

divine knowledge, think themselves perfectly competent to stand up and teach every one. How many say that they have an unction from above, and know everything, whereas the Holy Spirit says, "If a man thinketh he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know it."

While there is

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in the Christian ministry, and any attempt to elevate any body of men into a priestly caste, as if they were in a special sense the lot of God, is utterly subversive of Christianity, still we must never forget that it has pleased God to call certain men to official positions in His Church, and that therefore the Christian ministry is stamped with a peculiarly sacred character. To despise it is to despise our Saviour's good gifts, and to throw contempt on His infinite wisdom. Paul, in all his labours for the Church, recognized this grand fact; therefore it was his practice to ordain elders in every church, or cause them to be ordained. Nowhere did he leave a company of Christians without some among them who should labour in word and doctrine; who should rule and feed the flock of God; who should give themselves wholly to this work, and keep themselves therefore disentangled from the ordinary affairs of life. Such labourers are spoken of under various figures in the context. They are *soldiers*, fighting for the great Captain of Salvation—officers in His army. Some who follow divisive courses would reorganize this army, and have all officers and no privates. They are also *vine dressers*, tending the vineyard he has planted and watered and hedged in. They are to preserve and train and nourish the vines, so that they may produce abundant fruit. They are also *shepherds*, loving the sheep for whom the Good Shepherd has died; feeding them from day to day under the eye of the Great Shepherd, who rose from the dead, and looking forward to that time when they shall present each one blameless before the Chief Shepherd in His kingdom of glory. They are also *ploughmen*, breaking up the fallow ground by the plough of repentance and conviction, casting in the good seed of the eternal Word, harrowing it in by prayer and supplication, reaping and threshing the spiritual harvest on earth. They are also called *oxen*. This