat for pardon for the defects of the whole service, and for the gracious assistance of his good Spirit, by which they may be enabled to walk in the strength of that grace, as becomes those who have received so great pledges of salvation.”

The collection for the poor is so to be ordered, that no part of the public worship is thereby hindered.

Of the Sanctification of the Lord’s Day

THE Lord’s day ought to be so remembered beforehand, that all worldly business of our ordinary callings may be so ordered, and so timely and seasonably laid aside, that they may not be impediments to the due sanctifying of the day when it comes.

The whole day is to be celebrated as holy to the Lord, both in public and private, as being the Christian sabbath. To this end, it is requisite that there be a holy cessation or resting all that day from all unnecessary labours; and an abstaining, not only from all sports and pastimes, but also from all worldly words and thoughts.

That the diet on that day be so ordered, that neither are servants unnecessarily detained from the public worship of God, nor any other person hindered from sanctifying that day.

That there be private preparations of every person and family, by prayer for themselves, and for God’s assistance of the minister, and for a blessing upon his ministry; and by other holy exercises which may further dispose them to a more comfortable communion with God in his public ordinances.

That all the people meet so timely for public worship, that the whole congregation may be present at the beginning, and with one heart solemnly join together in all parts of the public worship, and not depart till after the blessing.

That whatever time is vacant, between or after the solemn meetings of the congregation in public, be spent in reading, meditation, repetition of sermons; especially by calling their families to an account of what they have heard, catechising them, holy conferences, prayer for a blessing upon the public ordinances, singing of psalms, visiting the sick, relieving the poor, and similar duties of piety, charity, and mercy, accounting the sabbath a delight.

The Solemnization of Marriage

MARRIAGE is no sacrament, nor is it peculiar to the church of God, but common to mankind — it is of public interest in every commonwealth. Yet, because those who marry are to marry in the Lord, and need special instruction, direction, and exhortation from the word of God at entering into such a new condition, and need the blessing of God upon them in it — we judge it expedient that marriage be solemnized by a lawful minister of the word, that he may accordingly counsel them, and pray for a blessing upon them.

Marriage is to be between one man and one woman only; and those who are not within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity prohibited by the word of God; and the parties are to be of the years of discretion: fit to make their own choice or, on good grounds, to give their mutual consent.

Before solemnizing marriage between any persons, the purpose of marriage shall be published by the minister on three separate sabbath-days, in the congregation, at the place or places of their most usual and constant abode, respectively. And the minister who is to join them in marriage must have sufficient testimony of this publication, before he proceeds to solemnize the marriage.⁸

Before that publication of their stated purpose (if the parties are under age), the consent of the parents, or others under whose power they are (in case the parents are dead), is to be made known to the church officers of that congregation, and to be recorded.

For their first marriage, the same is to be observed in the proceedings of all others whose parents are living, even if they are of age.

And in subsequent marriages of either of those parties, they shall be exhorted not to contract marriage without first acquainting their parents with it (if it may be done with convenience) endeavouring to obtain their consent.

Parents should not force their children to marry without their free consent, nor deny their own consent without just cause.

After the purpose or contract of marriage has thus been published, the marriage is not to be long deferred. Therefore the minister — having had convenient warning, and nothing being objected to hinder it — is to publicly solemnize it in the place appointed by authority for public worship, before a competent number of credible witnesses, at some convenient hour of the day, at any time of the year, except on a day of public humiliation.⁹ And we advise that it not be on the Lord's day.

⁸ That is, there are to be no rushed marriages, but only upon a minimum of three weeks' notice.

⁹ That is, a national day of prayer; "with the deepest humility, acknowledging before God the manifold sins and transgressions with which we are justly chargeable as individuals and as a nation" — from John Adams' proclamation on March 23, 1798. See Concerning Public Solemn Fasting. (below, p. 23)

And because all relations are sanctified by the word and prayer, the minister is to pray for a blessing upon them, to this effect:

“Acknowledging our sins, by which we have made ourselves less than the least of all the mercies of God, and provoked him to embitter all our comforts; to earnestly, in the name of Christ, entreat the Lord (whose presence and favour is the happiness of every condition, and sweetens every relation) to be their portion, and to own and accept them in Christ, who are now to be joined in the honourable estate of marriage, the covenant of their God. And as he has brought them together by his providence, that he would sanctify them by his Spirit, giving them a new frame of heart fit for their new estate — enriching them with all graces by which they may perform the duties, enjoy the comforts, undergo the cares, and resist the temptations which accompany that condition, as becomes Christians.”

The prayer being ended, it is convenient that the minister briefly declares to them, out of the scripture,

“The institution, use, and ends of marriage, with the conjugal duties which they are to perform each to other in all faithfulness,; exhorting them to study the holy word of God, that they may learn to live by faith, and to be content in the midst of all marriage cares and troubles, sanctifying God’s name in a thankful, sober, and holy use of all conjugal comforts; praying much *with* and *for* one another; watching over and provoking each other to love and good works; and to live together as the heirs of the grace of life.”

After solemnly charging the persons to be married, before the great God, who searches all hearts, and to whom they must give a strict account at the last day, that if either of them know any cause, by precontract or otherwise, why they may not lawfully proceed to marriage, that they now reveal it — the minister (if no impediment is acknowledged) shall cause first the man to take the woman by the right hand, saying these words:

I _____ do take you _____. to be my married wife, and in the presence of God, and before this congregation, I promise and covenant to be a loving and faithful husband to you, until God separates us by death.

Then the woman shall take the man by the right hand, and say these words:

I _____ do take you _____ to be my married husband, and in the presence of God, and before this congregation, I promise and covenant to be a loving, faithful, and obedient wife to you, until God separates us by death.

Then, without any further ceremony, the minister shall, in the face of the congregation, pronounce them to be husband and wife, according to God’s ordinance; and so conclude the action with prayer to this effect:

“That the Lord would be pleased to accompany his own ordinance with his blessing, beseeching him to enrich the persons now married, as with other pledges of his love, so particularly with the comforts and fruits of marriage, to the praise of his abundant mercy, in and through Christ Jesus.”

A register is to be carefully kept, in which the names of the parties so married, with the time of their marriage, are immediately to be fairly recorded in a book provided for that purpose, for the perusal of all whom it may concern.

Concerning Visitation of the Sick.

It is the duty of the minister not only to teach the people committed to his charge in public, but privately; and particularly to admonish, exhort, reprove, and comfort them on all seasonable occasions, so far as his time, strength, and personal safety will permit.

He is to admonish them, in time of health, to prepare for death; and for that purpose, they are often to confer with their minister about the state of their souls; and in times of sickness, they are to desire his advice and help, timely and seasonably, before their strength and understanding fail them.

Times of sickness and affliction are special opportunities put into his hand by God to minister a word in season to weary souls: because then the consciences of men are or should be more awakened to think of their spiritual estate for eternity; and Satan also takes advantage then to load them more with sore and heavy temptations. Therefore, the minister, being sent for, and traveling to the sick person, is to apply himself with all tenderness and love, to administer some spiritual good to his soul, to this effect.

Considering the present sickness, he may instruct him out of scripture, that diseases come not only by chance, or by weaknesses of the body, but by the wise and orderly guidance of the good hand of God to every particular person struck by them. And that, whether it is laid upon him out of displeasure for sin (for his correction and amendment), or for testing and exercising his graces, or for other special and excellent ends, all his sufferings shall turn to his profit, and work together for his good, if he sincerely labours to make a sanctified use of God's visitation, neither despising His chastening, nor growing weary of His correction.

If the minister suspects him of ignorance, he will examine him in the principles of religion, especially touching repentance and faith; and as he sees cause, he will instruct him in the nature, use, excellence, and necessity of those graces; also touching the covenant of grace and Christ the Son of God, the Mediator of it; and concerning remission of sins by faith in Him.

He will exhort the sick person to examine himself, to search and test his former ways, and his estate towards God.

And if the sick person declares any scruple,¹⁰ doubt, or temptation that are upon him, instructions and resolutions will be given to satisfy and settle him.

If it appears that he does not have a due sense of his sins, endeavours should be made to convince him of his sins — of the guilt and deservings of them; of the filth and pollution which the soul contracts by them; of the curse of the law, and wrath of God due to them — so that he may be truly affected and humbled by them: and with this, make known the danger of deferring repentance, and of neglecting salvation that is offered at any time. This is to awaken his conscience, and rouse him out of a stupid and secure condition, to apprehend the justice and wrath of God, before whom none can stand, except the one who, lost in himself, lays hold of Christ by faith.

If he has endeavoured to walk in the ways of holiness, and to serve God in uprightness, although not without many failings and infirmities; or if his spirit is broken with the sense

¹⁰ A moral hesitation arising in the person's conscience.

of sin, or is cast down through lack of the sense of God's favour; then it will be fit to raise him up by setting before him the freeness and fulness of God's grace, the sufficiency of righteousness in Christ, and the gracious offers in the gospel, so that all who repent and believe with all their heart in God's mercy through Christ — renouncing their own righteousness — shall have life and salvation in him.

It may be also useful to show him that death has in it no spiritual evil to be feared by those who are in Christ, because sin (with its sting of death) is taken away by Christ, who has delivered all who are his from the bondage of the fear of death, triumphed over the grave, given us victory, and has himself entered into glory to prepare a place for his people. Thus neither life nor death shall be able to separate them from God's love in Christ, in whom they are sure — even though, now, they must be laid in the dust to obtain a joyful and glorious resurrection to eternal life.

Advice may also be given to beware an ill-grounded persuasion on mercy, or on the goodness of his own condition for heaven, but instead, to disclaim all merit in himself, and to cast himself wholly upon God for mercy, in the sole merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, who has engaged himself never to cast off those who come to him in truth and sincerity. Care must also be taken that the sick person not be cast down into despair by such a severe representation of the wrath of God due him for his sins, that it is not mollified by a sensible propounding of Christ and his merit as a door of hope to every penitent believer.

When the sick person is best composed, and may be least disturbed, and other necessary offices about him are least hindered, the minister, if desired, will pray *with* him and *for* him, to this effect:

“Confessing and bewailing original and actual sin — the miserable condition of all by nature, as being children of wrath and under the curse — acknowledging that all diseases, sicknesses, death, and hell itself, are the proper issues and effects of sin; imploring God's mercy for the sick person, through the blood of Christ; beseeching that God would open his eyes, reveal his sins to him, cause him to see himself lost in himself, make known to him the reason why God strikes him, reveal Jesus Christ to his soul for righteousness and life; and give to him His Holy Spirit to create and strengthen the faith to lay hold of Christ; to work in him comfortable evidences of His love; to arm him against temptations; to turn his heart from the world; to sanctify his present visitation of sickness; to furnish him with patience and strength to bear it; and to give him perseverance in faith to the end.

“That if God is pleased to add to his days, He would bless and sanctify all means of his recovery; to remove the disease, renew his strength, and enable him to walk worthy of God by a faithful remembrance, and diligent observing, of those vows and promises of holiness and obedience which men are apt to make in times of sickness, so that he may glorify God in the remaining part of his life.

And if God has determined to finish his days by the present visitation, then he may find such evidence of the pardon of all his sins, of his interest in Christ, and eternal life by Christ, that it may cause his inward man to be renewed, while his outward man decays; that he may behold death without fear, cast himself wholly upon Christ without doubting, desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, and so receive the end of his faith,

the salvation of his soul, through the only merits and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and all-sufficient Redeemer.”

The minister shall also admonish him (if there is cause) to set his house in order, thereby to prevent inconveniences; to take care for payment of his debts, and to make restitution or satisfaction where he has done any wrong; to be reconciled to those with whom he has been at variance, and to fully forgive all men their trespasses against him, just as he expects forgiveness at the hand of God.

Lastly, the minister may use the present occasion to exhort those around the sick person to consider their own mortality, to return to the Lord, and make peace with him; while in health, to prepare for sickness, death, and judgment; and all the days of their appointed time to so wait until their change comes, that when Christ appears, who is our life, they may appear with him in glory.

Concerning Burial of the Dead.

WHEN any person departs this life, let the dead body, on the day of burial, be decently attended from the house to the place appointed for public burial, and there immediately interred, without any ceremony.

And because the custom of kneeling down, and praying by or towards the dead corpse, and other such usages, in the place where it lies, before it is carried to burial, are superstitious. Because praying, reading, and singing have been grossly abused both in going to and at the grave, and are in no way beneficial to the dead, and have in many ways proved hurtful to the living – therefore, let all such things be laid aside.

However, we judge it very convenient that the Christian friends which accompany the dead body to the place appointed for public burial, apply themselves to meditations and conferences suitable to the occasion; and that the minister, if he is present, may put them in remembrance of their duty, just as he does on other occasions.

This shall not extend to deny any civil respects or deferences given at the burial, which were suitable to the rank and condition of the deceased party while he was living.

Concerning Public Solemn Fasting.

WHEN some great and notable judgments are either inflicted upon a people, or apparently imminent, or notoriously deserved by some extraordinary provocations; and also when some special blessing is to be sought and obtained – public solemn fasting (which is to continue the whole day) is a duty that God expects from that nation or people.

A religious fast requires total abstinence, not only from all food (unless bodily weakness manifestly disables a person from holding out till the fast is ended, in which case something may be taken to support nature when ready to faint, yet very sparingly), but also from all worldly labour, discourses, and thoughts, and from all bodily delights and such (even though they are at other times lawful), rich apparel, ornaments and the like, during the fast – and much more from whatever is scandalous and offensive in the nature or use of it, such as gaudy attire, lascivious habits and gestures, and other vanities of either sex. We recommend to all ministers, in their places, to diligently and zealously reprove these things – just as it is at other times, so especially at a fast, without respect to persons, as there is occasion.

Before the public meeting, each family and person, apart, are to privately use all religious care to prepare their hearts for such a solemn work, and to be early at the congregation.

So large a portion of the day as may be convenient, is to be spent in public reading and preaching of the word, with singing of psalms, fit to enliven affections suitable to such a duty, but especially in prayer, to this or similar effect:

“Giving glory to the great Majesty of God, the Creator, Preserver, and supreme Ruler of all the world, to better affect us with a holy reverence and awe of him; acknowledging his manifold, great, and tender mercies, especially to the church and nation, to more effectually soften and abase our hearts before him; humbly confessing sins of all sorts, with their several aggravations; justifying God’s righteous judgments as being far less than our sins deserve; yet humbly and earnestly imploring his mercy and grace for ourselves, the church and nation, for our king, and all in authority, and for all others for whom we are bound to pray (as the present exigent ¹¹ requires) with more special importunity and enlargement than at other times; applying by faith the promises and goodness of God for pardon, help, and deliverance from the evils felt, feared, or deserved; and for obtaining the blessings which we need and expect; together with a surrendering of ourselves wholly and forever to the Lord.”

In all these, the ministers — who are the mouths of the people to God — should so speak from their hearts, upon serious and thorough premeditation of them, that both themselves and their people may be much affected, and even melted by it, especially with sorrow for their sins; that it may indeed be a day of deep humiliation and afflicting of the soul. ¹²

Special choice is to be made of those scriptures to be read, and of those tests for preaching, that may best work the hearts of the hearers to the special business of the day, and most dispose them to humiliation and repentance — insisting most on those particulars which each minister’s observation and experience tells him are most conducive to the edification and reformation of that congregation to which he preaches.

Before the close of the public duties, the minister is, in his own and the people’s name, to engage his heart and theirs to be the Lord’s — with a professed purpose and resolution to reform whatever is amiss among them, and more particularly, those sins which they have been more remarkably guilty of; and to draw near to God, and to walk more closely and faithfully with Him in new obedience, than ever before.

He is also to admonish the people, with all importunity, that the work of that day does not end with its public duties, but that they are to so improve the remainder of the day, and of their whole life, in reinforcing upon themselves and their families, in private, all those godly affections and resolutions which they professed in public. Thus they may be settled in their hearts forever, and may more sensibly find that God has smelled a sweet savour in Christ from their performances; and that He is pacified towards them — by answers of grace in pardoning sin, in removing judgments, in averting or preventing plagues, and in conferring blessings suitable to the conditions and prayers of his people, by Jesus Christ.

¹¹ *Exigent*: tragedy, emergency, or other special circumstance.

¹² See Lev 16.29-31.

Besides solemn and general fasts enjoined by authority, we judge that congregations may keep days of fasting at other times, as divine providence administers special occasion to them; and also that families may do the same, if it is not on days in which the congregation to which they belong is to meet for fasting, or for other public duties of worship.

Concerning the Observation of Days of Public Thanksgiving.

WHEN any such day is to be kept, let notice be given of it, and of the occasion of it, some convenient time beforehand, so that the people may better prepare themselves for it.

The day having come, and the congregation (after private preparations) being assembled, the minister is to begin with a word of exhortation to stir up the people to the duty for which they have met, and with a short prayer for God's assistance and blessing (as at other conventions for public worship), according to the particular occasion of their meeting.

Let him then make some pithy narration of the deliverance obtained, or mercy received, or whatever has occasioned that assembling of the congregation, so that all may better understand it, or be minded of it, and more affected by it.

And, because singing psalms is, of all others, the most proper ordinance for expressing joy and thanksgiving, let some pertinent psalm or psalms be sung for that purpose, before or after the reading of some portion of the word suitable to the present business.

Then let the minister who is to preach, proceed to further exhortation and prayer before his sermon, with special reference to the present work. After this, let him preach upon some text of Scripture pertinent to the occasion.

The sermon being ended, let him not only pray as he is directed at other times after preaching — with remembrance of the necessities of the Church, King, and State (if they were omitted before the sermon) — but enlarge himself in due and solemn thanksgiving for *former* mercies and deliverances; and more especially for that which at present calls them together to give thanks, with humble petition for the continuance and renewing of God's usual mercies, as there is need, and for sanctifying grace to make a right use of it. And so, having sung another psalm suitable to the mercy, let him dismiss the congregation with a blessing, that they may have some convenient time for their repast and refreshing.

But the minister (before their dismissal) is to solemnly admonish them to beware of all excess and riot that tend to gluttony or drunkenness, and much more of these sins themselves, in their eating and refreshing; and to take care that their mirth and rejoicing are not carnal, but spiritual, which may make God's praise to be glorious, and themselves humble and sober — and that both their feeding and rejoicing may render them more cheerful and enlarged to further celebrate His praises in the midst of the congregation, when they return to it in the remaining part of that day.

When the congregation is again assembled, a like course in praying, reading, preaching, singing psalms, and offering up more praise and thanksgiving, as directed for the morning, is to be renewed and continued so far as time will allow.

At one or both of the public meetings that day, a collection is to be made for the poor (and in the same way on the day of public humiliation), so that their hearts ¹³ may bless us, and

¹³ Originally, "so that their *loins* may bless us," — i.e., so that their passionate reaction may bless us.

rejoice all the more with us. And the people are to be exhorted, at the end of the second meeting, to spend the remainder of that day in holy duties, and testimonies of Christian love and charity one towards another, and of rejoicing more and more in the Lord; as becomes those who make the joy of the Lord their strength.

Of the Singing of Psalms.

IT is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly, by singing of psalms together in the congregation, and also privately in the family.

In singing psalms, the voice is to be tunefully and gravely ordered; but the chief care must be to sing with understanding, and with grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord.

So that the whole congregation may join in this, everyone who can read is to have a psalm book; and all others who are not disabled by age or otherwise, are to be exhorted to learn to read. But for the present, where many in the congregation cannot read, it is convenient that the minister, or some other fit person appointed by him and the other ruling officers, read the psalm, line by line, before singing it.

AN APPENDIX,

Touching Days and Places for Public Worship.

THERE is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath.

Festival days, commonly called *Holidays*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.

Nevertheless, it is lawful and necessary, upon special emergent occasions, to set aside a day or days for public fasting or thanksgiving, as the several eminent and extraordinary dispensations of God's providence administer cause and opportunity to his people.

Just as no place is capable of any holiness under the pretence of whatever dedication or consecration is made, neither is it subject to such pollution by any superstition formerly used, and now laid aside, as may render it unlawful or inconvenient for Christians to meet together in it for the public worship of God. And, therefore, we hold it requisite that the places of public assembling for worship among us should be continued and employed for that use.