

The Scriptures represent your children as a blessing. Do not make them a pretext for disobeying God; for neglecting your salvation.

Finally, let me beg of you all to believe that it cannot be wise or safe to live in the neglect of an institution of Christ. Remember that you are bound to partake of the Lord's Supper, because Jesus Christ has commanded it; because you act most unthankfully if you neglect it; because of the spiritual benefits which it is intended to convey. Remember that nothing is necessary to prepare you for this ordinance but faith and repentance; and that nothing, generally speaking, ought to keep you from it, but what, if persisted in, will keep you out of heaven. If you profess and call yourselves Christians, do not slight the Christian sacraments. If you believe that Christ died upon the cross for your sins, do not neglect to commemorate his death in the way which he himself appointed. If you acknowledge Christ as your master—if you call him Lord, Lord, refuse not to do the things that he says.†

† Among the many excellent treatises on the Lord's Supper, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, I hardly know to which to give the preference. Perhaps the "Short Introduction to the Lord's Supper," by the apostolical Bishop Wilson, is altogether the most useful. Waldo's "Essay on the Holy Sacrament" is written with great judgment and piety, and the remarks on the Communion Service are excellent. Bishop Gibson's little book on this subject bears marks of the strong sense, learning, and pastoral fidelity of its author. Archbishop Synge's "Answer to all Excuses for not coming to the Holy Sacrament," and Bishop Fleetwood's "Reasonable Communicant," are both written with great clearness, and are particularly calculated for removing the doubts of scrupulous persons.

SERMON XI.

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

1 Cor. iv. 1.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

EVEN among men who profess and call themselves Christians, there are at all times too many who require to be instructed in the religion which they profess; and yet more who stand in need of exhortation, admonition, and reproof. From whom shall they receive such instruction, and admonition, but from the ministers of God? "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Public worship, too, appears to tend greatly to the promotion of the glory of God, and of the edification of man; and the Christian sacraments are acknowledged to be generally necessary to salvation. The proper celebration of public worship, however, requires the presence of some person regularly appointed to lead and direct the devotions of the people; and the sacraments having been ordained by Christ himself, must be administered by men duly authorized by him. From such considerations may be inferred the necessity of the office of the priesthood.

From the earliest ages, there appear to have been priests appointed to minister for the people in holy things. For some time, indeed, the office was

held by the head of each tribe or family, or annexed to the dignity of king; thus Melchisedec, the king of Salem, was also priest of the most high God. But whatever description of men was invested with it, the office appears to have extended over the whole world, so that as there has seldom been found a people without some religion, there has rarely existed any appearance of religion, without a distinct order of men set apart for its service, set apart "to minister in the things pertaining to God." Indeed, such an order of men seems absolutely essential to any public exercise of religion.

When the Almighty chose to himself a peculiar people to be the depositaries of the truth, he set apart the whole tribe of Levi to minister in holy things, investing with the high office of the priesthood Aaron and his sons. And our blessed Lord, when founding his Church, against which the gates of hell will never prevail, ordained his Apostles to bear chief authority; and, in addition to them, appointed other seventy also, to teach and preach the Gospel of salvation. And now that his religion is established in great part of the known world, there does not appear to be less occasion for a distinct order of men to preach the Gospel to the people; to assist them in the interpretation of the Scriptures; to lead and direct public worship; and, above all, to admit members into the Church by Baptism; and, after they are thus admitted, to administer to them spiritual sustenance in the Lord's Supper; to act, in short, "as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

But who are they who are to be considered as invested with this sacred character? Who are to be regarded as the ministers and priests of the Christian dispensation? Can we suppose that any man who, without any authority but his own, sets up himself as a preacher of the Gospel, is to be re-

garded as the minister of Christ? When Jeroboam caused the fatal schism in the Church of the Jews, and made priests of the lowest of the people,^a were they to be regarded in the same light with the priests of God's appointment? And now, when any man, actuated whether by zeal, or by personal vanity, or by any other motives, without any regular ordination, constitutes himself a preacher and teacher, is he immediately to be regarded as a minister of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God? Has any one, who chooses, power to administer the sacraments, and to guide the public devotions of the people? I am persuaded that you all acknowledge the force of the apostolical rule—"No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."^b Many of the self-constituted teachers are, I doubt not, men of sincere piety; but piety alone does not give them a right to take upon them this holy office. Personal piety and excellent qualifications of every description were in our Saviour in the highest degree; for in him was no spot of sin, and the Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto him:^c but even he did not enter upon his ministry until he was outwardly appointed to it. "Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said "unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee."^d Men may believe that they have an inward call, but that does not give them a right to exercise the office of the priesthood, unless it be accompanied either by the power of working miracles, or by an outward appointment and ordination. The power of working miracles has long since ceased to be conferred on men. An outward appointment or ordination appears then to be necessary to constitute a minister of Christ, an ambassa-

^a 1 Kings xii. 31. ^b Heb. v. 4. ^c John iii. 34. ^d Heb. v. 5.

dor and messenger of God; for "how shall they preach except they be sent?"^e The question, then, is, What kind of appointment is valid? The Church of England maintains, that ordination by bishops is most agreeable to the practice of the Apostles, and to that of the Churches which they established; and that by means of such ordination, the office of the priesthood has been delivered down in succession from the times of the Apostles, indeed from Christ himself.

Let me request your attention to the following considerations.

When our Lord gave his commission to the Apostles, he said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."^f The particular office on which they were sent by him was, to preach the Gospel to all people; to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to administer the Eucharist. Our Saviour adds, in another place, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."^g Does not this promise of our Lord imply the necessity of a *continued succession* in the ministry? The Apostles themselves in the course of nature could not very long survive their divine Master; "they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." This promise of Christ's presence therefore was made, not to them alone, but to them and their successors in the ministry to the end of time. So again; "he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."^h This is

^e Rom. x. 15.

^h Luke x. 16.

^f John xx. 21, 23.

^g Matt. xxviii. 20.

not to be understood of the Apostles alone, but also of their successors in after-ages.

Let us now consider in what manner the succession was continued. "As my Father hath sent me," says our Lord, "even so send I you." The power which he himself had to send labourers into the vineyard, that power he gave to his Apostles. And as Christ appointed them, even so they appointed or ordained other faithful men, to direct and govern the Churches which they founded, and also to ordain men to the work of the ministry. Thus we find St. Paul, who had himself, in the exercise of his apostleship, ordained elders in every city, left Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, with powers similar to those exercised by bishops now.

We dispute not about the precise meaning of the words elder, (or presbyter,) or bishop, as they occur in the Epistles addressed to these holy men. What we maintain from these Epistles is, that Timothy and Titus received from St. Paul the office and power of a bishop; the power to ordain, and to bear spiritual authority in the Church of Christ. Timothy, for instance, is admonished to "lay hands suddenly on no man; therefore, he had power to ordain: and he is likewise admonished not to receive an accusation against an elder or presbyter but before two or three witnesses; therefore he had a judicial authority over that order. Directions are given with respect to the deacons of the same Church; therefore, in the first Church of the Ephesians there was a bishop, with elders, (or presbyters,) and deacons under him."ⁱ

From the early history of the Church, and from the writings of the primitive fathers, we find that the same manner of ordination generally prevailed immediately after the times of the Apostles: and

ⁱ Jones's Essay on the Church.

it seems to be clear, that for fifteen hundred years after Christ, with only one or two accidental and trifling exceptions, there was no Christian Church without a bishop, and that holy orders have been handed down by episcopal ordination to the present time.

If however the ministers of the Church of England are well and rightly ordained, then they are *ministers of Christ*, and the various passages in the New Testament, relating to the ministers of Christ, are applicable to the clergy of our Church. And if this be so, they not only may, but *ought* to say to the people committed to their spiritual care, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;" they may and ought to say, "Obey them that have spiritual rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account:" they then have a right, though with all humility and self-abasement, to apply to themselves the words of Christ, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world:" "he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." As men, in our personal character and deportment, we can hardly be too humble. The sense of the nature of our office, and of the awful responsibility attached to it, increase this feeling of self-abasement, and induce us to exclaim, Lord, who is sufficient for these things! But still we must not suffer an affected humility to prevent us from "magnifying our office," from asserting its dignity, its claim to attention and respect.

My friends, let me beg of you to consider well what has been said. I speak not now of those who have been brought up as dissenters from their youth; but I address you as members of the Church of England, that Church which takes care of you

from the cradle to the grave; which baptizes you in infancy; which confirms you when arrived at years of discretion; which unites husband and wife in wedlock; which ministers to you in sickness; and which attends you with prayers and holy offices to the mansions of the dead. As such you were long since taught to submit in spiritual things to your *spiritual pastor*—the clergyman of the parish in which you reside—and must recollect, that the sacred office which he bears has a claim to your respect on the authority of Christ himself. The obedience which you owe to Christ requires you to be present at the public ministrations of your *spiritual pastor*, and to receive with attention and respect the exhortations, the admonitions, and even the reproofs, which in the execution of his office, and at the peril of his own soul, he feels it right to address to you.

There are among you but very few dissenters; and I trust that none of you will be seduced to desert your regular minister for any self-constituted teacher. But, by way of caution, suffer me to remind you, that if what has been above said be true, you cannot thus desert him, without being guilty of sin.

No man of right feeling will quit the religion and worship of his forefathers, the religion in which he has been born and baptized, and brought up, unless he is satisfied, upon thorough conviction, after a long and careful inquiry, that its terms of communion are unlawful. As good citizens too, you know that the Church of England is part of the Constitution of your country. The laws of the land, it is true, give every kind allowance to scrupulous consciences; but the acts of toleration and indulgence are exceptions to a general rule; and the religion which you profess is the established na-

tional religion, which even on this account ought not to be changed or quitted without reasons of great weight. This however I say by the bye. We claim respect to our office on still higher grounds—from the obedience which you owe to Christ. Respect I say to our *office*; for we ask no respect *as men*, beyond what our personal characters may be fairly entitled to. We acknowledge, that though invested with so high a commission, we are men of like passions with you; we acknowledge that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels;”^k that we are exposed to the common weaknesses and sins of our corrupted nature. Doubtless, we ought to strive to be examples of holiness; and the knowledge that our faults will do injury to the cause of religion, will give occasion to the enemies of the Lord and of his Church to blaspheme and speak reproachfully, furnishes to us a strong additional motive for walking circumspectly. Still our personal defects and failings do not set our flocks at liberty to treat with neglect or contempt the office which we bear.¹ And as in deserting your regular

^k 2 Cor. iv. 7.

¹ The 26th Article of our Church says, “Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments; yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ’s, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God, and in receiving of the sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ’s ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God’s gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ’s institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men. Nevertheless it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed.”

minister you would be guilty of disobedience to Christ, whose authority he bears, so also would you be guilty of the sin of *SCHISM*.

The nature of the sin of *Schism* is, I fear, in these days of laxity of principle, but little considered or understood. We pray indeed in the Litany, to be delivered “from heresy and schism,” but the spirit of the times we live in seems disposed to regard them as no sins, no evils at all. Schism however is represented in a very different light in the holy Scriptures. The word *schism* means division—a division, a separation in the Church of Christ; a breach of that unity, that oneness, which our Lord and his Apostles so earnestly inculcate. In the affectionate and pathetic prayer of his Church, our Lord says, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be *one*, as we are.—Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”^m

Such was the earnest supplication, which our Lord offered up to God the Father for the peace and unity of his Church. The Church, we know, is repeatedly styled the body of Christ, and in the passage just quoted, you see how anxious he was that his mystical body should not be rent, and divided, and torn asunder by *schisms*, or divisions. The Apostles earnestly laboured to promote this object of the prayers and wishes of their divine Master. They endeavoured to impress upon their converts the necessity of harmony, and peace, and unity; and to prevent those divisions and dissensions in religion, which human passions and preju-

^m John xvii. 11, 20, 21.

dices were likely to occasion. Such divisions appear to have prevailed to a great degree in the Church of Corinth, where the people ranged themselves some under one teacher, some under another, as their fancy led them. St. Paul anxiously warns them, that such divisions were directly contrary to the spirit of true religion, and were the result of human passions, and of a worldly frame of mind. "Ye are yet carnal," says he, "for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions," (or schisms,) "are ye not carnal; and walk as men," (as mere sinful men, rather than as real Christians?) "For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"ⁿ In the same spirit he had addressed them a little before, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment."^o So anxious was he to prevent such divisions, that those who occasioned them were to be marked by their fellow Christians as disturbers of the public peace of the Church, and their company and society to be avoided. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."^p It is, I trust, unnecessary to lay before you the many other passages to the same purport which occur in the Epistles of the Apostles; I must, however, be permitted to direct your attention to part of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where, after exhorting them to endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," St. Paul goes on to enforce this ex-

ⁿ 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4.

^o 1 Cor. i. 10.

^p Rom. xvi. 17.

hortation by saying, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."^q "How many ones are here," says an old writer, "to move the people of God to be one! how unnatural is it for members of the same body to be divided one from the other! All the members of the Church, the mystical body of Christ, have one and the same spirit. Why then should they not have one heart and one way, when they are taught and led by one Spirit? There is one Lord, and that is the Lord Christ, whom we all worship and serve. And shall fellow servants differ, that have the same Lord? If there be but one faith, why should we not be united therein in one judgment? There is one baptism, and shall we, by our discords and divisions, unbaptize ourselves, as it were, by dividing from that body, into which we were baptized? Shall not we be one that have one God? Shall he be over us, and through us, and in us all; and should not this be an argument to preserve peace and union among us?" In short, to adopt the words of another writer,^r who is so much venerated by many of the dissenters themselves, "A true Christian, that hateth fornication, drunkenness, lying, perjury, because they are forbidden in the word of God, will hate divisions also, when he well observeth how frequently and vehemently they are forbidden, and concord highly commended and commanded."

The evil of schism appears farther from the evil root from which it springs. I would not willingly give offence to any, and allow that it sometimes proceeds from a sincere though mistaken piety:

^q Ephes. iv. 3, &c.

^r Baxter.

too often, however, it has its origin in that spirit of pride and self-conceit which is so natural to sinful man; that spirit which produces sedition and rebellions in the state, and dissension and schism in the church. Religion inculcates humility, and meekness, and patience; a peaceable obedience to the laws and established government; and a dutiful submission in spiritual things to spiritual pastors. Pride tells a man not to submit to any body; and self-conceit makes him think himself too wise to learn or be directed. United, they dispose him to find fault with the established religion and government, and nourish in his bosom a proud factious spirit of insubordination. I trust that you will guard against this evil spirit. I speak not these things to reprove you, but, as my beloved sons, I warn you.

Schism, then, appears to be sinful in itself, and sinful in the origin from which it springs. It is also too likely to lead you into HERESY, or false doctrine. The ministers of the Church of England are pledged and bound to teach no doctrines at variance with those which are contained in her liturgy and articles—contained in them as being the sense of holy Scripture. The frequenters of a dissenting meeting-house have seldom a similar security, and are liable to be led wherever the preacher chooses to carry them. Many of the dissenters pride themselves upon the unrestrained licence of their opinions. Some of them represent our Saviour to have been a mere man, and deny that his death made atonement for sin. And there are, I believe, dissenting teachers in these evil days of rebuke and blasphemy, who even dispute the divine authority of the Scriptures. A man possessed of natural talents and readiness of tongue may easily make the worse appear the better reason, can easily give a specious colouring to erroneous doctrines, and “by

“fair words deceive the hearts of the simple.” Men who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, cannot generally be supposed to be possessed of learning and ability sufficient to detect the errors and false reasoning of a man fluent in speech, and able to pervert the words of Scripture, so as to give a seeming support to what he says. Hence, those who go to dissenting meetings are in danger of being carried about with every wind of doctrine, till at length, wearied and puzzled by the many opposite opinions presented to them, they end in doubt, and quit religion altogether. A man who keeps steadfast to the form of sound words, which he has been taught; who lives in quiet submission to the Church in which he has been baptized and brought up, is in little danger of being led into error; and if he should err, much allowance is to be made for him. But a man who frequents schismatical conventicles, runs himself wilfully into danger; and if he should be led away either by irregular zeal, or “cunning craftiness,” he has no one to blame but himself. His departure from the faith is his own work. His having become a heretic or an unbeliever is to be imputed to his own love of irregularity, his own itching ears. “The time will come,” says St. Paul, “when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having “itching ears.”

My friends, think on these things. If you go at all to dissenting meetings—even though you may also go to church—if, I say, you go *at all* to dissenting meetings, you do, by so doing, encourage dissent and schism; you expose yourself to the danger of being led into false doctrine or heresy; you act undutifully towards that Church in which

you have been baptized, and towards the spiritual pastor whom you ought to regard as "the minister of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God." Be on your guard, therefore, against irregular teachers, who may unawares creep in; mark them which cause divisions and schism in the Church, and avoid them; "hold fast the form of sound words," in which you have been instructed from your youth; and endeavour quietly "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

SERMON XII.

HOLINESS THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

EPHES. iv. 24.

That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

It appears, from the whole tenor of the Scriptures, that the advancement of real practical holiness—the formation of good dispositions and conduct, and the correction of such as are bad—is the great object of religious instruction. This is strongly asserted by St. Paul, in that passage of the Epistle to the Ephesians, of which the text forms the conclusion. "Ye," says he, "have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."^a Accordingly, if we would give correct notions of the Christian religion; if we would teach "the truth as it is in Jesus;" we must impress upon our hearers the necessity of getting

^a Ephes. iv. 20—24.