



The Bishop's Charge
Sept 1841

THE RELATIVE POSITIONS AND DUTIES OF

THE CLERGY AND LAITY;

A

CHARGE

TO THE CLERGY

OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH CAROLINA,

AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL CONVENTION,

In St. James's Church, Wilmington,

MAY 9th, 1841.

Levi BY

The Rt. Rev. L. SILLIMAN IVES, D. D.,

Bishop of the Diocese.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONVENTION.

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FAYETTEVILLE:

PRINTED BY EDWARD J. HALE.

1841.



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AS YOUR WATCHMAN IN CHIEF, AND CHARGED WITH ALL THE INTEREST OF THE CHURCH, I HAVE TO KEEP MY EYE UPON REMOTE AS WELL AS UPON IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES, AND TO GIVE THE WARNING FROM THE QUARTER WHENCE DANGER THREATENS.

Bp. Ravenscroft.



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C H A R G E .



MY BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY:

The success of our Ministry depends much upon our having, and acting upon, right views of the relation which we bear to our spiritual charge. This would be true, under almost any circumstances of the Church of Christ. But it is especially so in a country like our own, where the ministrations of this Church are kept up and extended, mainly by means of what is termed "The voluntary system." Where mutual dependence exists, there must be of necessity, in order to any mutual advantage, a strict regard to *relative positions and duties*. To the *relative positions and duties of the Clergy and Laity*, therefore, I design, on the present occasion, to direct your minds.

I. First, neither Clergy nor Laity are the *source* of any authority in the Church. All the powers which they may severally and legitimately exercise, come from above. "All is of God."^a The Gospel is "the Gospel of the blessed God;"^b the Church is "the Church of the living God;"^c its Ministers, "the ambassadors of God incarnate;"^d its members, "the members of Christ, and children of God;"^e its support, "the ability which God giveth," "that God in all things may be glorified through JESUS CHRIST,"^f "the Head over all things unto His Church."^g Both the laws of Christ's Kingdom, and the power to administer them, come from God. The government of this Kingdom is, in truth, a pure THEOCRACY. "God, manifest in the flesh," not only ransomed His people, called them unto Himself,

^a 2 Cor. v. 18. ^b 1 Tim. i. 11. ^c 1 Tim. iii. 15. ^d 2 Cor. v. 20. ^e See Church Catechism. ^f 1 Peter, iv. 11. ^g Eph. i. 22.

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and “knit them together in one communion and fellowship,” but also became their actual “Ruler and Head.” And now, that He hath ascended up on high, He fulfils His gracious promise, that “He will be with them to the end of the world,”^a in the appointment of sinful men to act in His place and stead; under His authority to proclaim His will, administer His laws, dispense the pledges of His love, open the channels of His Grace, and always and in everything to co-operate with Him, in extending His Kingdom, and accomplishing His purposes of grace for the salvation of sinners. While the whole body of Christ is, either directly or indirectly, thus employed, no member of it can lawfully act beyond the authority with which he is invested by the divine Head. A strict and universal regard to this truth, *as a first principle*,—a truth vitally essential to the peace, good order, and successful action of the Church,—cannot be too strenuously insisted on. Be it then our endeavor, at the outset, beloved Brethren, (and here I address both Clergy and Laity,) to fix in our minds this *fundamental truth*, that *whatever may be our several spheres and duties in the Church, all is of God’s appointment*. For the moment we depart from this truth, either in maintaining the one or discharging the other, we enter a labyrinth of interminable dissension.

II. Another consideration, no less important, is, that whatever powers may have been entrusted, or gifts imparted to any orders of men, all were given for one and the self same purpose, *viz: the salvation of men according to the commandment of God*. The means of this salvation, enjoined by God’s commandment, are indeed divers, but they all harmonize, all concentre upon one great object. And the different orders in the Church are appointed and

^a Matt. xxviii. 20.

arranged for the simple purpose of applying, under God's Spirit, these His instituted means. Unity, therefore, in all essential points of faith and discipline, is indispensable. We find it so considered and set forth by the revelation of God. Believers are constantly reminded, that "there is one body and one spirit, even as they are called, in one hope of their calling;"^a that, although they "are many members, not having the same office," yet "they are one body in CHRIST;"^b and, as a consequence, they are earnestly exhorted to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving *together* for the faith of the Gospel;"^c to move forward in the accomplishment of their one object, under the influence of "that one spirit, by which they were all baptised into one body;"^d and "to mark those who cause divisions and offences, and avoid them."^e Whatever, then, may be our individual notions as to the best means of advancing the Gospel of peace, we are to be governed in our efforts by the institutions of God, and the great principle of union and co-operation with one another. Every exertion made in disregard of these, is worse than lost to the Church—it endangers her peace and safety. It becomes us, then, to be ever mindful, that while our respective spheres are the appointment of God, we are not to act in them separately, but *unitedly*; as the several parts of a perfect whole—the different members of one body—the divers and well ordered ranks of the united host of God, advancing together in "the good fight of faith;" and also that, as we belong to the same fellowship, are pursuing the same object, and are to be partakers, if triumphant, of the same glory, no ground can exist for jealousies, envies or repinings. But, as in every host there is a leader, we are not surprised to learn, that in the Church, by God's appointment, a class of men are set apart to instruct, admonish, and guide.

^a Eph. iv. 4. ^b 1 Cor. xii. 12. ^c Phil. i. 27. ^d 1 Cor. xii. 13. ^e Rom. xvi. 17.

III. The next point, then, to be observed, is that of *due subordination among the different classes of men in the Church*. Each one has his distinct place assigned him by infinite wisdom, and the point of duty is *to keep his place*. The principle here involved, pervades every sound and well-governed association of men. Without it, indeed, no association can long exist. Let subordination be banished from our families, our work shops, and farms, and counting houses, and seats of learning and courts of justice, and what but their immediate and total destruction will ensue? We see the force, therefore, of those repeated and earnest exhortations of the Apostle to the Churches, to “be quiet, to do their own business,”^a to “submit one to another,”—“submit to those who are over them in the Lord;”^b and of the requirements of the holy Catholic Church, founded upon these exhortations—that, in doing our duty to our neighbor, we are “to honor and obey the civil authority; to submit ourselves to all our governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters.”^c Every member, then, of the christian Church, from the highest to the lowest grade, is bound to act in his appropriate sphere, to confine himself to the duties of his particular station, and to treat with proper respect and consideration, all orders and degrees of men, either above or below him,—remembering that each has his place, not by self-promotion, nor by any human authority, but by the appointment of Almighty God.

IV. In view of these cardinal truths, let us examine some of the high trusts which God has committed to “the divers orders in His Church.”

i. And *first*, those trusts committed by the incarnate Son, possessed of all power in heaven and earth, to the special ambassadors of His will.

^a 1 Thess. iv. 11. ^b 1 Thess. v. 12. ^c Church Catechism.

The words of the great commission are—"Go ye, disciple^a all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."^b No one can listen to this commission without feeling that an awful charge was placed in the hands of the Apostles; that they were put in trust with the Gospel, and from that moment became responsible to Christ, in a high sense, for the efficacy of the Gospel in saving men. Again, we have a somewhat altered form of the same commission: "As my Father sent me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, RECEIVE ye the HOLY GHOST: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."^c Not to enter upon a discussion of the full meaning of this passage, I shall insist upon its plainly teaching the authority of the Apostles to administer, for the benefit of men's souls, "the Sacraments and discipline of Christ." From the two passages we have, at least, this essential truth,—That prior to His ascension, the divine Head and Saviour of the Church set apart an order of men to act in His place, and by His authority, in publishing and carrying out the provisions of His Gospel; that He solemnly commissioned them to proclaim the words of eternal life, to bring men into a state of salvation, through His blood, by holy baptism, to dispense to them the manifold blessings of His covenant, and to withhold these blessings when sufficient cause should exist; and also, to transmit to coming ages, the authority with which He had thus invested them. The first ministers of Christ, then, having the entire charge, or oversight, of the Gospel, upon their being

^a "Disciple." This rendering is supported by the best authorities. The original word never means "To teach." ^b Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. ^c John, xx. 21, 22, 23.

sustained was made to depend the success of this stupendous scheme of life and salvation in a crucified Redeemer.

1. But the question arises, did this oversight of the Gospel, in its essential particulars, *continue* with the ministry of the Church? Did not the Apostles, in their peculiar CHARACTER as Apostles, as the first propagators of the whole truth as it is in Jesus, possess peculiar *powers*? It is true, they were inspired to teach this truth, and empowered to work miracles in its support. But neither of these endowments belonged to the Apostolic or ministerial *commission*, which we are considering. They belonged rather to a special *dispensation*, granted for a special purpose, and were shared more or less by all orders of men who lived at the time; by Apostles, elders, deacons and laymen,—by those who were commanded to be in subjection to the Apostles. Hence the authority of the Apostles could not have been derived from this source, but from their *ministerial commission*. An important distinction, therefore, must be kept in view, if we would rightly settle the question before us, between the ministerial or pastoral character of the Apostles, and their character as inspired men; this latter not having been restricted to their order. We are not disposed to conceal, that the Apostles had a different, and, in some respects, a higher security against error in their teaching, than is granted to their successors of the present day. They were guided and guarded by the immediate witness of the Spirit; while we are dependent upon Holy Writ and the Holy Catholic Church. This circumstance, however, has nothing to do with the question of *ministerial authority*: It can only affect the *business*, not the *office*, of teaching;—the business, by the change of dispensation, being rendered more difficult now than it was at the period of inspiration. The authorized teachers of

religion, however, have always been bound to teach the truth, by whatever means instructed in it; and in case of their failure to do so, full provision has been made for the correction of the error.^a Their authority of the Apostles, therefore, as the ministers of CHRIST, did not grow out of any peculiar or supernatural *qualifications*^b they happened to possess, but solely out of the fact of their *being* His *ministers*, entrusted with His Gospel, and commissioned to act in His stead. If, then, the ministerial *commission* of the Apostles is perpetuated in the Church, the responsibility and authority involved in it, must likewise be perpetuated. Now, that this commission is perpetuated, may be argued, *First*, from its own *language*, which makes provision to this end, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," which promise could be fulfilled to the Apostles only through their successors in office. *Secondly*, from the *object* of the commission, which is a perpetual object,—the dispensation of the Gospel to the end of time. "God hath given to us," declares St. Paul, "the ministry of reconciliation."^c So long, therefore, as any of our redeemed race are in a state of alienation from God, so long are the ambassadors of CHRIST entrusted with the office of "beseeching them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God."^d Again, he gave some Apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the

^a By an appeal to the ecclesiastical authority of a diocese, or to a Council of Bishops; as in the case of the first Council at Jerusalem.

^b It is not here meant to undervalue the *personal qualifications* of Christ's ministers. Such qualifications we regard as indispensable to a proper *exercise* of ministerial authority;—but they cannot confer this authority. A man may have the holiness and devotion of an angel, and still not be authorized to preach the Gospel, nor administer the Holy Sacraments. Many Laymen are as holy and devoted to God in their lives as the most spiritual of the Clergy; but they are nevertheless Laymen, and must remain so, and not attempt any sacred functions till they are ordained to the Ministry by those who have *power* to ordain. *Qualifications*, then, although important to *usefulness*, are not essential to *authority*, or the *validity* of ministerial acts. See *Articles of Religion*, Art. xxvi. ^c 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. ^d *Ibid.* 20.

body of Christ.”^a Now, till the saints are made perfect, in number and graces; till the work of the ministry be finally accomplished; till the body of CHRIST, the Church, be built up in all lands and throughout all time; the purpose of the pastoral office, as here set forth, will be unfulfilled, and hence the office be in force. But the office, in its duties and responsibilities, cannot be in force while its authority is taken away. Besides, suppose we admit that the Apostles, from their position as founders of the Church, and perfecters of the sacred Canon, were entitled to a peculiar submission; this surely could not be said of their successors, who performed their office where the Church was already founded, and performed it with no supernatural safeguard against error. And yet St. Paul exhorts the Hebrew christians, in a country where the government of the Church had passed into the hands of the successors of the Apostles, “to obey those who had the rule over them, and submit themselves;”^b and not for the temporary reason that these ministers were *inspired* men, but for the abiding reason that they were *commissioned watchmen*,—“for they *watch for your souls as they that must give account.*”^c Timothy, invested with the office of a bishop by St. Paul, received from him this charge, “Before GOD and the LORD JESUS CHRIST,” “Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine.”^d But Timothy was not put in possession of the truth, nor secured in it, by the inspiration of God; but received it and kept it, as we of the present age receive and keep it, “By giving attention to reading, and by holding fast the form of sound words committed to him.”^e Titus, also, raised by the Apostle to the same of-

^a Eph. iv. 11, 12. ^b Heb. xiii. 17. ^c The same may be said of the admonitions of St. Paul, recorded 1 Thess. v. 12. ^d 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. ^e 1 Tim. iv. 13; 2 Tim. i. 13.

vice, was empowered to set in order all things that were wanting in the Church over which he was placed;^a to speak the things which became sound doctrine, and to exhort and rebuke *with all authority*,^b and to reject heretics after suitable admonition: And still Titus was a man subject to like errors with ourselves. Not being shielded by any miraculous communications, he was instructed, as we are, "to hold fast the faithful word as he had been taught."^c Hence we see, that ministerial authority was imparted where the gifts of inspiration were wanting; and that the Apostles, at their departure, left in the ministry of the Church the commission, with all that pertained to it, which they had received from CHRIST, its divine HEAD.

That the same authority was claimed by the ministry, and universally acknowledged in the Church, immediately subsequent to the age of the Apostles,^d is a fact too generally admitted to require proof, even were its establishment necessary to my present purpose. For this, however, it will be enough to state the views, on the question, of that branch of the Catholic Church to which we belong. The Liturgy will furnish the proper information. Those solemn forms by which we introduce men to the sacred office, first claim our attention.^e To the candidate for the Episcopacy, the Church addresses this language: "Are you ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine, contrary to God's word; and both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to the same?" "Will you diligently exercise such discipline as, by the authority of God's word, and by the order of this Church, is committed to you?" The candidate, showing his willingness to do

^a Tit. i. 5. ^b ii. 15. ^c i. 19. ^d Bing, Orig. Eccl. B. i. C. v. sec. iv.; also Sinclair's Dissertations on Episcopacy, chap. ii. and Hicks on Christian Priesthood.

^e Form of consecrating Bishops and ordering Priests and Deacons.

these things, in the answer, "I *am ready*; I *will* so do, the LORD being my helper," is consecrated to his holy work by imposition of hands, with these weighty and emphatic words: "Receive the Holy Ghost, for the office and work of a Bishop in the Church of God, now committed unto thee." Prayers follow for grace that the newly consecrated Bishop, with all others, "may diligently preach God's word, and duly administer the Godly discipline thereof, and that the people may obediently follow the same;" that "he may be earnest to reprove, beseech, and rebuke, with all patience and doctrine,"—"using the authority given him, not to destruction, but to salvation; not to hurt, but to help;" and that the people may so receive the word of life, that "all may obtain the crown of everlasting glory." In regard to the candidate for the Priesthood, the Church is no less explicit. She meets him, on his approach to her sacred altar, with this thrilling appeal: "We exhort you, in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that you have in remembrance into how high a dignity; and to how weighty an office and charge, you are called; that is to say, to be a *messenger, watchman, and steward* of the LORD; to *teach and to premonish, to feed and provide* for the LORD's family."—She then demands of him an answer, before God, to the following question: "Will you give your faithful diligence so to minister the *doctrine and sacraments*, and the *discipline* of CHRIST, as the LORD hath commanded, and as this Church hath received the same, according to the commandments of God; so that you may teach the people committed to your cure and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same?" "Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine, contrary to God's word; and to use both public and private monitions and exhorta-

tions, as well to the sick as the whole, within your cure, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given?" A ready answer being returned, the candidate is invested by his Bishop with the holy office of Priesthood. The language used on the occasion is remarkable: "Take thou authority to execute the office of a Priest in the Church of God;" or, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands: Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained; and be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God and of His holy sacraments." In the case of Deacons, the words employed are, "Take thou authority to execute the office of a Deacon in the Church of God, committed unto thee." In addition to this language, the Church employs, as applicable to the Ministry *now*, all those passages of Holy Writ, which set forth the divine commission and authority of the Apostles themselves. Her view, therefore, undoubtedly is, that whatever ministerial powers may have been imparted under the first commission, they are still continued to "the ministers of Apostolic succession."

2. Another quere, however, arises: Are not these powers *defined* and *limited*? Our answer is unhesitatingly in the affirmative. All essential points of faith and discipline are definitely settled by the authority which Christ reposed in the Church. Hence her ministers promise at the altar, that "they will give all faithful diligence, always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments and discipline of CHRIST as the Lord hath commanded, and as *this Church hath received the same*." The creeds, and offices, and catechism, and rubrics, and articles of the liturgy, show how the doctrine, the sacraments, and discipline of CHRIST, have been

received by the Church;^a and hence what the standards are, by which each minister is to be governed in the exercise of his functions. But as a few general principles only are set forth in these standards, and as the cases requiring their application are exceedingly numerous and diversified, considerable latitude of judgment must necessarily be allowed to the minister in the discharge of his duties. In the case of discipline for what the Church regards scandalous offences, his discretion must be limited to a fair interpretation of the strict *letter* of the law; but in his instructions, and warnings, and admonitions, he is to have respect to its general *tone* and *spirit*.^b And here he is authorized to expect deference, although he may have no right to enforce it. This view is fully borne out by the requirements of the Church. One of her Canons^c obliges the minister of every parish “not only to be diligent in instructing the children in the Catechism, but also, by stated Catechetical lectures and instruction, to be diligent in informing the youth and others in the doctrine, constitution, and liturgy of the Church.” Under this Canon, “the youth and others” are to look to their minister, and to no one else in the parish, for an authorized explanation, among other matters, of the *three things* set forth in the Catechism, as promised and vowed in their name at their baptism:—For he, and he only, is authorized to give such explanation, or has responsibility in the case. “Youth and others,” therefore, are to attach to his judgment peculiar weight,—

^a Hook's Sermon, “The Gospel and the Gospel only the basis of Education;” Bp. Doane, “The Faith once delivered to the Saints;” Manning, “The rule of Faith;”—productions which speak the language of the best days of the English Reformation, and which can be resisted only at the hazard of destruction to the sacred Canon.

^b In ascertaining whether an action is *malum in se*, or *malum prohibitum*, the enlightened christian looks deeper than the mere *body* of the action, into its *soul*, and its *tendency*. He feels that in obeying the *law* of God, he is “to do all to the *glory* of God;” that, like the young man in the Gospel, he may be faultless in the *outward observance of the commandments*, while a want of the *true spirit* of obedience may be fatal to his hopes of eternal life. ^c Canon xxviii. 1832.

are to "submit themselves to their *spiritual pastor.*"^a Two petitions in the liturgy tend to illustrate the Church's view of this matter. In the first, we beseech Almighty God "to illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of His word; that both by their preaching and living, they may set it forth, and show it accordingly:" and in the second, we beseech Him "to give to all His people increase of grace, to *hear meekly* His word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the spirit." This difference in the petitions for ministers and people, while it runs through all those prayers which refer to their relative spheres, points to the one as instructors, and to the other as learners, in the school of CHRIST.

3. You ask, perhaps, is there no check to this discretionary power lodged with the teachers of Christ's people? I answer, there clearly is. At his ordination, the Deacon or Priest, as the case may be, is required to promise, that "he will reverently obey his bishop, and other chief ministers, who, according to the Canons of the Church, may have the charge and government over him; following, with a glad mind, their Godly admonitions, and submitting himself to their Godly judgments." In this promise, provision is made for all necessary restraint upon ministerial author-

^a This is not to be regarded as a submission to the *private opinions* of the pastor, for he is bound, we have seen, to be governed in his interpretations by the *public standards* of the Church. In case, however, of a disagreement between the pastor and parishioner, the latter is not to go about proclaiming his views in opposition to his pastor, but is, if the matter of difference be *essential*, to appeal in the manner hereafter pointed out. If, however, the matter be *not essential*, he can *silently* entertain his private judgment. In opposition to this view, the question is sometimes asked, "If the Laity are not to judge for themselves in matters of Faith, why are they required to *search the Scriptures?*" I answer, the positions of both Clergy and Laity, in respect to the truth, are essentially different from what they were when this exhortation was penned. Then, the *foundations* of truth were not fully discovered; now, the truth *itself* is settled; and hence the force of the Gospel exhortation at the present time must be determined by the condition of Christians at the present time. In the case of an intelligent Churchman, nothing remains, in *searching the Scriptures*, but "growth in grace." The Scriptures are the proper food of the soul, and he is to search them, that he may imbibe more and more of the spirit of Christ, and be nourished up into everlasting life.

ity in a parish; while the Canons of the Church distinctly prescribe the proper means for the adjustment of all *parochial* differences by an appeal to the Ordinary.^a Where these differences are *diocesan*, recourse may be had to a National Council; and thence, if need be, to a *General Council*.^b Ample, therefore, are the securities in the Church,—securities which the Laity themselves assisted in providing,—against the undue exercise of Priestly authority. So that such authority need never be feared in our country, so long as the ministers of the Church are excluded, as they rightly are, from all participation in civil offices, and hence, from the chief temptation to lend their spiritual influence to build up an undue secular importance.^c

ii. But you inquire, if such be the divine commission of the Clergy, what are the duties of the Laity? Have they nothing to do or say in a matter so vitally connected with their present and eternal well-being? I answer, “much,” almost “every way.” The ministry of CHRIST is *theirs*—the blessing of God to *them*. “We preach not *ourselves*, but CHRIST JESUS, *the LORD*; and ourselves *your servants* for JESUS’ sake.”^d We are to “glory only *in the cross* of our LORD JESUS CHRIST;”^e “are to know nothing among you, save JESUS CHRIST, and Him CRUCIFIED.”^f Ministerial authority, therefore, was conferred, not to elevate and dignify the ministry,—to create and provide for “a privileged class;” but to be a savour of life to condemned sinners; to bear the tidings and terms of salvation, through a crucified Redeemer, to our perishing race; to call them up from the depths of a vile bondage to Satan, receive their submis-

^a Canon xxxiv. ^b Palmer’s Treatise on the Church, chap. GENERAL COUNCILS. This invaluable work is about to be re-published by Appleton & Co., N. York.

^c An examination into the causes which led to the enormous power of the Clergy in the middle ages will more than justify these remarks;—See POOLE’S CYPRIAN, p. 45, &c.—where it is made clear that the early Church entertained a salutary dread of the intermeddling of the Clergy in secular things.

^d 2 Cor. iv. 5. ^e Gal. vi. 11. ^f 1 Cor. ii. 2.

sion to Christ, and gather them into His glorious fellowship: Yea, as an instrument in God's hands, "to raise them up together, and make them sit together in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS."^a The appointment of the holy ministry, therefore, was not for the mere temporal advantage of any one; but for the mutual benefit of both ministers and people, as *sinner*s before God. It is emphatically "the ministry of reconciliation,"—the chosen instrument of God "in reconciling the world unto Himself."^b When the first converts to Christ are represented as "continuing in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship,"^c it was not that they were contributing to the honor of the Apostles; but that they were pursuing the way of life for themselves. The ministry, then, is the blessing of God to the people; and the people are called upon, for their *own* sakes, to sustain the ministry. This is the sum of their duty in sustaining the Gospel; as the ministry "is put in trust with the Gospel."^d In the New Testament, therefore, the people are never spoken of as having any department of duty distinct and separate from the Clergy. St. Paul styles them *fellow laborers*. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, *my helpers* in Christ Jesus."^e "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us."^f "Salute Urbane, *our helper* in Christ."^g And he gives commendation "to every one that helpeth *with us*, and laboureth;"^h and he no where intimates, that either individual or associated effort for saving men, can lawfully be made, except in co-operation or concurrence with the ministry of Christ. The lesson is, that the Laity have the deepest concern in the progress of the Gospel,—the heaviest responsibility in promoting its interests; that they are bound to be co-workers with God—*fellow laborers* with the ministry of His Son.

^a Eph. ii. 6. ^b 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. ^c Acts, ii. 42. ^d 1 Tim. i. 11. ^e Rom. xvi. 3. ^f Ibid. 6. ^g Ibid. 9. ^h 1 Cor. xvi. 16,—See also Phil. iv. 3; 3 John, 8; 2 Cor. i. 11; 1 Cor. iii. 9.

1. Their first duty is to establish among them this ministry;—to provide the means for its proper support. Not a support to feed luxury, or pamper pride,—this would be highly injurious; but such a support as may be needful to shield the mind of a minister from worldly anxiety, supply him with the means of charity, and leave him free to devote his time and energies to the sacred work assigned him by the Lord of the harvest. This will be required, and may be reasonably claimed, under the command of Almighty God.^a The support of the ministry, I know, is sometimes considered a burden,—but not by minds acquainted with the subject; for, let the ministry be viewed in its bearing either upon our temporal or eternal interests, and nothing can be more unwarrantable than the feeling, that it is burdensome. Remove it, with all its temporal advantages to the community; take away its wisdom, its literature, its moral power; put out its sacred lights; overturn its altars; and lay its temples in the dust; and you may form some notion of your indebtedness to it as an instrument of mere worldly prosperity. It is the deepest ingratitude to God, even for the man who has chosen his portion *in this life*, to complain of the support of the ministry, as burdensome; for there is nothing under heaven contributing to his temporal good, for which he pays so mean and inadequate a price. Well would it be for men to consider, whether, in this thing, they are not guilty of “robbing God.” The pecuniary support of the ministry, however, is to be viewed in its influence upon our spiritual and eternal interests. I refer here, not to the blessing of this ministry as an appointed means for our salvation, but to the saving influence, which our being called upon to maintain it with our worldly goods, is calculated to ex-

^a Luke, x. 11; 1 Tim. v. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 6; 1 Cor. ix. 7, 11, 13, 14; Gal. 6, 7.

ercise upon our affections and lives. The main obstacle to the love of God in our hearts, is the love of the world, which has in them so firm a lodgement; so that whatever tends to weaken this, must be cherished as a blessing. Now, giving largely of our worldly substance has this tendency; and hence is enjoined as among our first and highest duties, on our becoming followers of Christ. Our spiritual welfare, then, is deeply concerned in these calls upon us to maintain the ministrations of the Divine Word. To break down the dreadful power of the world in the heart of the rich young man in the parable, our Lord enjoined, that he should give up *all his goods*. And so fully in agreement with the spirit of this injunction was the influence of the Gospel upon the primitive saints, that "none among them lacked;"—"none calling aught that he possessed his own;"^a "each looking not only on his own things, but on the things of others also."^b The pecuniary support of the Gospel, therefore, is to be regarded by a people, as *a means of grace*. And no people evince that they have greater need for a liberal use of this means, than they who complain of its burdens.

2. The people have a further duty in this matter. It can afford little comfort to the faithful ambassador of Christ, that his temporal wants are supplied, his person honored and cherished, while his message is set at naught, or in any way hindered. Incumbent is it, therefore, upon his spiritual charge, to receive his message, and to promote its reception, in all its fullness, "according to their several ability." Much of a pastor's success depends upon the example and influence of the leading members of his Church; upon parents, communicants, and those in a position to give tone to the young and more dependent of the flock. When

^a Acts, ii. 44, 45. ^b Phil. ii. 4.

parents co-operate with their pastor, in imparting to their children deep and solemn views of the baptismal covenant; of their obligation to God for its gifts, and their accountability to God for the use they make of them: When communicants realize, that “they are not their own, but are bought with the precious blood of Christ, and bound to glorify Him in their bodies and their spirits which are His;”^a when they realize the high privilege they enjoy, of being allowed “to continue in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship; and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;” the high privilege of belonging to “the communion of saints;” of being admitted “to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel;”^b When communicants realize these glorious things; when those, whose example and spirit bear sway in the community, understand and feel the awfulness of their responsibility, and the weight of their obligation to God, to cast all their influence into the scale of his service; when, in short, the members of Christ’s mystical body shall be animated by His spirit, and earnest in the inquiry, “What more can I do for His glory, who has *died* to save *my* soul!”—Then will appear the divine excellency of the ministerial office; then will the word of God, spoken by His commissioned servants, “have free course and be glorified;” then will their hands be made strong to labour, and their hearts glad to endure, and valiant to contend and to achieve. On the other hand, let parents be indif-

^a 1 Cor. vi. 20. ^b Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24.

ferent to the holy state of their children by baptism; let them, in spirit, and conversation, and example, go counter to the authorized instructions of their minister; let baptized adults and communicants be anxious, rather to get low views of their obligations, than make high advances in the christian life; let them lose sight of their commanding attitude as "God's peculiar people,"^a and live as those who have "no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;"^b let the few in a parish, to whom God hath given power to control the many, employ that power against the teaching of Christ's ambassadors; let them encourage the young and dependent in doctrines or in ways against which they are warned by those commissioned to warn them:^c and how surely, except as God may interpose his mighty hand, will the ministry of Christ, as regards its rightful influence, become of none effect unto the people. Tremendous is the responsibility which he assumes, who utters a word, or puts forth a finger, to impede the progress of the work of salvation committed to the ambassadors of Christ; while but little less is his responsibility, who exerts not every energy for its advance! Beloved Brethren, consider, I pray you, the true character and weight of your christian vocation; how it obliges you to live only for Christ; how it consecrates your talents, your time, your substance, your influence, to his cause; consider, if ye were bound together in love, and made to strive together for the faith of the Gospel, by that heavenly charity, which united, and animated, and emboldened, and bore onward, through suffering and death, the first believers in Christ,—what glorious

^a Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 9. ^b Eph. v. 5.

^c A Layman may have a right to think for *himself*, in matters which he regards *indifferent*; while he has *no* right to think for *others*. A large portion of every parish is made up of persons who, from ignorance or infirmity, depend for guidance upon their minister. If, however, his influence here may be lawfully counteracted by Lay-teaching, his office is vain, and this class of persons have no security.

and rapid achievements ye might now make for His Kingdom!

3. But there are other ways in which the Laity may co-operate with the Clergy in advancing Christ's kingdom. When a Clergyman is called to a parish, he is too commonly expected to give his personal oversight to every interest connected with his charge. Hence his time is often consumed and his strength exhausted in attention to small matters,—perhaps the mere temporalities of the Church,—while he needs both his time and strength, in their fullest measure, for the discharge of his peculiar functions—his high spiritual duties. These things, Brethren of the Laity, ought not so to be. To you, as “our helpers in Christ,” belong a variety of matters pertaining to the ministrations of the Gospel, but comparatively secular, and intolerably burdensome, when allowed to rest upon the hands of your minister;—such, for example, as attention to Church buildings; the preservation of order in time of public worship; the raising of funds, and the collecting of charities; aiding in the support and instruction of the poor; supplying to the parish almoners and catechists, tracts and books.

To secure this co-operation, the Church has placed in each parish an organized body, styled Wardens and Vestrymen,^a whose duty it is to give their active agency for the accomplishment of the things I have named, with others of like character. Besides, the Laity are associated with the Clergy in all the important interests and councils of the Church;—in our Diocesan Committees and Conventions; in our general boards of Missions and Theological Education, and Sunday School instruction; and in our great National Synod, “the General Convention.” Here the Laity have a right to be heard. Here the Church has

^a Sec Charge of Bp. Ravenscroft on duties of Wardens and Vestrymen.

a right to look for their counsel and support. And if, at any time, through their neglect of the duties here involved, too much power should seem to centre in the hands of the Clergy, the fault surely is not with them. The true remedy against any encroachment upon our rights from others, is faithfully to exercise them ourselves. Let each order be animated with the love of Christ; then each, in his proper sphere, will vie with the other in promoting the kingdom of Christ, and all will be harmony and peace.

4. A further, and still more pressing duty, remains to the Laity,—the duty of praying for God's blessing upon the persons and labours of the Clergy. "Brethren, pray for us,"^a is the earnest request of St. Paul; and a more important one cannot be made by ministers of the Gospel in any age;—important, in respect both to themselves and to their people. To *themselves*, as sinful, erring, and dependent creatures, "not worthy that God should come under their roof,"^b but put in charge with the Gospel of His grace, and made accountable for the souls of men. To their *people*, as receiving the overtures of pardon and salvation, amid a thousand distractions and deceits, calculated to blind their understandings, and betray them into error and sin. Prayer is here heaven's own appointed remedy. Let our congregations be habituated fervently to supplicate for God's guidance to their minister, and God's spirit upon his ministrations; and with what altered feelings—what increased preparation of heart for hearing the word, will they take their place under his instructions. Yea, let them enter the house of God as miserable sinners, desirous of being taught more perfectly the way of life; of being enlightened, and strengthened, and sanctified, by "the truth as it is in Jesus;"^c and when listening to the blessed

^a 1 Thess. v. 25. ^b Minister's prayer at his institution. ^c Eph. iv. 21.

words of that truth, let their hearts be raised in prayer to God, that these words may come with saving power to their own souls, and to the souls of their fellow-worshippers;—and with what a different spirit and changed aspect, they would leave the sanctuary of the Most High! The smile of incredulity, the jest of profanity, the display of thoughtless criticism, would at once give place to the inquiry, on the one hand, “what shall I do to be saved!”^a on the other, “what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?”^b For your *own* sakes, then, dear Brethren of the Laity, and for *our* sakes, “*pray for us!*”

My reverend Brethren, fellow laborers with me in the dispensation of the Gospel, ours is a holy and divine office; it becomes us to magnify it before God. Its powers are peculiar and well defined, bestowed for the salvation of men. As a holy trust, then, committed to us by God, we are firmly and boldly to exercise them. Necessity is laid upon us; we have no choice. Clothed with authority from God to advance His Gospel, we must not, as we value His favour, as we value the souls of men, yea, and our own souls also, yield this authority, whatever may be the demand. “A dispensation of the Gospel is committed to us, and wo be unto us if we *preach* not the Gospel!”^c Preach it, “whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear;”^d preach it, “through evil report and good report;”^e preach it, if need be, in privation, and suffering, and the face of death; and we must preach it in its integrity and fullness; “declare the whole counsel of God;”^f keep back nothing that is profitable, nothing that is revealed, at whatever cost. Misconstruction, reproach, and ingratitude, must not deter us. “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord.”^g If they derided,

^a Acts, xvi. 30. ^b Ps. cxvi. 12. ^c 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17. ^d Ezk. iii. 11. ^e 2 Cor. vi. 8. ^f Acts. xx. 27. ^g Mat. x. 24.

set at naught, and persecuted unto death, the holy Jesus; if opposition, and suffering, and blood, marked the footsteps of the blessed Apostles; if the foundations of the holy Catholic Church were laid amid the fires and groans of martyrdom;—what is there in our day of general peace and good fellowship, to make us shun “to declare all the counsel of God?” Our efforts may be feeble, our success small; still, if they be faithful efforts, put forth in the strength of God, and with an honest and steadfast desire to advance His glory,—our hearts need not be troubled; “we shall reap in due time, if we faint not.”^a We now enjoy the prayers of the faithful, the succour of angels, the deep sympathy of departed saints, and the smiles of an approving God; and when our labours and trials are past, heaven will be our eternal reward.

But, my reverend Brethren, it becomes us to act with prudence, as well as boldness; to remember that the infirmities of a corrupt and erring nature still hang around us, and endanger the success of our holy mission. It will not be enough, that we can prove the validity of our orders—can claim regard on the ground of our divine commission; we must go forth in the spirit and with the bearing of messengers from God; must learn of our holy master, who, though clothed with “all power in heaven and earth,” was *meek and lowly in heart*.^b Meekness and humility, and Godly sincerity, will do far more to ensure submission to the Gospel, than the most fiery zeal, or authoritative tone and manner. Let us take heed unto ourselves. Our danger is great; is enhanced by the very position we occupy. “We are ambassadors for CHRIST;”^c and yet are associated with the Laity in our work, and stand, in some respects, on the same ground with them. They are our friends and com-

^a Gal. vi. 9. ^b Mat. xi. 29. ^c 2 Cor. v. 20.

panions in society,—interchanging with us the courtesies and kindnesses of life. In a laudable anxiety not to merge the sacredness of our calling in our friendly intercourse, we are liable to confound our rights, as ministers of Christ, with those which we hold in common with the Laity, as members of society. Our commission to speak with authority in the Church of God, and to exhort and reprove, if necessary, in the concerns of the soul, may beget in us a spirit of dictation, in all places, and in all the matters of life; and also, such a sensitiveness to opposition as may lead us to imagine, that whenever our opinions are called in question, our ministerial prerogatives are lightly esteemed. These are misjudgments, against which we must guard, or they will help to bring about the very resistance we so much dread. Besides, in respect to many things in a parish or diocese, essential to the success of our priestly office, the Laity have a deep concern, and should not be expected to yield a blind acquiescence to our judgments. In all cases where duties are distinctly assigned them, they should be left unembarrassed in their action. And in those cases in which they are called to bear a part with us, their views should be patiently considered; their counsel respectfully listened to, and, if sound, most gladly followed. It becomes us to bear in mind a former proposition—that our efforts, although put forth under different degrees of authority, are in a common cause, and, if lawful, tend to the same result; and hence that everything should be characterized by mutual confidence, meekness and love; that from the host of God, all jealousy, suspicion, and hasty judgment, should be banished forever; and, “each esteeming others better than themselves,” yield to the sway of that heavenly charity which suffereth long and is kind, —to the constraint of those holy bonds “which knit toge-

ther the elect of God in one communion and fellowship.”

Finally, my brethren in the sacred ministry, we are not exempt from the influence of selfish and corrupt passion. Love of power, mortified pride, feelings of revenge, and the like, may prompt us in the assertion of even lawful authority. O, let us humble ourselves before God, and pray mightily for His saving strength, that we be not chargeable with so dreadful a desecration of our office; with the guilt of using our authority “to destruction, and not to salvation!”^a Our only safety, beloved, is at the foot of the Cross. At the foot of the Cross, in humility of heart, for our great unworthiness of so holy a trust; in contrition of heart, for our manifold unfaithfulness in fulfilling it. At the foot of the Cross, in continual and earnest contemplation of the awful sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, there made for sinners; of the precious blood of the Son of God there poured out to quench the burning wrath that was kindled by their sins. At the foot of the Cross, in humble and unceasing prayer for ourselves, and intercession for our spiritual charge. At the foot of the Cross, learning of Him, whose place we occupy, and whose message we bear; that His all-powerful love may constrain us in every act, and his divine energy nerve us for every difficulty and every trial, and keep us steadfast and immovable even unto the end. Come, my young brethren, about to assume vows,—too holy, too great, for all but Omnipotence,—come, and let us cast ourselves together at the foot of the Cross! There, let us take refuge, and abide; for there, we shall be safe; there, find wisdom and strength; there, rest under the blessing of God, in the sanctuary of his endless favour,—his ineffable love.

^a Office for consecrating Bishops.

O CHRIST, hear us.

LORD, have mercy upon us.

CHRIST, have mercy upon us.

LORD, have mercy upon us.

MOST merciful FATHER, we beseech Thee, send upon the ministers of the sanctuary thy heavenly blessing; that they may be clothed with righteousness, and that Thy word, spoken by their mouths, may have such success that it may never be spoken in vain. Grant also, that we may have grace to hear and receive what they shall deliver out of Thy most Holy Word, or agreeably to the same, as the means of our salvation; that in all our words and deeds, we may seek Thy glory, and the increase of Thy kingdom, through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. *Amen.*



