

"The moment that we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry, our right hand is withered; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains," says one. The Godly Venn writes: "One of the mistakes that I have cause to regret is, that from fear of pride, I never paid due regard to the numberless passages of Holy Writ, which so plainly point out, and extol, the high dignity of our office. Had I given but a little consideration to these passages, I indeed believe, I should have had much more comfort in my own soul, and more success both in public and in private addresses to my people." And speaking from the very precincts of the Judgment seat, a dying pastor exclaimed, "If ministers only saw (especially in their public exercises) the preciousness of Christ, they would not be able to refrain from clapping their hands with joy, and exclaiming, 'I am a minister of Christ, I am a minister of Christ.'"

Nor be surprised that men so speak and so feel when they have attained to just conceptions of this their great commission, for to a faithful and successful discharge of its duties, what are the qualifications needed in the incumbent? These twelve things he needs:—

"A father's tenderness: a shepherd's care;  
A leader's courage which the cross can bear;  
A ruler's awe: a watchman's wakeful eye;  
A pilot's skill, the helm in storms to ply;  
A fisher's patience; and a labourer's toil;  
A guide's dexterity, to disembroil;  
A prophet's inspiration from above;  
A teacher's knowledge: and a Saviour's love."

"I magnify mine office" (Rom. xi. 13). Yes, well said, peerless Paul; in so doing, you are magnifying God, the author and inspirer of your office.

Then as to the *design* of the Christian ministry, this may be very clearly gathered from the several names and

metaphors under which the work and the workmen are set forth in Holy Writ.

"A flock," the church is called: ministers, therefore, are under-shepherds, who are to provide for, and protect those under their care, to heal the sick, to strengthen the weakly, to recover the wandering, and keep from wandering those now withing the fold. "Christ's household or family:" ministers, therefore, as wise and faithful stewards, are to dispense the provisions of the house according to the necessities of each individual member. "A city:" as watchmen, ministers are to guard every avenue against every foe, and summon to the city's defence, when necessary, all within it. "Vineyard, or Husbandry:" as gardeners therein, ministers are to till the soil for the good seed, sow therein the good seed of the Word, and instrumentally carry forward the germination of a successful harvest. "A Building of God:" ministers are the workmen by whom tier upon tier is to be laid upon the chief corner-stone, and the apostolic foundations, until the whole body of the elect, "growing into an holy temple of the Lord, shall be builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." "A Kingdom:" ministers are members of Christ's cabinet, with Him to administer the affairs of the realm according to the king's good pleasure; and, as ambassadors to the disaffected and rebellious, to pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.

Archangels were exalted and honoured by such an office; how ineffably great the honour conferred on fallen man in God's appointing *him* to the great work! "Magnify the office," for its origin is Divine, its dignity is in keeping with its origin, and its design is the ultimate salvation of a lost world.