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Two leather parchment copies

A

CHARGE,

from Wilson

addressed to

Dec 17-1845

DELIVERED TO THE

CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION;

AND A

SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE GENERAL ORDINATION,

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, OXFORD,

DECEMBER 21, 1845.



BY

SAMUEL, LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD,

CHANCELLOR OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER.

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TO THE
PRIESTS AND DEACONS

SENT OUT BY HIM

TO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,

DEC. XXI, MDCCCXLV,

This Charge and Sermon

ARE INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND AND BROTHER,

S. OXON.

A

CHARGE,

&c.

DEAR BRETHREN IN THE LORD,

DURING the last three days, we have all had our attention turned to various parts of that great subject—the Ministry of Christ's Church. Within this chapel, as well as in the more formal examination by which we have been occupied, it has been my desire and endeavour to bring especially before you the spiritual character of your future office, with the necessary consequences of its perilous risks, and its exceeding blessedness. And this I have done in the firm conviction, that great as is the importance to yourselves and the Church, of your being well furnished with the pre-requisites of a liberal education, and some measure at least of theological knowledge, there is one condition of yet higher necessity, and that is the possession of a true living faith in Christ our Lord, both for your own

salvation, and for all the work of his ministry to be committed to you. An ignorant Clergy are a reproach to any Church, and must injure its efficiency; but an ungodly Clergy threaten the removal of its candlestick, and the extinction of its life.

I would, therefore, before I proceed to a few detailed suggestions, once more beg you to reflect a while upon this momentous subject. The first question which it will be my duty to put, before God and His Church, to every one of you who apply either for priest's or deacon's orders, brings it practically before us. Of those who seek the office of a deacon I must enquire, "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost?" Of those who seek the priesthood, "Do you think that you be truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ," "to take upon you this office," and you must answer as before your all-seeing Judge, "I trust so"—"I think it."

My brethren, this question is an awful one to put—an awful one to answer. Your reply must be spoken deliberately; with the full foreknowledge that it must be rendered; with every opportunity for self-examination; after solemn prayer; in the presence of the Church; before the jealous God who smote of old with sudden death him who stretched out his uncommissioned hand to stay but the material ark; before the heart-Searcher whose invisible stroke swept instantly away those who "lied not unto man, but unto God."

For yourselves and for others it is of the greatest moment that you answer not this question carelessly or wrongly: for others—for who can fix limits or ends to the disastrous issue to souls for which Christ died, and to the whole Church, of the commencement of a faithless, indolent, unfruitful ministry? for yourselves—for the error is by all human means one which cannot be repaired. Your words cannot be unsaid; your vows cannot be read backward. Your ministerial character is indelible; the only reparation of which the case admits is, that you hereafter rise up to the requirements of the office you have so unhappily assumed. And though the might of God's Grace has wrought these conversions, yet who may venture to speculate upon being the subject of such undeserved mercy? Who will stake knowingly on such a hazard his own or his brethren's salvation? And, after all, such cases are not the rule, but the exception. As the rule, the ministry continues in its leading character as it commences. There is, of course, a growth in every living ministry—a growth from the weak uncertainty of infancy to the confirmed strength of perfect manhood—a growth in knowledge, comprehension, power, skill, insight, faith, and love: but whilst there is growth on all sides in a living ministry, growth is not in the dead. The increase of corruption is there the only change. This is, indeed, the enemy's sad mockery of growth—the development within each false ambassador of Christ of the character of Antichrist—

the full ripening and perfecting of selfishness, in one of its various forms of covetousness, or lust, or worldliness, or utter sloth and carelessness; the contracting and the hardening of the soul; the dulling of all conscience, till it sleeps, to awake only as the worm which dies not.

This, I say, is the ordinary law and rule of an unfaithful ministry. Instead of the man being made better, as the Tempter whispers to you he will be, he is made worse, by his careless rushing into Holy Orders. With them come new temptations and new requirements; new risks, that is, on both sides; and he has grace for neither; and so he falls, and falls lower than other men; falls, as perhaps he never would have fallen as a layman—falls, certainly, into deeper gulfs of sin and woe than he could otherwise have reached. God's Word, with which he must have some familiarity, like daily handled fire, hardens utterly his soul; God's message spoken, but not listened to, makes deaf his ear; the visions of judgment and of peace, on which he has gazed unfeelingly, have turned his sense of sight to blindness. And even if he reach not this depth of woe, there are many lesser woes for him who has entered with thoughtlessness upon this great charge. All—even the most thoughtful and prepared—find, it may be, as they go on, that they knew not whither they should be led, when first they began to follow Christ: His net caught them, and they were taken; His voice allured

them, and they followed Him; but they knew not at first how verily they should be made like Him, made to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His Baptism; and to this He leads them step by step; for this His grace enables them. But who can paint the bitter anguish through which they must pass, who, without a full trust in Him, and well-nigh without His presence, are met by these temptations, and overtaken in this storm? It is most commonly with a heart almost broken, that such men pass to life: it is as by fire that they are saved. Surely, then, this is an awful answer for any of us to pronounce; and one concerning which it becomes us to search with all diligence whether we can make it with anything of Christian confidence and truth. Let us, therefore, for a few minutes go on to the consideration of this question—When may we trust that we are inwardly called by the Holy Ghost to undertake this office?

Now it will help us to answer this question aright, if we first clear away some of the manifestly insufficient grounds on which men are led to make this choice. Clearly, then, it is not enough to choose it as men may choose lawfully any ordinary business or profession. It is not to be thought that a man is moved inwardly by the Holy Ghost to undertake it, when he enters upon it merely because it is an honourable profession, and has attached to it a certain rank, respectability, or endowment; or because his friends have designed him for it; still less, because he has

a family living waiting for him ; or good prospects of preferment ; or, least of all, because he is unfit for any other business or calling.

Of all these, though in different degrees, we may most assuredly assert, that they are not the reasons from which any man can safely gather that he is called by the secret voice of God's most Holy Spirit to be a watchman for his brethren's souls, and an ambassador of Christ. Many of them, indeed, may blamelessly come in as secondary motives. To have been educated for the work ; destined to it by pious parents ; led to it by the outward appointments of God's Providence ; to desire rather to live moderately by the altar than more abundantly upon secular earnings ; all of these may properly come in to aid a choice ; but they must not be its basis. Some desire at least to live nearer to Christ in employment and pursuit than worldly callings render possible ; some personal sense of the deliverance brought to the soul by His Gospel ; some desire to speak His precious Name to others ; some love for souls ; some aptness for ministering to them ; some of the desires and qualities of the Watchman, the Steward, the Shepherd, the Physician, the good Master-builder, must be certainly within us, and attest the working of the Spirit of the Lord, if we would assert safely that we act beneath His guidance. And these may, and in not a few instances, thank God, do, mount up to an earnest self-devoting love to the Lord our Redeemer ; to a supreme desire and labour to live

in all things for His glory ; to a spirit burdened with a “ woe is me,” and struggling like a pent-up fire until it can witness unto others, of the love of God our Father, of the power of Christ’s cross, of the healing, ennobling presence of the Lord the Holy Ghost. In such instances as these it is comparatively easy to trace the presence of a call from God ; but in the case of the numerous intermediate shades of character which lie between these and apathy or coldness, there may be much real perplexity in settling this important question, “ Am I truly called of God to serve Him in this office ?” For though an answer to this question may oftentimes be obtained by a careful sifting of our motives, yet such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that even after the belief at least that they have so tried themselves, some may be led without due cause either to presume or to despond. Whilst, therefore, it may be very useful to ask ourselves such questions as these,—to what do my thoughts most naturally turn in thinking over my future course ? do they mainly settle upon its ease, or family enjoyment, or respectability, or, on the other hand, upon its labours, its fellowship with Christ, its glorifying God, and its eternal crown ? and though the answers to these questions may give us some insight into the state of our hearts ; yet even here it will be especially needful for us to remember, that it is not of *feelings* one way or the other that the great question should be asked ; it reaches far deeper into the centre of our being ;

and these lighter airs of feeling may be nimble as the gales of summer, or charged thick with clouds and sadness, when the central man is of a mind wholly other from their mutable and deceitful aspect.

Let this then be your question,—what am I? And how may you learn that, but by seeing what you are in act and under trial; what are your ordinary motives, what is your ordinary conduct? And examine this, not by settling what will be your conduct under imagined trials, but by seeing what it has been hitherto in actual trials. Are you living as a witness for Christ, or for Antichrist? Are you resisting sloth, the rule of pleasure and self-indulgence, or are you yielding to them? Are you now cursing your brethren, or not caring for them, or are you already blessing them? Is your Lord dear to you? have you groaned beneath the burthen of your sinful being? and has He turned, or is He promising to turn, those groans to joy? Do you know any thing of the sinfulness of sin, of the sharpness and hardness of maintaining a warfare with it? Is the Christian life a reality in you? Do you know indeed what it is to have a place in the kingdom of grace, and in the strength of that grace do you desire to gather in the lost to Christ, their Lord and yours? In your present position are you seeking to live so as to glorify God? and is it your great aim in choosing this more especial service within the courts of His house, that you may glorify Him more abun-

dantly? This is a point on which you should obtain what certainty you can. His glory should be your great aim. In whatever measure His grace has touched your heart, in that measure it will be your aim. And if, indeed, it be so with you, surely you may hope that he is leading you on into a higher room of service; that He is calling you, and that you may dare to answer; that He is sending you, and you may go; that you shall be as a sharp and winged shaft in His quiver; as one upon whom He will bestow in *that* day the faithful pastor's crown of more than others' brightness.

So much, then, as to the materials for an answer to the general question, whether you are indeed moved inwardly by God the Holy Ghost to undertake this ministry. But there is a further branch of this question distinctly stated in the service for Ordaining Priests, and implied in that for the Ordering of Deacons, to which I would wish for a few moments to call your attention. The question, put in its distinctness, is—"Do you think in your heart that you be truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *the order of this United Church of England and Ireland*, to the order and ministry of priesthood?" Now, a sincere answer to this question must imply that your mind is so fully and entirely satisfied with the orders, discipline, and doctrine of that Church whose minister you seek to be, that you have not a doubt or a misgiving as to her character and office as being the branch of Christ's

holy Church which He has planted in this land. The first part of the question tests your secret call to the ministry of Christ; the second, your call to minister in this branch of the Church to which you apply for Orders. If you have a doubt as to her true character; if you are conscious to yourself that you are about to sign her Articles in a sense of your own, and one which really differs from that in which they are proposed to you as the rule of your teaching, and the condition of receiving your credentials, you are most truly obtaining the office of a teacher under false pretences, and cannot expect God's blessing on your course. These may sound hard words, but they are unhappily necessary. So much labour has been spent, and so much perverted ingenuity employed, in mystifying the requirements of common honesty in this matter, that they who are charged to enforce subscription as a preliminary to conferring Orders, seem to me compelled to be even painfully explicit. I would not indeed strain the rule so as to require from all an absolutely passive uniformity of view on every several proposition of the Articles, as the test of a conscientious subscription; such conduct would be very unlike the moderation and wisdom of the Church of England, which has always (witness her 17th Article) allowed a certain, nay, even a large licence to different minds; but I repeat my judgment, that unless you are honestly convinced that in the main tone and tenour of your mind and opinions you do thoroughly and heartily agree with

the thirty-nine Articles, as to what they assert and what they condemn, in the sense in which they are propounded to you, you cannot honestly subscribe them; and I will add, that I believe you could not more deeply injure yourselves than by allowing yourselves to sign such documents at such a time, with subterfuges and reservations. I am sure that a more deadly blow could not be inflicted on our Church, than that a people, of whose character, thank God, sterling honesty is the distinctive feature, should have reason to suspect that their Clergy believed one thing whilst they taught another.

And now, brethren, if these points be clear, we may proceed to a few hints which I desire to give you, for the due fulfilment of this ministry, which you will undertake with a well-informed and settled conscience.

To enter, indeed, here at length on this wide subject, would be manifestly impossible. I hope, moreover, God willing, for an opportunity of addressing you to-morrow on some of its more solemn topics: only I would now desire to suggest to you some considerations as to matters of detail, which suit the circumstances of to-day, rather than those of to-morrow.

And, 1st, let me repeat what I have already said to you here. Make up your minds deliberately, if you mean to be faithful, to lead a life wherein hearty and venturous faith will be daily tested by

calls to unflinching self-denial. Your one work is to win souls to Christ : not to produce a certain general decency and amendment in the face of society round you, but as God's instrument, and through the power of Christ's name, to work in living souls the mighty marvel of their true conversion. How painful soever be the thoughts which it excites, never lose sight of this truth, that your ministry has failed as to every soul entrusted to you, who is not under it converted to the Lord, or built up in His holy faith. And such a work *must* be full of toil and self-denial. The strong man armed will not allow you to spoil his house, and be free the while from molestation. And he is ever ready with his assaults and crafts; unless you slumber he will not even seem to sleep. Reckon then first on opposition. And then, secondly, remember that in all this you have a *real* work to do. Let this thought be always with you. Go out to visit in your parish, not because you ought to spend so much time in visiting your people, but because *they* have souls; and you have committed to you (feeble as you are) the task of saving them, in Christ's strength, from everlasting burnings. When you talk with them, beware of the dreamy listlessness which would decently fill up some ten minutes, with kindness, good words, an inquiry as to their families, their work, their health, ending possibly with a formal prayer; but say to yourself, Now must I get into this heart some truth from God. Be *real* with them; strike as

one that would make a dint upon their shield of hardness, yea, and smite through it to their heart of hearts. When you preach, be *real*. Set your people before you in their numbers, their wants, their dangers, their capacities; choose a subject, not to show yourself off, but to benefit them; and then speak straight to them, as you would beg your life, or counsel your son, or call your dearest friend from a burning house, in plain, strong, earnest words. And, that you may be thus *real*, I would counsel you from the first to take as little of your sermons as possible from those of other men. Let them be your own, made up of truths learned on your knees, from your Bible, in self-examination, amongst your people. And to make them such as this, spare no pains or trouble. Beware of giving to God and souls the parings of your time, the ends of other employment. Beware of a pernicious facility. However poor or ignorant your people are, you may be assured that they will *feel* the difference between Sermons which have been well digested and well arranged, and those which are put carelessly and ill together. Think your subject thoroughly over; settle, if possible, on Sunday evening the next Sunday's subject. Meditate on it as you walk about your parish; pray for power to enforce it; and as you read God's word, and go about your parish, light will break out on it, illustrations occur, applications suggest themselves; and when you write or speak, you will be full and orderly, and this is to be strong. Let every sermon be one subject, well divided

and thoroughly worked out; and let all tend to this highest purpose, simply to exalt before your people Christ crucified. Deal much in the great truths which the blessed God has taught us of Himself; beware of always tarrying amongst the graves and corruption of our own fallen tempted state, but rise up to God and Christ and the Holy Ghost, and bear your flock with you there. To lead them for themselves indeed through the Spirit, to believe in the person of the eternal Son, and so to stand before the Father, accepted in the Beloved,—this is life eternal.

But once more, let me say, begin your ministry at once. The spirit in which you begin it will probably cleave to you always; begin it, then, as you would wish to end it. From the first, fight against your great dangers—delay, unreality, mere professional decency, indolence, self-pleasing. Get you to the cross of Christ; look at those wounds; see in them what sin is; see in them what is the greatness of your Master's love; and as a ransomed sinner minister to ransomed sinners; take your censer and run in and stand between the dead and the living, for verily the plague is begun.

And to those of you, my brethren, who are to be ordained to college titles, and not to parochial cures, let me also say one word. With the same vows upon you, your duty, in some important points, differs widely from that of the parochial Clergy. Preachers of the word, indeed, when thereto licensed, you will be at once; and those who are engaged in tuition, will find their flock amongst

their pupils. As God's ministers, charged with the training of their fellow Christians, they must be far more than mere lecturers, or teachers of philosophy. Yet, still their duties and their temptations differ in many points from those of others. They have far more time, far fewer interruptions, than men who are labouring to supply the pressing spiritual necessities of populous parishes. And their duty seems to be defined by these facts: they should live much in devotion; they should be to their brethren, who are labouring amongst the multitudes, what Moses was, as he prayed upon the mountain, to Joshua as he fought upon the plain. And, further, they should be deep students of Theology. It is for them to maintain amongst us a high tone of Christian learning; and this is of moment, not only or chiefly that they may be ready to answer gainsayers, but because there is beneath all the separate facts and statements of Theology, a high and perfect scientific unity, the knowledge of which is most important for enabling minds which have mastered it, to adjust the proportions, and exhibit the relations of the different parts of truth.

And if these special duties belong to the academical Clergyman, no less marked are his peculiar temptations. First, there waits for him, in a high degree, the common temptation to a life of indolent and easy self-indulgence, whether in its grosser form of enjoying every day plenty of food and plenty of amusement, or in its subtler form of living for mere intellectual excitement. Beyond these, too, lie other

dangers. They who have retired from the busy world to contemplation and a cell, have found ere now, too often, that the Satan whom they fled from in the crowd, has travelled on before them to meet them in the waste. Self-confidence, fondness for speculation, love of singularity, separation from their brethren, and then the misty visions of the darkening eye, the eager throbbings of the narrowing heart, heresy, schism, unbelief, and apostasy, these are the special dangers of the unwatchful Christian student. How deeply, but as yesterday, some have thus fallen even by our side, is known to all of us. They are set as beacons to us, if such is our path, that we "be not high-minded, but fear," lest like them we too be led hereafter deliberately to adopt errors which we have been permitted erewhile to expose with a clearness withheld from others; and, at last, to fly on the wings of an unbounded scepticism into the bosom of an unfathomed superstition.

And where, my brethren, in the world or in the study, where is our safeguard? Only in His keeping, who in the city, in the wilderness, and on the temple pinnacle, alike rebuked the enemy; only in His presence with our souls, who has borne our nature and redeemed our loss; only in the perpetual guiding of His everlasting Spirit; and He will not fail one of us if we will indeed and constantly seek after Him. Only let us ever stay our souls on Him in the simplicity of childlike trust, and His promise is our own: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

A
SERMON,
&c.

ACTS i. 21, 22.

“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”

HERE was one of the noblest ventures of faith ever made by man. Viewed from the world's side, it was, as great faith always is, frivolous foolishness or daring madness. A little company of ignorant men, in a small province of the Roman world, had for three years followed up and down their land a new teacher, who professed to come from God. For awhile He had wrought great works, and spoken words of stirring power, but then his enemies had gathered round Him and hemmed Him in; one of those closest to Him had betrayed Him; He had been taken, crucified, and slain. They had been terrified, scattered, and overwhelmed with astonishment; and now they gather together in an upper room, and, with the door fastened for fear of their enemies, talk of choosing one in the traitor's room

to complete their broken number. They speak great words: they seem to look forth from their own scattered trembling company into the wide world around, as though it waited for them, as though they had a message for it, and power over it; as though it, too, would bow before the name of this their Master, and own at last the power of his resurrection. Here certainly was either the emptiest madness or the noblest faith.

Either their minds were full of the darkest delusions, or they were acting in the very might of God; His hand was laid upon them—was transforming them, was drawing out of their souls this prophecy of wonderful acts which they should do in His name. And, which was the truth, the event may tell us. From that completed company a voice awoke, to which the world did listen, and before which it fell. No visible strength dwelt in them as they went forth on their errand. They were scourged, beaten, imprisoned, slain. The weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but they were mighty. The world gathered against them in all the fierceness of its hatred, and all the might of its dominion. The legions of empire and the violence of the rabble, Roman governors and “lewd fellows of the baser sort,” equally assailed them; and their weapons were endurance, submission, love, faith, martyrdom,—and with these they triumphed. Two and two they went out. With a presence at first unperceived, they entered into every city and place of concourse.

The world despised them, and trampled on them; but soon it admitted most reluctantly their power. They stood beside it as reprovers; they seemed another conscience, so still and yet so piercing was their reproof; and if need were, they spake aloud. They stood beside the evil altar in the name of the Lord, and reproved even kings when they wrought iniquity. And their company was ever growing. They spoke words which had in them such a hidden power and sweetness, that the hearts of those who heard melted before them. They told men, learned and unlearned, secrets concerning themselves, concerning their state, their hope, their deliverance, for which their inmost spirits had until that day been pining; they preached unto them "Jesus and the resurrection," and their hard souls yielded, and they bowed to the cross, and were washed in baptism, and gathered into the new company, and were fed with its food, and wore its cross, and carried on its triumphs, until the world trembled at the change which was passing on itself. One and another had yielded, and who would yield next? Restless with uneasy suspicion, and fierce with the apprehension of defeat, it watered the ground with the blood of its victims only to advance their kingdom and hasten their triumph. And so it has, we know, advanced with one unfaltering tide from that day to this, until all that is mightiest in power, and greatest in nobleness, and highest in intellect has bowed down in adoration before that witness of the resurrection of Jesus.

So plainly does the event show that the acts of

that upper chamber were no dreamy delusions, but ventures of the noblest faith. And greatly are we concerned in this; for the acts which we are here this day to do, are but the carrying out of those which then were wrought. The two offices we are here this day to confer, were included in that apostolic office to which St. Matthias was elected. From the apostolate, under the direction of the Spirit, was severed first, as it seems, the diaconate, and then the priesthood. So that the temper of those eleven should be our temper now. We who are gathered here this day, laity and Clergy, the ordainer and ordained, the pastors and the flock, have common interests and common duties as to this day's purpose; and we all should feel to-day as those eleven felt. Further, we may see in the course of their work what should be the issue of ours.

For, first, we should have a firm faith in the reality of that we are doing. The same words are to be spoken to-day as those which broke of old the silence of that chamber, where the risen Lord stood beside the amazed eleven; and when He had shown them His hands and His side, breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whose sins soever ye retain, they are retained." These same words are again to-day to be spoken as in His name, and as if He were present with us. And all this is the most blasphemous frivolity if it be not the deepest truth. But truth it is; the selfsame truth as that which turned the madness of that upper

chamber into a reality which has subdued the world. Only let our faith lay hold of it: for Christ is with us in spiritual presence as truly as He was with them. What are the 1800 years which have since passed to Him? Still there is a Church within, and a world without; a world full of the discordant shouts of Babel builders, full of groans, and misery, and sin, and death; a Church within, dwelt in by His secret presence, and charged with the healing message of the resurrection of the Lord. We are this day in his presence. He is amongst us. We stand in the kingdom of His grace: we are about to send those from this cathedral who, in His strength, may labour for Him. Let us earnestly lay hold of this truth, with the strength of desire, and love, and gratitude, and expectation, and prayer. Let us open our mouths wide this day; let us strike not twice or thrice only and stay, but as those who would smite the Syrians until they have consumed them. Let our prayers win for Christ's Church this day some Saul of Tarsus, who shall witness mightily for His truth, and labour in God's work more abundantly than they all.

And as we may thus see, how we should all this day be affected, so may we see further the proper issue of this day's service.

Here is, 1st, the strength in which each one of those sent forth is to labour, and the spirit in which he is to be received. Here is his strength—he is called by God to this office (and woe be to him if he rush into it uncalled); he goes on God's call

about God's work : he may be, he ought to be, conscious of weakness unutterable, to feel himself a child, a man of unclean lips, slow of speech and of a slow tongue ; his inmost soul may groan forth, "Who am I, that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" he may be full of all darkness and all weakness, and *therefore* he may be strong ; for all this conscious feebleness may drive him from himself to God in Christ, and therein is there for him through faith all strength. In spite of appearances, at all times in his ministry there is strength for him : I witness not of myself, but of the resurrection of my Lord ; my words are not mine but His ; these sacraments, they are not naked signs of man's invention, they are His appointment, and received by faith, are full of Him ; I witness not by strength, but by weakness, glorying in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. And as having such an office they are to be received ; not for their natural eloquence or power, not for their acquired skill or learning, but for the supernatural presence which will make their weakness strong.

And then, farther, as there is here sketched out their strength in labour, and the claim of their unearthly mission, so is there also the nature of their charge :—they are sent to bear the witness of Christ's resurrection. This is their whole charge ; for all is shut up in this. They come from God to the world with the message of reconciliation ; and this message is, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"—the incarnation of the eternal

Son, His death, His rising again; and from this the truth of the ever-blessed Trinity, and man's restored relation to his God, this is their witness; this is what the heart of one and another longs for unconsciously; this is what the mortification and asceticism of the natural man are so dumbly craving for where they can never find it; this is that which will meet all the world's needs. This simple declaration of the truth of God was that which, when He gave us in this land the marvellous blessings of the Reformation, supplied the pressing necessities of that time; it is this which will meet our urgent needs at this time. By it only, and through it by bringing out the relation of redeemed man to the ever-blessed Trinity, can we supply to ourselves and ours that unity and common life of which there is, alas! so little, and for which so many are disposed to seek amongst the dead, amongst the cerecloths and wrappings of an ancient superstition.

This, then, my reverend brethren, is henceforth to be your charge; you are to witness of life to a dead world, of light to them that sit in darkness. Christ's resurrection is to be the beginning and ending of your message. This is to form the burden of your sermons; this is the meaning of your absolutions; this is the acted language of the blessed sacraments you minister. For this you are endued with a power above your own; not a magical power which shall act by a law of external force upon resisting agents, but a spiritual power—the power of Christ Himself acting by you and with you—which

shall brood over their spirits, awaken and answer voices in their deepest heart, fan the rising flame of love, win over the hardly yielding will, and lift in the might of God's Grace the man and the society to God their Saviour. For this we send you forth to-day; not to wear uneasily the rusty armour of the dead, but in the strength of a living truth, full of God's presence, to meet the pressing, threatening evils of man and of society; to awaken the careless, to heal the wounded, to bind up the broken, to breathe unity, concord, and love, amongst the divided and the hostile.

And how are you to discharge this great vocation? Already have we in more private communings given some consideration to this question, so full of awful issues to yourselves and all of us.

But once again let me remind you of some general rules which you must ever bear in mind, if you would be a blessing to your brethren, and render up your own account with joy.

And, 1st, for this end, we must be deep students of God's word. Where else are we to learn our witness of Christ's resurrection? Here it is written clear and full. The Old Testament in type, shadow, prophecy, and promise; the New in fulfilment, act, history, and grace, show Him continually forth. In it, day by day, we must live with Him. Thus must our message sink into our own hearts. Even as they who lived with Him upon earth, "who companied with" Him "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them," learned unawares, day by day, the truth they

needed, so must it be with us. His word must be our meditation, our study, the subject of our prayers, the matter for our self-examination, the instructor of our praises, our guide, our light, our refreshment, our teacher. We must scrupulously exclude all rival teachers; the holiest and best must not come into any competition with it. Not in the early Church, not in the holiest fathers, not in recorded visions, not in any or all of these are we to learn the witness of Jesus,—but in His Word. It is at this day of the greatest moment to be explicit here. Want of clearness on this point, more, I believe, than any thing besides, has tended to the unsettlement and fall of those who once were deemed to be pillars of the faith amongst us. Once let the mind begin to allow itself to look out of God's word for some clearer light than is there to be found, and it is the prey of every phantom and delusion. Once begin to set your Scriptural faith right by your gleanings amongst fathers and councils, and there is no amount of error which you may not most logically develope. Let us clearly understand what God's gift to us in Holy Scripture is, how alone and unapproachable it stands, and we shall be safe from these delusions. What that gift is, we cannot surely doubt. To the Church at the beginning, in the persons of the Apostles, was given, by the first outpouring of the Spirit, the full knowledge of the revelation of God in Christ as far as man can receive it. They knew all that can be known until we see

“**face to face.**” There was no limit to the communication, no invincible imperfection in its recipients. Here the words of Christ are plain: “When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into ALL TRUTH¹ ;” “but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name, He shall teach you ALL THINGS² ;” and that which they thus knew perfectly by revelation, they unerringly wrote down beneath the guidance of the same Spirit. God’s written word is the transcript of that revelation. In it Christ is revealed, and revealeth the Father by the Holy Ghost; so that here, and here only, is THE TRUTH ;—not the germ of truth to be developed, but all saving truth which can by any be received.

Of this truth the Church was to be “the keeper and the witness³ ;” to her was given not to discover more, but to preserve uncorrupted what she had received; “to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints;” and this she was to do, first by exhibiting in appointed acts and institutions what she had at first with the fullest clearness received—and hence her authority as an historical witness to facts; and secondly, as well by keeping uncorrupt the sincere word of inspiration, as by fixing with logical exactness, in opposition to the various glosses of heretics or the vagaries of private interpretation, what had always been received as the

¹ John xvi. 13.

² John xiv. 26.

³ Art. XX.

true doctrinal interpretation of that text of Scripture which admitted of a diverse rendering—and hence the authority of early creeds as exhibiting an universal consent; which rest, not on any power of development, but on the power of being a true witness conceded to the Church; who cannot coin new truth, but can witness to the King's mint mark upon his own coinage; who cannot add one iota to the necessary faith, but who "hath authority in controversies of faith," declaring, as a faithful witness, amidst the necessary uncertainties of language, how at all times THE ONE INSPIRED RECORD hath been understood. Of it then, brethren, we must be deep, humble, constant students; of it, our souls must be full; then shall we bear our witness clearly. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. From it truth in its simplicity, truth in its proportions, truth in its practical bearings, on ourselves first, and then on others; from it the truth in love will be revealed to us. By studying God's word far above all other books, for ourselves devotionally, on our knees, we shall gain a strength, and unction, and love, which will make us indeed able ministers of the new covenant. Nothing else will teach us to value at so high a rate the souls committed to our keeping; nothing else will give so great a simplicity and reality to the whole tone of our ministry; nothing else will so preserve alive within ourselves the important power of seeing the relative value of different truths; nothing will so much keep us from unsettling our people's minds, or disturbing our

parishes about things in themselves either of inferior moment, or of utter insignificance; nothing else will so much enable us to approve things which are excellent, to be sincere, and without offence, until the day of Christ. It is "by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures, that you may wax riper and stronger in your ministry⁴."

And then, brethren, 2ndly, if we would bear the witness of the resurrection of Christ, we must be men of prayer. The union of these two is the essence of the apostolical character. "We will give ourselves," was the declaration of the twelve, "continually to prayer, and the ministry of the Word;" and without prayer we cannot bear this burden. How without it shall we have an insight into Scripture? how turn what we read to profit? how have power with God or with our brethren? how shall we hope ever to be called in to see our King's countenance, unless we haunt the permitted antechamber of His presence? Prayer brings us near to Him; and of His infinite condescension brings Him near to us. In prayer, in real, hearty, earnest prayer, all things around us are set into their proper places. The earth and its interests shrink into their real insignificance. Time and all its train of pleasures, pains, shame, poverty, honour, and riches, what are these to one whose eye is on the great white throne, before whom lies the awful book of judgment, who sees heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the

⁴ Service for Ordering of Priests.

right hand of God? In prayer our minds are armed for the coming temptations of the day; they are cooled, refreshed, and calmed after its vexations, fatigues, and anxiety. In it we can, indeed, even whilst compassed with infirmities, bring our own crooked or withered will into His presence, who is the healer; and whose word of power shall restore the shrunken sinews to their vigour, and make him straight whom long infirmity hath bowed down. On our knees, if any where, we learn to love the souls of our people; to hate our own sins; to trust in Him who shows us then His wounded side and pierced hands, and to love Him with our whole heart. Nothing will make up for the lack of prayer. The busiest ministry without it, is sure to become shallow and bustling. To come forth from secret communing with Him, and bear our witness, and to retire again behind the veil to pour out our hearts before Him in unceasing intercessions, and devout adorations, this is, indeed, the secret of a blessed, fruitful ministry. Nor let us suppose, that at once, and by the force of a single resolution, we can become men of prayer. The spirit of devotion is the gift of God; it is a rare and costly gift: thou must seek it long and earnestly; and His grace will work it in thy heart. Devotion is a science high and difficult, for such as thou art. Thou must practise it and labour for it. Thou must pray *often*, if thou wouldest pray *well*; thou must condescend to be taught, to learn, to make gradual advances, if thou wouldest be indeed a master in

this most blessed art; thou must know its sweetness, that thou mayest be held up in following after it; its difficulties, that thou mayest resist them. Their first onset must not scatter, nor their multitude alarm thee. In God's strength thou must wrestle with wandering thoughts; sap their strength by the countermines of watchfulness and self-denial; fly from them into quietness and separation; so shalt thou find in the wilderness of this world the mountain of God's presence, where He shall look in upon thy soul, and draw out all its hidden powers and fragrance by the sunshine of His own countenance.

And then, once more, if we would bear the witness of the resurrection of our Lord, we must be men of holiness.

1st, Because, without this, there cannot be *reality* in our witness. We cannot, indeed, testify of the resurrection of Christ, unless we ourselves have known its power. The testimony which rests merely on the conclusions of the understanding is poor, cold, and utterly unconvincing. Even though our lives be perfectly correct, though we avoid not only great falls, but even lesser indecencies, yet our ministry must be *unreal*, unless the truths we speak have first thoroughly pervaded our own souls. If we have for ourselves no living faith in a risen Saviour, we cannot speak of Him with power to others. A heart truly converted by God's grace is the first requisite for an effectual ministry. To have bowed ourselves under the burden of conscious un-

cleanness; to have felt the loss and misery of sin; to have struggled so hard against it, that we were driven to Christ as for our lives; to know the entrance of the iron into our own souls; and then to have seen the cross of Christ for ourselves, to have found deliverance there; to have received help from God; to have prayed and been heard; to have obtained strength in the name of Christ risen; to have learned to love Him; to have been taught by Him to love others; this is the foundation of a real ministry. And as this true beginning of holiness is even essential to our ministry, so are high measures of it needful for those who would be greatly blessed to others. We must be great saints, if we would have our people holy; and this, for deeper reasons than from the mere necessity of affecting them by example. This, of course, is needful. Our flocks will be, for the most part, fainter transcripts of ourselves; they will go something beyond us in every act of self-indulgence, want of mortification, worldliness, and unwatchfulness, in which we allow ourselves. They will fall something below us in our outward conformity to the life of Christ. But this is not all, or even the principal thing. By a deeper law, it is true that the pastor's character is, in the main, the character of his flock. Mystically is it true of every pastor of the flock of Christ, "when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him ⁵." We are

⁵ John x. 4.

not, indeed, to be religious instead of our people. We are not a priestly class who undertake to perform their religion for them; but we have every reason to be holy for their sakes. For as personal holiness is needful, even for the reality of our work, so is great holiness for its perfection. We must *show* them in our risen lives, that Christ indeed is risen. This is a witness, from the force of which they cannot escape. They may close their ears to our words, when we tell them that Christ is risen, but they cannot avoid seeing, when we show them in ourselves the blessed power of His resurrection; and it is only by being near Christ our Lord, that we can be like Him; it is only by being like Him, that each one of us can be indeed in any measure the good shepherd. There is the greatest need, in our works, of spiritual skill and discernment, of an insight into hearts, which are only to be attained by learning, under His teaching, to know our own. There is need of untiring patience, of the meekest forbearance, of a willingness to go over the same ground again and again, of being ready to watch for days and nights to save so much as one soul, of a desire which no delay can quench, and a deep tenderness of inner spirit which no waywardness can dry up or turn to irritation; and where, but beneath the cross, can we learn this love, and win this patience? There may, without these, be a great addiction to those more conspicuous parts of the ministry, in which self is gratified and exalted by display; but there

can without them be no true devotion to those secret humiliations, intercessions, watchings, struggles, waitings, and labours, to which God only is privy, and without which any ministry is in a great measure fruitless. We can never truly prosper in our work, unless love pervades it thoroughly; and true Christian love is the crowning flower and ripening fruit of a life which God's grace has sanctified.

And, again, for another and even a higher reason yet, must we be men of holiness; because we are in the kingdom of God's grace, and because to us is committed a dispensation of His grace. Every act of ours will be real and effectual only so far as God's grace goes with it; and though He may be, and is, pleased to work by His grace even at the hands of the unholy, showing forth miracles through a Judas, and giving to the faithful the grace of sacraments though they be administered by an evil or a worldly-minded servant, yet who can say how greatly such unfaithfulness does mar His work, how much is lost which might be gained? How can the other necessities of our character be supplied if we fail here? How can we be students of God's Word without God's grace? Surely, to those who lack that heavenly anointing, it is a sealed book, and they blind of eyes and dull of heart amidst the great lights of its manifold and awful Wisdom. How can they pray for themselves or their people, who have not the Spirit of grace and supplication? How can they draw down the blessed dew on others, who even repel it from themselves? Who can have daily audience

of our King, but those that dwell within His courts?

And is it to such a life as this that you this day are called to pledge yourselves? Yes, brethren, it is; and that under the threat of penalties so dreadful, that the flesh of man may well shrink from their recital. For if this life, in some measure at least, yet in truth and reality, be not formed within you, you are lost for ever. And then whose loss can be so terrible? In the fiery pit, who but Christ's unfaithful messenger shall have the deepest, saddest gulf as his eternal portion? To have broken such vows as yours; to have been so near Christ, and yet to have rebelled with devils; to have had His pierced hands laid on you, and to have received no impress from them; to have had a special dispensation of His grace, and to have turned unto deeper sin; to have been sent forth to witness to your brethren of His resurrection, and by that witness to lift them up to Him, and instead thereof to have dragged them with you into darkness and the pit; surely such an issue of such mercy must lead by the shortest, surest path, to the uttermost destruction.

And what, then, can induce any to venture on this risk? Surely one thing, and one thing only—God's effectual call to such a service, and the sure belief in His special aid and mercy vouchsafed with that call. For this, too, His grace shall suffice. Your weak, failing, treacherous heart; it may be strong in Him; Christ's love may overcome your coldness, Christ's strength be perfected in your

weakness. He who has drawn you thus closely to Himself, He of His great mercy will work in you, through you, for you. Cast yourself upon His faithful word, upon His boundless mercy; and look to Him simply—to Him incarnate—the virgin-born; to Him dying, risen, reigning at the Father's right hand; look to Him in every hour of weakness, and be strong: and then blessed above all are ye. Whose crown of light amidst that radiant host shows as bright as does the faithful pastor's? "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Who shall be so near the throne as he who shared the likeness of his Master's service; who bore,—and fainted not,—His heavy burden; who used life as a ministry, time as a talent, opportunity as a service; who drank of His cup, and was baptized with His baptism, received and bore the impress of His hands, and, like the great Apostle, even "rejoiced in sufferings, filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in their flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church, whereof they are made ministers according to the dispensation of God which is given to them?"

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, One God, Blessed for ever; be ascribed all glory, majesty, dominion, and power, for ever and ever. Amen.

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