

the preaching of the gospel be the only sovereign, effectual means appointed by God for the change of men's natures and the reformation of their lives (a denial whereof includes a renunciation of Christianity), it is a vain expectation that either of them will be wrought in such a way as to restore the beauty and glory of religion in the world, unless provision be made for an able ministry to instruct the body of the people, through all their distributions, in knowledge and understanding.

2. It is the duty of this sort of persons, unto the same end, to *preserve the truth pure and uncorrupted*. Unless this be done carefully and effectually, holiness will not be maintained or preserved in the world. And it is evident how many of them have acquitted themselves herein, as hath been in part declared in the foregoing account of apostasy from the doctrine and truth of the gospel. By them principally it hath been debased, corrupted, perverted, and continueth yet so to be; neither is there at this day scarce any one doctrine that should really promote evangelical obedience which is free from being despised or depraved by some of them. But this is not that which we now speak unto; it hath been done already. Our present inquiry is after that love and care of, that zeal for the truth, which are eminently required of them. Do they pray, and labour, and plead with God and man for its preservation, as that wherein their principal interest doth lie? or do many esteem of it any farther but as their outward advantages are secured by it? A fault there is in this matter, and it is not without the especial guilt of some that the world is come to such an indifferency about the principal truths of the gospel that from thence men slip into atheism every day.

3. Neither are these defects supplied by diligence in their work; yea, the want thereof is of all other evils in this kind most evident. No words are sufficient to express the sloth and negligence, the coldness and carelessness, that are found amongst many in the discharge of their duty, as to the instruction of others, and the application of the word of God to the hearts and consciences of men. I shall not mention particular instances, that none may be offended. The matter itself is evident, and the effects of it manifest. It may seem to some desirable that such things should be concealed, but whilst by reason hereof the souls of multitudes are in danger of eternal ruin every day, those who are sensible of their misery may be allowed to complain. How few, therefore, do diligently and industriously lay out themselves and their strength in the ministry, with zeal for the glory of God and compassion unto the souls of men! How few do take heed to themselves and to the flocks, do watch and pray, and press their message on the consciences of their hearers! Alas! it is but little of saving truth that many know in the notions of it, less they