

Ebenezer Parkman's Sermon on the Origin, Duty, and Business of Deacons September 27, 1767

A special meeting of the Westborough church on Tuesday, June 2, 1767, chose Capt. Benjamin Wood as a deacon to replace the late Deacon Simon Tainter, and on July 26, Wood first officiated at the administration of the Lord's Supper. Two months later, Parkman preached his sermon on the origin, duty, and business of deacons, which, as he wrote, was "for the *Introduction of Deacon Wood* into his Office."

Parkman had not previously preached on the office of deacons, and in composing this sermon, he may well have had in mind the character of his "dear Friend and Brother" Simon Tainter who died on April 2. On the Sunday morning after Tainter's death, Parkman's sermon was on 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." For the afternoon sermon, he preached "a Discourse on the same mournful Occasion, and Subjoined some Character of the Deacon. And wish it may be without Offence, and profitable" (Apr. 5). The text from Isaiah reads, "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."

Parkman's "character" of Tainter most likely formed the basis for the "Account of Deacon *Tainter*" that Parkman sent to the *Boston Evening-Post* the next day:

A man of that excellent spirit which ever disposed him to Piety, Charity and universal Usefulness. — His *Piety* was manifested by his high regard to the house of God, his constant attendance there, and his esteem of the ordinances and ministers thereof. — His deeds of *Charity* were unstinted, his heart and hands being ever open, to relieve and help, and to supply, the necessitous; who now deplore the loss of such a friend and father. — But his *Usefulness* and *Serviceableness* was very noticeable and memorable, as he was of a generous temper, of a public spirit, and was evermore ready to all acts of beneficence; but especially was concerned for the common weal; promoting, to his utmost, the great interest of true religion, the glory of God, and the kingdom of the glorious Redeemer in the souls of men.¹

Benjamin Wood was a widower whose fourth wife, Vashti, had died on September 2, 1766. Parkman officiated at Wood's marriage to widow Sarah Johnson on November 12, 1767, and in the months that followed, Parkman, Wood, and church members were embroiled in a controversy over the too-early birth of Benjamin and Sarah's child. The issue was resolved when the couple, after much foot-dragging, confessed the sin of fornication, with church members in agreement that he should continue as deacon.

That Wood continued to serve as a deacon might seem surprising. After all, he and his wife had violated the Seventh Commandment. But Puritans were keenly aware of human frailty, that all persons were flawed and liable to sin. Central to church discipline was not the confession itself

¹*Boston Evening-Post*, Apr. 17, 1767, p. [3].

but the fact that a sinful person humbly acknowledged his or her lapse and was restored to the church's charity. Benjamin Wood served as deacon for another twenty-two years, finally resigning, "considering his age and infirmities," at the age of seventy-six.²

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Note on the Transcription. This transcription follows the so-called "expanded" method. The thorn "y" is expand to "th," and letters and abbreviations are brought down to the line and expanded unless the abbreviation is in common use today. Sentences end with a period; occasional punctuation is silently inserted (or omitted) for clarity; & and &c. are changed to "and" and "etc." Words that Parkman crossed out have been silently omitted. Insertions, whose place is usually indicated by a caret within the text, are silently moved from the margin or bottom of the page or brought down from above the line.

The manuscript of the sermon is among the Parkman Family Papers at the American Antiquarian Society (Box 1, Folder 6). A digital image of the sermon may be found at <https://congregationallibrary.quartexcollections.com/documents/mirador/109822>.

No. MCCCCLXXX. Westborough, Sept. 27, p.m., 1767.
For the Induction of Deacon Benjamin Wood.

A
Discourse on the
Original,³ the Duty and
Business, and the Quali-
fications of
DEACONS

Act. 6:1 to 6, and 1 Tim. 3:8 to 13.
And in those Days, etc.
Likewise must the Deacons etc.

The Audience may be apprized, That a little while since, this Church made choice of another Deacon in the Room of the Deacon last deceased. And the Person elected having, after convenient Time for deliberating and considering the Matter, accepted the Choice, it may be thought convenient, both for his sake and ours, to have a few words concerning this Office, what we may justly think concerning it, what may be incumbent on, or expected from those who Sustain it, and the profit that may redound to us all who desire to be acquainted with the Things of the Kingdom of God. The Passages of the divine Word which I have been reading will lead us into all that we shall find Necessary to know about them. There is indeed another place where

²See "Benjamin Wood's Fornication: From Sin to Confession in Eighteenth-Century Westborough, Massachusetts (<http://www.ebenezerparkman.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Wood-Benjamin-Benjamin-Woods-Fornication-From-Sin-to-Confession-in-18th-Century-Westborough-Massachusetts.pdf>).

³*Oxford English Dictionary*: "The thing or person from which something springs or is derived; a source, cause; an originator, creator" (obsolete).

they are expressly mentioned; but it is only in the brief direction, or Dedication of the Epistle to the Philippians. “Paul and Timotheus, the Servants of Jesus Christ (they glory in that Title) to all the Saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons,”⁴ these two being the only Officers in the Gospel Church that are clearly and Plainly of divine appointment in the New Testament. Nor are there any other Pointed forth to us, especially in the 1 Tim. 3 Ch. where we have the completest Directory given to the

(2)

the Church of Christ and its Ministers to Shew them the Characters and the Work and Business of its Officers. By Bishops are to be understood those who have the Oversight, Watch and Care thereof as their Elders, Pastors and Teachers. Thus we read in 1 Pet. 5:1, “The Elders which are among you, I exhort” – and v. 2, “Feed the Flock of God which is among you taking the oversight thereof,” etc. Eph. 4:11, “And He gave some — Pastors and Teachers.” By Deacons we understand the Temporal Stewards of the Church or those who are entrusted with, and the Distribution of the Churchs Treasure. The word is of Greek Original and denotes Service or Ministry. It is sometimes used of other ecclesiastical Officers, both Ordinary and Extraordinary, of Ministers who preach, 1 Cor. 3:5; nay it is the Same word which is improved by our Lord concerning Himself that he “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,”⁵ and when St. Paul, Rom. 15:8, speaks of Him as the Minister of the Circumcision. But the most common and appropriate meaning of it is, to this forenamed Church officer. Concerning which we would

First, Enquire into the Original and the Occasion of Constituting this Order of Men.

Secondly, into their Duty, their proper Work and Business. This will lead us to

Thirdly, an Enquiry into their Character and Qualifications which are requisite for those who are to be chose and are to execute this Office.

There are divers other Things which we might properly enough be desirous to inform ourselves about — as particularly

Fourthly, The Manner in which those primitive Deacons were introduced into their office, and

Fifthly, the Happy Prospect of Things thereupon – All these Articles

(3)

may be gathered from the Passages which I have been reading. Here therefore,

I. First, Let us Enquire into the Original, and the Occasion of Constituting this Office, and this Order of Men. And it was thus —

⁴Phil. 1:1.

⁵Matt. 20:28.

According to the Sacred story of the Acts and Proceedings of the Apostles and early state of the Church, they had then but one common stock, out of which they were Supported: The Ministers supplied, and the whole Body of Christians from Day to Day, maintained; it so happened that when they grew pritty numerous, and there were different sorts of Widows, among them some Grecians, or those who dwelt in various parts of Greece, Spoke that Language, and used the Septuagint Translation: and others who were native Jews and used the Hebrew Bible; these latter, it was complained, whether justly or unjustly we can't at this Day certainly tell, were made more of, and the former too much neglected and unprovided for, in the daily Distributions; wherefore the Apostles were oblig'd to look into the Affair, and See that justice be done, and the Grievance redressed. In the best ordered societies, in the purest Church that ever was, something may be amiss; or at least there will be some Complaints from some or other. All have not true Faith: all that have true Faith have it not in Exercise; or have not that Meekness or Patience, Self-denial, or Prudence, which Christians ought to be Examples of. But to return. The Apostles must take Some Effectual Care respecting the fore mentioned Difficulty, that it may

(4)

be removed. They had themselves hitherto had the Trouble of the Fund; the receiving, and the laying out the Money; the providing and dispensing from Day to Day, as every Days Necessity called for it. But now they found it could no longer consist with the Dutys more immediately and properly pertaining to their high and important Office, to attend upon it. The Encumbrance was too Great and the Impediment to their principal work and Business was insupportable. Having therefore called a Meeting, the Apostles (called here the Twelve) laid the Matter before 'em, and told them that as to themselves it would be unreasonable for them to desist from their preaching, in order to their attending to this Temporal Care. They don't deny it to be a Necessary Care: but then there must be some body else to bear it. What they would therefore have the people do, is this, they must choose out from among themselves seven fit persons to whom the Trust may be committed. They did thus; and this was the Occasion and Original of this Office.

And by this Account which we have from the inspir'd writer of this Book, we have at the Same Time, good satisfaction.

- II.** Secondly, what was their Duty; their Proper Work and Business. For here you may see the Design and scope of the whole. It is not, as in a certain Church of higher Renown, to preach and baptize. They may alledge that there were several of these seven Deacon preached and One of them baptized.
1. Neg.

But first: if two did as Deacons,

(5)

they must necessarily be Supposed to go beyond any Character work or Design that is mentioned here to have Occasioned the Appointment of them.

2. Secondly, If two did as Deacons then we may judge that they all of them did, which we may conceive, if it had been so, would have been inserted Some where or other; but we find no such Thing of the rest of them, and as to baptizing, we read of but one of them and he bore another Character as we shall see. But let us examine the divine Word, which is our only Rule, a little more carefully upon this Head, concerning these two, who are said to preach, and, at least one of them, to baptize. They are Stephen and Philip. They were both of them extraordinary persons, and there is something very remarkable concerning them.

As to the first of them, St. Stephen, there are several things here recorded concerning him; but not a word can be found that he preached.

One is, that he wrought Miracles, v. 8, “And Stephen full of Faith and Power, did great wonders and miracles among the People.” But this proves nothing of his preaching. For these were distinct Gifts, as we read in 1 Cor. 12:4, “Now There are Diversities of Gifts, but the Same spirit”; v. 8, “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of Wisdom,” etc.; v. 10, “to another

(6)

the working of Miracles; to another Prophecy” — which (we are taught) is frequently to be understood of Preaching. And it may be remembered that our Lord's words, in Mark 16:17, are, “And these signs shall follow them that believe”; and not those only that preached.

Another Thing observable of this eminent Person, was that he was a most able Disputant. And is not every Christian required to defend the Christian Faith, according to his Capacity, as the Occasion may be therefor? And as it pleased God wonderfully to assist St. Stephen in that Disputation, insomuch that it is added in v. 10, that they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.” Thus St. Jude “writes” to Christians and “exhorts that they Should contend earnestly for the Faith,” Jude v. 3. And St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews that we Should “hold fast the profession of our Faith without Wavering”⁶ — and there is added for our Encouragement “for He is faithful that has promised.” He therefore that was with holy Stephen, will, we may hope, be with us when He calls us, according to the Good Pleasure of His Will. — But to look back again upon the Sacred story for the Effect, we don't find there was very good success in Convincing the Enemies of the Gospell. No: the less able they found themselves to answer that good servant of Christ, the more they were enraged against him; and they done leave, till, though innocent, he is arraign'd — and this brings me to

A Third Thing very memorable concerning him; namely, His Plea at the Bar, and The Defence which he made of Himself and of Christianity — in which when he grew bold and came home with it to them they were exasperated; and they run upon him, and ston'd him, that he dyed, the first

(7)

Martyr to the Christian Cause. But unless you will call this a sermon, which was his apology, and a most eminent Address to the Court, we have no Account that I know of, of his Preaching.

⁶Heb. 10:23.

With regard to the other of those whom we mentioned a while ago; namely

St. Philip, we presently owning that he was a Preacher, and that he baptized as well as wrought Miracles, for so we are expressly assured by the Sacred Word, as in Acts 8 v. 5-6 and v. 38, 40. But we have good Reason to conclude this worthy Deacon had purchased to himself an higher Degree by this Time and was advanced to this Superior office of a preacher. The Case appears to be this, We read in the Beginning of the 8th Ch. of this History, that “at that Time” (that is, of the Death of the Proto-Martyr we have been speaking of), “there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem,” which broke ‘em up; and consequently the Remaining Deacons could no longer attend to their special Charge there as it had been for “they were all scattered abroad through out the Regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles.” “Then Philip went down to the City Samaria” – and according to Ecclesiastical account he was there employed as an Evangelist; for So we read of him, under that extraordinary Character (as I shall mark to you presently) “and Preached Christ unto them.”⁷ What we have concerning him further in that Chapter will evidence that he was peculiarly under the Direction and Influence of the divine spirit But I would hasten to that Passage in this Sacred Book where he is recorded to be of that higher Order which I spoke of. It is in Acts 21:8

(8)

Posit. where we find it is the very Person who was one of the seven, who is called Philip the Evangelist, which makes it clear that he did not preach or baptize as a Deacon. Nor can we think the work and Business of the Deacons was properly any other than what occasioned their being chose, and what we are expressly told it was, viz. to serve Tables. Nor could it be judged any other than inconsistent with preaching especially since this is the very Reason given for appointing this different Order of Men for it: that the Apostles could not leave the word of God to Serve Tables. See v. 2.

Ques. If the Question be, What Tables are they to Serve? The Answer is these 3. The Lord's; the Poor's; the Ministers. It is necessary that they Should take the proper Care of each of these; and it is the Churchs Duty to see that there be sufficient stock to enable them thereunto. And although in this Land of Gospel Privileges, where we are blessed with a Christian Magistracy, and there are good and wholesome Laws made for the promoting of Religion and the Welfare of the State, there is provision made with respect to two of these Articles, the Care of the Poor, and the Support of the Ministers of the Gospel, yet this does not supersede or can be designed to preclude a divine Institution. It renders these Parts of their Care, and the Discharge of their Duty herein, much easier and Plain to them but it does by no

(9)

means vacate or nullifie it; but they have still the Superintendency and oversight of these Matters — In a Special Manner I can't but think that as to the Poor, our Customs have been too defective, and our Charity too Slender. For it would be more agreeable to the Spirit of Charity, if persons reduced to straits and Difficultys were relieved in private ways and Methods before they

⁷Acts 8:5.

come to such Necessity as to be made the Towns Poor; and without exposing them to the Public; and though I doubt not many good Deeds are done thus, yet ought we not to be concerned whether we are not much behind in this as a Church? which ought to have such a Treasure in the Hands of its Stewards as to be able, and be empowered, according to their Wisdom and Goodness, under proper Limitations and Regulations, to distribute as Cases and Circumstances might call them for it. I would therefore recommend this to your Serious Thought and Consideration. Some objections hereto which might rise in the Minds of persons may be partly removed by what we have next to treat of, Scil:

III. Thirdly, The Characters and Qualifications of the Gospel Deacons.

1. The Direction given by the Apostles in Acts 6:3 is, "look ye out among you Men of honest Report, full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom." It was primarily requisite that Such Trustees should be

(10)

Men well spoken of, that there may be no suspicion of them in the Minds of People to hinder their charitable and pious Contributions or Benefactions; but that there may be full Confidence in them in all Things.

If, according to the Rule in 1 Cor. 4:2, "Stewards are to be faithfull," it follows, that Such men must be improved in that Office, as have unblemished Reputation for their Fidelity, that the Church Treasury may be committed to them Safely.

They must have such a good Name that when any Sums of Money are committed to them they may be like the men that repaired the House of the Lord in the Reign of Jehoash, and in the Reign of Josiah: There was no need of reckoning with, because they dealt faithfully. 2 K. 12:15 and Ch. 22:7. Of Such good Report was Timothy, Acts 16:2, "who was well reported of by the Brethren of" one Place and another. Another Qualification is,

2. "Full of the Holy Ghost" — This Expression sometimes means the being endowed with the power of working miracles. — But with what powers soever any were furnished in those first and extraordinary Times of Christianity whether Ministers or Deacons, yet we are sure that since those Gifts and Powers have ceased, with the extraordinary occasion for them, this Expression can be understood no other than that they Should be Peculiarly eminent for the Common Gifts and Graces of the divine Spirit: Sound Knowledge, firm Faith and Hope, Love, Holiness, Stedfastness and Constancy, Courage and Zeal; that they may hold fast their Profession, attend to their Duty and be unmoved by Temptations and Discouragements, cheerfully for-

(11)

warding and promoting the work of the Lord and in particular, assisting the Ministers of Christ (in 1 Cor. 12:28, they are called Helps), Strengthening them against all Oppositions, or whatever might tend to obstruct them in their grand Design of Converting souls to God and edifying the Body of Christ. And cheerfully and generously relieving, supplying and succouring, according

to their ability or what they are furnished with, the poor and necessitous. To be endowed with these noble and divine Principles, and to be in the Exercise of these excelling Graces, so fit and proper for Men in their Office, is to be full of the Holy Ghost.

3. It is added, And Wisdom. Persons in their Office and Trust and called to discharge such Dutys as they are, stand in need of peculiar Measures of Prudence and Discretion upon numberless Occasions: And therefore ought they to be Persons of Judgment and sagesness. Some think it respects their being furnished with distinguished Understanding in the Doctrines of the Gospel; and skill in disputing and maintaining them as St. Stephen was very expert in this; as is evident by his Defence. But I conceive the former sense is more likely to be true, not exclusive of the other, they being so foremost among professors.

But, Besides these Qualifications mentioned by the Apostles, at first, St. Paul in his Directory to Timothy and to all Ministers, speaks of some other, or more particular Vertues, and that they just be guarded against some peculiar Vices. 1 Tim. 3:8-9, "Likewise must the Deacons be grave, not double-tongu'd, not given to much

(12)

1. Wine, not greedy of filthy Lucre: holding the Mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience." First, The Deacons – Grave. [Greek letters] The same word which is thus translated here, is elsewhere rendered honest. See Phil. 4:8, but in the margin there, it is Venerable. In no wise light, but of a composed, Sober, Seemly, respectable Behaviour. Again, they must be
2. Secondly, Well guarded in their Speech. "Not double tongu'd," not loquacious, or talkative, not saying one Thing to one man and another to another, Shaping themselves to their Company, or uttering one Thing and intending another. They must be men of Constancy; Men who have a just regard to Truth, and Speak it at all Times, let the Temptations to the Contrary be what they will. — Further, they must be Persons
3. Thirdly, of Temperance; "Not given to much Wine." As their Office is to serve Tables, and particularly the Lord's Table, where they must be more immediately employed about the Wine than others; purchasing and providing it, bringing and preparing it, etc.; therefore they must be of more sober and temperate Disposition, and under the government of divine Grace, that they may not be moved by any Temptation to Excess. Moreover,
4. Fourthly, They must be free from a Covetous Turn. Deacons "must not be greedy of filthy Lucre." It is most becoming in such to be very open-hearted, open-handed, generous — and setting a good Example of free giving, to induce others hereto: and therefore it is very contrary to their Character and opposite to the End and Design of their Constitution, to be of a close, Sordid make. And as they are entrusted with monies of various kinds, and untol'd, so they are to be put into this Office, not only who are honest and faithful but who are not under the sway and Influence of a Mean, low, niggardly, avaricious Spirit which may make them hard-hearted to the Poor

(13)

and not inclined to help and assist as they ought: Covetousness is also directly opposite to the tender Compassion and bountifullness which is very peculiarly requisite in the Church Steward, and that is to be as the Father of the Indigent and distress'd. There is Another Thing mentioned with these, viz.

- 5 Fifthly, They must "hold the mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience."

By the mystery of Faith understood the Gospel: called thus because it contains great and wonderful Mysteries, which yet are to be believed as divine Truths, because of the Evidence from God, v. 16.⁸ And without Controversie, Great is the Mystery of Godliness. Deacons, as well as Ministers (nay all Christians, though there is special Reason why the Officers of the church Should), must hold this fast —firmly believe and abide by it; maintain and defend it — let the Opposition to it, to the Doctrines and Order of it, be what they will. It is our Duty to hold fast this profession of our Faith without wavering.

This must be "with pure Conscience," i.e., in sincerity and uprightness; not in hypocrisy, or for worldly Ends. This must be made to appear, by the Life and Conversation; even if it be in a Time of Persecution, they must still be firm and stedfast. Nay and not only themselves but

Their good Conduct must be manifest and evident by the good Order, Government and Exemplariness of their Familys. For

6. Sixthly, Care is here taken respecting their Wives and Children (if they have such), v. 11-12.⁹ "Even so must their Wives" etc. This may refer to the Wives of the Bishops also. But undeniably to those who had been last Spoke of. Since the Holy Ghost has Seen meet to be Particular about these, I may not shun to declare the whole Counsel of God.

Their Wives must be Grave — the same word in the Original as about them Selves — Their Deportment must be, not light and airy, but Staid and Serious, modest, venerable. "Not Slanderers." A slanderer is one

(14)

that back-bites, reproaches, vilifies and defames his Neighbour — talks in Such a strain about him as to make the Hearers think meanly of him. Tis a very great and reigning Sin, and very provoking to God. All professors of Religion are to abstain from it, it being exceeding hurtful and unbecoming. The word in the Original is that by which the worst of Beings is describ'd. Devils. Not calumniators — false-accusers, or make-bates.¹⁰

⁸1 Tim. 3:16.

⁹1 Tim. 3:11-12.

¹⁰"Makebate," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "a person who...creates contention or discord; a fomenter of strife" (now archaic).

Sober – that is, free from Intemperance. It is also translated, vigilant. Sobriety and watchfulness being near of Kin, and very necessary Vertues: Especially very becoming in the wives of the Officers of the Church, of each Order. Tis added,

Faithful in all Things — For in keeping the Church's Treasure, in distributing Charity to the Poor, and in many Articles of incumbent Duty, there will be much dependence on her Fidelity. As to the Deacon's being Husband of One Wife, This was also required with respect to the Bishop. See v. 2.¹¹ It must be remembered that it was of old customary among those people, and other eastern Nations to have Plurality of Wives — but this Law teaches Chastity and Purity. What is further added is,

“Ruling their own Children, and their own Houses Well.”¹² This was also in the Character of the Bishop. They must both of them imitate the good Patriarch Abraham in this, and it Should be certainly so, that God may depend upon it. “I know Abraham says He,”¹³ etc. It is of great Consequence to Religion and to the Interest of the Gospel that both their Houses be under the best Regulation.

Thus I have gone through what we have in both these passages of Sacred Scripture which principally relate to the Duty and Business, and to the Qualifications of Deacons. There are some few Things relative to their Probation and the Manner of Constituting them which I must wave. What remains now is,

(15)

The Application and Improvement of this Discourse in the following Articles.

1. First, The Church of God ought to be sensible of the Care and Kindness of her great and glorious Head in So Considering her Necessities and providing them Supplies. As He provides Pastors, Bishops, Elders or Ministers for them so He does these other needful Officers, the Deacons. Herein we see both the Affection and the Faithfulness of Christ. 'Tis He appoints the Office, and it is He by His Spirit glorifies persons therefore. For this, grateful Praise and Thanks are due from us. Let us pay our devout Acknowledgments to Him herefor. Again
2. The Churches of God Should see that they duely improve the Benefit which they may have by the Officers which He has Set up and continued among them. Next to His own Glory, God graciously designs the highest Good, the Edification and Eternal Salvation of His Church therein.

The peculiar Design of the Pastorate is the Preaching the Everlasting Gospel, the Administration of Sacraments and the Inspection and Guidance of the Flock. They are therefore to be improv'd with all due Care as the Ascension Gifts of Christ to His People. The immediate Design of the Deaconship being to serve Tables, or as Temporal Stewards to look after the outward Affairs of the Church, they Should therefore be improved to those purposes. And it is

¹¹1 Tim. 3:2.

¹²1 Tim. 3:12.

¹³Gen. 18:19.

needful they Should have wherewith to discharge their Duty. Likewise their Graces and virtuous Example Should be imitated to Gods Glory. Mark and Consider the Success of the Churches abiding by divine Institutions, Act 6:7. But then

3. Thirdly, Those who are in Office, of one Order and another, Should impartially Examine themselves concerning their Conduct in their respective Offices, and their Discharge of the Dutys which were incumbent on them —

This may produce two things, viz.

- 1.) First, Shame and Grief that we have fallen so short: which Should be accompanied also with Prayer for Forgiveness, through Jesus Christ. And

(16)

- 2.) Secondly, very earnest Excitement to all proper Endeavours and Labours in the proper Discharge of the several Dutys which we are bound to: with Eye and Heart to God for needful Aid and Assistance and watching against whatever may be an Impediment or Disadvantage to us.

4. Fourthly, This Discourse being more especially occasioned by what was a while ago transacted in this Church, in electing a Deacon (as I said in the beginning), so it is fit that a few words be directed more especially and Peculiarly to him. Accordingly

Dear Brother,

You See how the Providence of God has ordered these Things; and you have heard both what the Duty and Business of Such an Officer is, and what the Qualifications requisite are. Your Accepting the Churchs Vote of your Election is to be understood as your yielding and resigning yourself to God and to His and the Church's service. This office and Charge is now therefore committed to you, as a Deacon of this Church and it is solemnly charged upon you to be upright and faithful in performing the Duty of Such an one. See that you use this Office well; and labor after that Grace whereby you may be stedfast; may excell, and adorn the Christian profession, for you have great Encouragement hereto, as in v. 13;¹⁴ you Shall thereby purchase to yourself a good Degree — that is, of Honour and Esteem; and if timorous before, yet may hope to attain to great Boldness in the Faith which is in Christ Jesus.

(17)

For by a diligent attendance to their Duty they may arrive at higher Degrees of Christian knowledge, and increase in Faith and every Grace. There arises good Courage from a good Conscience. “Those that are Careless (says Dr. Collings on the Place) and unfaithful in the Discharge of their Duty, Guilt makes timorous; but the good and faithful servant of God enjoys that Liberty and Courage which Faith in the Lord Jesus gives, and without Fears discharges all

¹⁴1 Tim. 3:13.

the parts of his Office.”¹⁵ But above all that you can obtain among Men, if you are upright and faithful you shall be favoured with the approbation and Applause of the glorious Head and Lord of the Church and Judge of Quick and Dead,¹⁶ who has expressed Himself in this gracious manner. Be thou faithful to the Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life¹⁷ — [*illegible*] etc. etc.

Before I break off I would have a brief Word to the whole Assembly, and this is, to put you all in mind of What is the great End and Design of all Ordinances, all these various Orders and Means of Grace; scil: your Saving Conversion; your eternal Redemption — Let us not therefore loose sight of these; but diligently Prosecute them especially remembering how Short and uncertain our Time is; of what infinite Moment it is, and that in the Grave etc. O that we might etc.! And be admitted to the General Assembly etc.! Through Jesus Christ to whom etc.

¹⁵According to the Wikipedia article on Matthew Poole, John Collinges (1623-1690) wrote the commentary on 1 Tim. 3:13 in *Annotations upon the Holy Bible. Wherein the Sacred Text Is Inserted, and Various Readings Annex'd, Together with the Parallel Scriptures. The More Difficult Terms in Each Verse Are Explained. Seeming Contradictions Reconciled. Questions and Doubts Resolved. And the Whole Text Opened. Being a Continuation of Mr. Poole's Work by Certain Judicious and Learned Divines* (4th ed.; London, 1700), II. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Poole (accessed Sept. 5, 2022). For the entry in Poole's *Annotations*: https://www.google.com/books/edition/Annotations_Upon_the_Holy_Bible_Wherein/KEHtTAYr-TeC?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=%22parts%20of%20his%20office%22 (accessed Sept. 5, 2022).

¹⁶Acts 10:42.

¹⁷Rev. 2:10.