

and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you." And then they declared unto them their office and doctrine; and with these sayings, Scripture observes, "Scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them."

Not only persons in heathenism, but those who profess the faith of the Gospel, have, in many instances, paid too high a deference to the ministerial character. Thus, *Cornelius*, who was a devout man and approved of God, from not being sufficiently acquainted with this character, fell down at the feet of Peter, and worshiped him. But Peter took him up, saying, "*Stand up; I also am a man.*"

And the Apostle John (though the instance be not exactly within the limits of our subject, yet, as it confirms the fact, it may be mentioned), who in a vision saw and heard many things, fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed him these things. But the angel said, "*See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them that keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*"

From every consideration, and from every example, it appears to be the *duty of ministers themselves*, when persons, either from ignorance or partiality, entertain too exalted an opinion of them, *to correct the mistake*, and to entirely refuse the undeserved honor; but more especially when it implies idolatry.

Our subject will lead us to consider when the ministerial character is viewed in too exalted a light.

As I design to vindicate the Christian Church from the errors of the present day, I would confine myself more particularly to two observations:—

1st. It is an erroneous opinion of the ministry to suppose that any order of men now in the Church of God are successors of the Apostles.

2d. That it is an erroneous idea of the authority of a minister to suppose that he has any other power to forgive sins than by the preaching of the Gospel.

I will state first, my brethren, that, with me, you are some-