

A SERMON

ON

THE CHURCH;

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ANNUAL CONVENTION

OF THE

Protestant Episcopal Church of N. C.

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SERMON.

Amos. Chap. 7th, ver. 8th, latter clause. "*By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.*"

THE providencies and dealings of Almighty God, for and with his Church, form a very conspicuous and instructive portion of the inspired writings. Indeed we might be justified in observing, that the whole scheme of revelation and prophecy is predicated on the existence of a Body or Society of men, distinct from and called out of the world, as the peculiar people of God; and that the dealings of God, whether in acts of mercy, or in the infliction of judgments, refer primarily to this his inheritance; through that, to the rest of mankind, and ultimately, as we are warranted in believing and saying, to the higher intelligencies of the unseen world. "To the intent (says the apostle to the Ephes. 3. & 10.) that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God."

Thus divine in its origin, influential in its character, and single in its designation, it presents a subject of the most impressive consideration to all mankind; inasmuch, as it is only in connection with this Body or Society, that the revealed promises and hopes given in and by Jesus Christ, are assured to men, and the appointed means of grace and salvation brought within their reach.

Under this view, a brief notice of the distinctive character of the Church, as presented in the scriptures, will prepare the way for an appropriate improvement of the text.

That this point has been greatly neglected, and held back from the public edification of christians, even by those who were nevertheless entrusted with its defence and support, is unhappily

too evident, and the consequences such, as to warn both ministers and people, that it is time to retrace their steps, and by considering this vital doctrine in its application to the hope of man as a sinner, to learn its influential bearing on the advancement of pure and undefiled religion in the world.

I feel, my reverend brethren, as I doubt not you also do—the full difficulty with which long neglect, and the consequent prevalence, and almost establishment of erroneous opinion, invests the subject. But I trust that I feel and that you feel, the awful responsibility of our respective stewardships, and are prepared to meet whatever may be required by a conscientious discharge of duty. And I trust, also, that you, my brethren of the laity, feel that lively interest in the cause we have in hand, which shall ensure your hearty co-operation in such plans for the revival of the Church in her pure and primitive character, as its present condition, and the means in our controul, shall render advisable; while I cannot permit myself to suppose, that amid the variety of opinions on this subject now before me, there can one be found, by whom it will be considered an unnecessary or unprofitable discussion. Error, my dear hearers, however sanctioned by time and numbers, still retains its character: truth, however obscured by ignorance or prejudice, or rejected by men, is yet eternal and unchangeable as its author. And when eternity, with all its glories, or with all its horrors, is suspended upon truth or error, here received and followed; the astounded exclamation of Pilate, before our blessed Lord, “what is truth?” should burst from all our lips, and engage our enquiries.

To every class of my hearers, then, I must believe that a candid and scriptural, though necessarily brief enquiry, into the origin and purpose of the Church, and of the appointments of Heaven in it, for the salvation of man, must be both desirable and profitable. While to us, my clerical and lay brethren of this Convention, it is essential to the right performance of the duties devolved on us, that we view the subject in this light, as well as in the causes which contributed to its decline; otherwise, with the best intentions, our efforts may prove abortive, because erroneously devised and improperly directed. If Jacob is ever to arise, it must be as Jacob, and not as Esau.

First—as to the origin of the Church.

That the Church is divine in its origin, and in the appointments connected with it, is so generally admitted a doctrine, that the less may suffice on this point; yet it ought ever to be borne in mind, that this divine institution of the wisdom and goodness of God, is not an abstract idea to be entertained in the mind; but an actual, visible, accessible body or society, for practical use; deriving its constitution, laws and authority, directly from God. As such, it is placed beyond the reach of any human appointment, addition or alteration; and this so strictly, that all the wisdom, piety and authority in the world, congregated together, is just as incompetent to originate a Church, as to call another universe into existence. This, however, will be more evident, when we come in the *next place* to consider the purpose of such an institution. And as this is the key which unlocks all the difficulties that surround this subject, from the divided state of the christian world, it will be necessary to consider what led to the appointment of the Church as a distinct body, with a visible and verifiable character.

The dispensations of Heaven's mercy and wisdom for the salvation of fallen man, are presented to us under various aspects, all of which are closely connected with each other; yet with marks of distinct discrimination, manifesting, nevertheless, that it is the same plan, modified and fitted by the Almighty himself, to the condition of that poor, perverse, and opposing being, for whose benefit it was all provided, and who has never ceased to corrupt and depart from it, in every age of the world.

Under the first, or Patriarchal dispensation, as it is called, of religion, as the benefits of the covenant of redemption were to be continued in their knowledge and operation, by the influence of parental instruction, and a family priesthood, no particular designation as a Church, or visible society, with privileges and obligations, promises and helps, of a special description, was marked out. Each family composed a Church for the worship of God, and was furnished with the necessary means of grace within itself, in the offering of that sacrifice which prefigured the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and was appointed and intended, to keep alive in the minds of men,

the knowledge of their fallen condition, and of the only method of recovery from it.

When, however, an experience of 1500 years had proved that the corruption of human nature was too powerful to be withstood and counteracted by this method of continuing the influence of religion in the world; and when a farther trial of the same means, for the space of 500 years more, under the fresh remembrance too, of the recent destruction of the ungodly by the general deluge, and the still more recent visitation of the dispersion at Babel, had demonstrated, that they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; but had corrupted their way before him, and departed from both the letter and spirit of his institutions—Then it pleased the merciful Saviour of poor sinners, again to interpose; and by selecting from this mass of corruption, another family—through that to restore, and continue in the world, the true knowledge of God, of the worship acceptable to him, of the expectation of a Deliverer, in the promised seed of the woman, and of the means of that grace, by which only, can fallen man be renewed in the spirit of his mind, delivered from the guilt and power of sin, and from that eternal death, which is its only wages.

In this, the second dispensation of true religion, provided for mankind, the distinction from that which preceded it, to be most carefully marked and considered by us, is, its covenanted and peculiar character; in other words, the limited and prescribed conditions, on which only, its privileges and advantages can be obtained. If we overlook this, we overlook its most distinguishing feature, lose that deeply impressive lesson, which it was intended to teach us, and pass over the most interesting, because most influential part of the whole transaction; that of a new relation to God, conferred upon men by outward and visible marks, and henceforth confined and limited within this institution. For it is this, and this only, my brethren and friends, which marks its separation from the rest of the world, as the Church, the peculium, the elect of God. Because of this its distinctive character, it was made the visible and only depository of his revealed will and precious promises. For certainty and assurance, to this Church were committed, those lively oracles

of divine truth, which were corrupted and lost under the custody of tradition. And in it was prepared and established that body of testimony to the person and offices of Jesus Christ, as the promised seed of the woman, which shines so bright, so enlivening, comfortable and irrefragable to us, under the gospel. Through this channel only, was to flow hereafter, that chain of revelation, prophecy and providence, which constitutes and confirms the hope of man. And to mark its dignity and pre-eminence, and to fulfil the wise purposes of its founder, the condition of the rest of the world, in the rise and fall of its kingdoms, and in the operation of its various events, is overruled, and made subservient to the advancement, enlargement, and final establishment of this kingdom of God upon the earth, against all the opposition of men and devils combined.

For the order and uniformity of the public, prescribed, and therefore only acceptable service of God, in this his sanctuary, a divinely constituted priesthood was appointed, through which alone, were the people permitted to present their united worship, to offer up the proper sacrifice for personal as well as general sin, and to draw assurance of forgiveness, through the efficacy of that great sin-offering, atonement and expiation, which all their sacrifices represented.

Hence, my brethren, the singular and personal character under which it is spoken of, throughout the scriptures; that sacred unity with which it is invested; hence, that zeal for its purity and interest, so constantly manifested, and that care with which its constitution and government were fenced against all intrusion.

Hence, also, the strong language, in which its endurance or everlasting continuance is spoken of in the scriptures; which proves that it was not a temporary appointment; but inseparably connected with the wonderful plan of man's redemption, and to run parallel with it, and efficient in it, "until the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the great deep," "and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

Here, then, my brethren and friends, let us pause a moment, and look back and reflect, what would have been the state of the

world, what would have been our individual condition, had this wise and merciful provision of the love of God, never been appointed; had men been left, as justly they might have been, to the influence of traditional knowledge, as the ground and the means of salvation for sinners—and let the awful religious blank which the thought reflects back upon the mind, awaken us to consider more carefully, the foundation on which we are building for eternity; whether on this certified and verifiable basis of God's appointment, or on some presumptuous imitation of its liniments, by the weak and incompetent intrusion of human wisdom. "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say."

But to proceed—Thus divine in its origin, constitution and appointments—definite in its purpose, and singular in its character, the Old Testament Church stands alone in the world, like the ark on the waters of the deluge, the sole depository of the truth, and of the people of God; nor is there access to it, nor admission within its saving enclosure, otherwise than according to the institution of its founder. It was competent to no man; not even to Lot, or to Melchisideck, to obtain its privileges, without its seal. Whatever of mercy might be in store for them and the rest of mankind observing the law written in the heart, it was not the pledged and promised mercy made over to the Church. Whatever the truth or reasonableness of any religious duty might be; however well founded the hope of God's favour, from conformity to the dictates of natural conscience; it was not the truth confirmed by express revelation; it was not the hope which springs from the promise of God, certified by outward, visible and appointed ordinances, as helps to faith, means of grace, and assurances of a relationship to God, in which none other stood, transacted through an authorized and accredited agent.

This, my brethren and hearers, is that deeply impressive and influential character, in which the Church of the living God is presented to our notice and use, in working out our eternal salvation. This is that commanding feature, by which it is to be distinguished by us from all imitations of it, by either the piety or the presumption of fallible men; and it is by tracing it according to this, its specifick character, through all the deal-

ings and providencies of its founder, that we, at this day, are enabled to discover and distinguish this ark of safety—this special deposit of the promises of God to a fallen world—this authorized source of agency between Heaven and Earth. For the Church of Christ, under the New Testament dispensation, is not a new or fresh appointment of God, in the sense and meaning too commonly entertained; but a continuation of the old, in all its essential provisions. The same, and not a new divine origination; the same, and not a fresh devised constitution of government, administration and authority; with the same and not another holy purpose of separation, certainty and assurance to men, in things spiritual and invisible; and this, upon the sure ground, that “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever.”

From not attending to this essential point to the very being of a Church, room has been given for the intrusion of man’s presumption into this sacred appointment, and to deal with it, as the creature of his contrivance, as a thing subject to his alteration and amendment. By losing sight of the intimate relation and analogy between the old and new testament dispensations; by failing to consider the one as *perfective* of the other, confusion and obscurity on this subject has spread over the christian world; and division and destruction, instead of union and peace, has been the bitter fruit: while the event has fulfilled the prediction of our Lord, in impeding the progress of the gospel, and encouraging that infidel spirit, which turns away from the truth, because those who call themselves the disciples of Christ, bite and devour one another. Above all—by neglecting to apply the test which God himself has provided, whereby to determine the certainty with which we are transacting our spiritual affairs, in the very natural enquiry—“By what authority doest thou these things?” and substituting, in lieu thereof, the reputed piety and holiness of particular men, has the darkness become thicker and blacker, and the powerful prejudices of pride and profession, been enlisted against the truth; so that men, reasonable beings, with the light of God’s word in their hands, contentedly trust their souls to a security, on which they would not risk their estates.

Yet the truth remaineth, my brethren and friends, unaffected in its heavenly and unchangeable nature, by any perverseness and opposition of men. And to us it is given, by the distinguishing mercy of God, to know and ascertain the truth, to the comfort and health of our souls. The Church also, "the pillar and ground of the truth," the peculium of God, by the same distinguishing mercy, yet remaineth, lingering as it were, with us, and verifiable, by the same heavenly original, divine authority, and saving purpose, which constitute its sacred character. As such, it is presented to your consideration this day, my hearers, in a point of view in which you may never have regarded it; briefly, it is true; yet sufficiently plain to enable every man, with his bible in his hand, to determine the question for himself. And sure I am, that this is the only representation of the subject, which can correct erroneous notions, or confirm those which are true; the only ground on which there is any foundation for faith to rest upon, any assurance of hope in the revealed mercy of God. For I am yet to learn, where a promise of God to fallen man is to be found, that is not limited on the previous condition, that he be a member of Christ's visible Church upon earth.

Having thus given a faint outline of the origin, purpose, and importance of the Church, as an appointment of Almighty God in the gracious plan of our redemption; I will make a few remarks on that branch of the true vine which has been planted in this portion of the Lord's vineyard.

Of the early state of the Church in this diocese, the notices are so scanty, and my information so limited, that there is no safe ground on which to form an estimate of the state of religion within our communion, previous to the recent effort to revive the cause in the year 1817.

The journals of the General Convention, and the lists of the clergy in each state therein published, give no notice, that the Episcopal Church was even known by name in North-Carolina. It is nevertheless certain, that the Church was coeval with the establishment of a regular government, and had spread the knowledge of her doctrines and liturgy, and formed regular congregations for the worship of God, as far west as the middle counties of the state.

We must therefore refer the decline, and almost extinguishment of the Church here, to the same causes which operated throughout this vast continent, to wit: the just judgment of Almighty God, on the sins and iniquities of his people. To ascribe the depression of the Church to political causes *solely*, is to reverse the order of his providence, who overrules and directs the affairs of the world, to the final triumph of his spiritual kingdom.

The long period, however, during which the people were deprived of the services of the sanctuary, could not fail to operate injuriously. We gradually forget our dearest friends, my brethren, when removed from all intercourse with them. We soon seek to form new connexions, and we cleave to them the closer, perhaps, because of previous privation. And thus it fared with the Church. Multitudes, who would never have deserted the fold, were forced by want and privation into strange pastures. Still greater numbers have grown up in ignorance of her claims, and even of her existence; while the pride of opinion, reluctance to acknowledge an error, and the modern fallacies of liberality in religious opinion, and equal safety in all religious denominations, keep back many who once enjoyed the benefit of her sound and safe ministrations, and bid fair to establish the notion, that no religious profession is necessary. Thus demonstrating by experience, that in proportion as you weaken the vital doctrine of the visible unity of the Church of Christ, by acknowledging communions erected by human authority, you encourage the growth of infidelity and impiety. And it requires but a fair consideration of the effects which have followed the divisions among christians, and the consequent adoption of liberal opinions, to demonstrate the alarming fact, that if the Church of God may be found every where, it will soon be sought no where. Indifference to religion, is the inevitable result of such pestilent notions; and this is the sum total of gain from this so much boasted system of liberal opinions.

Yet the arm stretched out upon his inheritance was, and is, an arm of mercy. A remnant was left. "Jacob indeed was made thin, and the fatness of his flesh became lean;" yet "gleaning grapes were left in the vineyard, as the shaking of

an olive tree, two or three berries, in the top of the uppermost bough." It was a praying remnant, and it pleased God to open his ear to hearken.

For that remnant, then, it is, and for those whom God hath added to them, and for the deluded multitudes who are living without God in the world, we are met, in the fear of God, I trust, and in the hope of his guidance and direction in our counsels, to consult and devise things profitable, prosperous and happy; the things which accompany salvation. Let us then enquire

Thirdly—By whom shall Jacob arise?

And by whom, my brethren and friends, can Zion "arise and shake herself from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments, and become the praise of the whole earth," but by that Almighty arm which upholds the universe; by that ever living head, who hath pledged his promise, that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her.

On that promise I am built; on that providence I am staid; and when I consider the marked interposition of his hand in the commencement and progress of this work; when I reflect, that by him who inspireth the counsels, and ordereth the doings of the children of men, I meet you here this day, in the station which I fill in his Church; I bend in humble adoration before his wonder working power; I rely, with unshaken confidence, in his abiding faithfulness; and give myself to the work, in the firm belief that the set time to favour Zion is come. Well may we say, dear brethren, "what hath God wrought!" and in contemplation of what he hath already done, be strengthened and encouraged to be workers together with him, in building up the waste places of Jerusalem. I have been among them, my brethren—among the earliest records of the piety of our forefathers; and my heart yearned over the ancient and decaying, and now too often silent temples. I have been among the ancient Simeons and Annas, servants of the Lord, who "take pleasure in the stones, and favour even the dust of Zion;" who have prayed and fainted not, through a long night of darkness and bereavement; and I have seen the smile of transport, and the flush of hope, and the fervour of devout and grateful praise, light up their patriarchal countenances, as the promise of a

brighter day dawned upon their children ; and I felt that it would not be disappointed.

In this holy hope, then, let us continually look up to our great covenant head, and ever merciful Redeemer ; beseeching him to inspire our prayers, direct our counsels, and prosper our endeavours “ to the advancement of his glory, the good of his Church, the safety, honour and welfare of his people.”

But while it is by the Lord only, that Jacob can arise, it is by the use of means within our reach, by joining our earnest endeavours to our united prayers, that this most desirable work is to be carried on and effected.

First, then, because of the highest concernment, let us, my brethren, ever bear in mind, from what causes the depression and downfall of the Church originally proceeded, and guard carefully against a return of the same evil. Throughout the whole history of God’s dealings with his Church, we may see, that the light of his countenance upon his people, or the hidings of his face from them ; the communication of his favour to them, and the infliction of his judgments on them, have ever been regulated, according as piety or ungodliness prevailed among them. Now, all these things, we are instructed, “ happened unto them for *ensamples*, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” Happy, then, will it be for us, my brethren and hearers, if we take warning by this more recent example and proof, that the same order of his providence yet subsists ; and keep ourselves from the evil way of profession without practice, religion without holiness. Many suppose, that in the Episcopal Church, a greater laxity is allowed, than in other denominations. But this manifests a total ignorance of all our institutions. No countenance is given or allowed to what is sinful ; nor can any denomination pretend to greater strictness, than is required by the Canons and Rubrics of the Church. We cannot help it, my brethren, if persons whose conduct is a scandal to all christian profession, will call themselves Episcopalians : the discipline of the Church can be applied only to those who are known and received as communicants ; and by those compared with any other denomination, we fear not to be tested ; yet with us, whatever may be the

case with other professions, we know and confess, that much of the old leaven has to be purged out ; and this will we do, if God permit.

To this point, then, my brethren, let us bend our united attention ; taking away occasion from those who seek it, and wiping out the reproach against us ; firmly setting our faces against all conformity with the world in its ungodliness ; and withholding our fellowship from all who walk disorderly. This we owe to our own souls, to the honour of God, to the credit and advancement of the Church, and to the souls of others ; we owe it to that forbearing goodness which has once more revived us, and in agreement with which only, can we hope to prosper.

As holiness is the mark of God's children, we are called to holiness, to severance from the world, its idolatrous pursuits, its vain and vicious pleasures, in ourselves and in our families. " Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." " Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

This is the doctrine of the Episcopal Church ; this is the practice in the life, which all her precepts inculcate upon her members ; which her discipline is constructed to enforce, and which no endeavours of mine shall be wanting, God being my helper, to bring to full effect. And here I am truly thankful that so many circumstances concur to favour us in this essential work. No wide spread, inveterate habit of ungodliness, has yet had time to take root among us, and cause alarm at the extent of the excision required. Jacob indeed is small, but he is young also, and comparatively free from the great transgression. Be it our care then, one and all, dear brethren, that as he increases in stature, he may ' grow in grace,' and increase also in ' favour both with God and man.'

Whatever reproach of this nature is brought against our communion as yet, is brought from a distance, and there, let us resolve that it shall remain ; whatever is now to perform of the painful duty of reproof and correction, is comparatively light ;

and blessed be God for it, there is no diversity of opinion among those who have the care of the flock. United in this, as in all other points which concern the peace and prosperity of our Zion, we may humbly trust to build up those committed to our charge, "an holy Temple unto the Lord."

Secondly. That Jacob may arise as Jacob, it is essential that the doctrines and worship prescribed in the articles and liturgy of the Church, be faithfully preached and adhered to by all of her communion.

On you, my brethren of the clergy, depend the hopes of the Church in this diocese, for this means of resuscitation. This precious deposit she has committed to your fidelity, and at your hands does she require that it be exercised for the increase of the body.

And here again I have to bless God, that the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places. That however small the number, it is a little phalanx of men sound in faith, and united with me in one mind, and in one doctrine; that on no point is there such a division of sentiment as leads to a diversity of practice; but all can go hand in hand to the object before us. That however feeble in the eyes of the world, it is a band of brothers who have themselves experienced the power and efficacy of the truths they preach; who know and feel that they are the power of God unto salvation, and are therefore able to teach others also. Who admire and love the scriptural simplicity, devotional sublimity, and doctrinal security, of that form of sound words, in which they lead the public worships of the sanctuary; who know that the liturgy of the Church is the great bulwark of the faith once committed to the saints; the tried safeguard against the heresies of the day, of all who use it with the understanding and the affections.

Thus favoured of God, my burden, dear brethren, is comparatively light—while my hope is animated, that with such workmen, the edifice will arise, beautiful in its proportions, resplendent in holiness, and the praise of the whole earth.

The foundation on which it rests, is the rock Christ, confessed, and believed on, as "God over all, blessed forever;"—"who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from

Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us, under Pontius Pilate." The beauty of its proportions, consists in the harmony of that unsearchable wisdom—whereby 'mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other'—in the unspeakable mystery, of God made sin, that man might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And the splendour of its embellishment, in the union of all its members, in the faith which worketh by love, the hope which maketh not ashamed, and the charity, which never faileth.

This is the blessed fruit of the doctrine of the gospel, and of the Church, 'truly preached, truly received, and truly followed.' The mystery of godliness, that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," is the new sharp threshing instrument predicted by the prophet, wherewith to break down the kingdom of sin, satan and death. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel, I will keep thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel. Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth. Thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.—Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy one of Israel.'

On the doctrines of the cross, then, as you have taken, maintain your stand, my reverend brethren. Preach them in the simplicity and sincerity of hearts that feel them, with the earnestness of men, who wish to save their own souls and the souls of others. The entire spiritual death, and alienation of man from God, by the entertainment of sin; the reconciliation of God to the world, by the sufferings and death of his only begotten Son; the atonement of his blood; justification by faith; acceptance through the merits of the Saviour; conversion of the heart to God; holiness of life, the only evidence of it, and the grace of God, in the renewal of the Holy Ghost, the sole agent from first to last, in working out our salvation from sin here, and from hell hereafter. In fewer words, "*salvation* by grace, through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast."

But with these vital and Heaven-blessed doctrines, other points of edification to those of your charge, and to your general hearers, will require your attention, my reverend brothers; particularly that of the distinctive character of the Church. On this, a most lamentable ignorance prevails, and most unfounded opinions are becoming established, not only among Episcopalians, but at large. To permit this ignorance to continue undisturbed, is to be false to our ordination vows, to our acknowledged principles, to the interests of our communion, and to the souls committed to our care; and however amiable in appearance, the principle on which we act may be, reflection shews it to be a mistaken one, and experience proves it to have been injurious. If we hold principles that are indefensible, let us abandon them. But if they are our principles, interwoven into the very frame of our polity—impregnable in their truth, and essential in the great work we have in hand; let us not appear ashamed of them, or weakly afraid of the consequences, and thus become parties to that miserable delusion, which weakens us as a body, strengthens the ranks of our adversaries, and, I will fearlessly say, weakens the cause of true religion, by tacitly owning one division after another, until the great master principle of the Church of God, its unity, is merged in the mass of christian names, and swallowed up by the indifference and infidelity thus fostered.

If, then, we would be found faithful to ourselves, to the Church whose commission we bear, and to the souls committed to our trust; this doctrine of the distinctive character of the Church, must be fully unfolded and laid before our people. Their attention must be called to it, on the grounds of scriptural reason. The purpose of this wise and merciful appointment of Almighty God in the salvation of sinners, must be dwelt upon and enforced, by all those weighty arguments and authorities which the word of God so richly supplies. The importance and efficacy of authorized ministrations, of valid sacraments, must be elucidated and confirmed, by the analogies which govern men in temporary things, and by the method so demonstrably resorted to by God himself, both under the law and under the gospel, to give certainty and assurance to men in things so unspeakably important. These are the points to be presented to our people, to be pressed upon the understandings and the

feelings of our hearers, in connection with the other doctrines of the gospel—that they may learn to estimate aright their privileges; and valuing, to cleave to them.

Thirdly. That Jacob may arise in his true character, a steadfast and uniform adherence to the liturgy and offices of the Church, as set forth in the book of Common Prayer, and administration of the sacraments, must be observed.

In this duty, it is my happiness to believe, that you, my reverend brethren, are found faithful. As honest men—dependent of your christian character, I could expect no less. But in this liberal and latitudinarian age, this duty is sometimes rendered painful, by the wish to yield in some degree to the prejudices of a mixed congregation; and by the hope, that conforming in this respect, they may be won over. In aid of this dereliction of duty, the points objected, are artfully represented as things indifferent in themselves, and therefore to be yielded in favour of christian fellowship. All this, however, is mere pretence; for if they are points really indifferent, the fault must ever be with those, who on such grounds separate themselves, from what never can be viewed with indifference by any serious person. And whatever pretences may be urged, they are all fallacious, and proved to be so by experience. For whatever the principle of accommodation may be capable of in other things, it has ever failed in points of religious dissent—and I am yet to learn, in what instances the surrender of principles, or even of distinctive points, has profited those who have tried the dangerous experiment. My brethren, the attempt has ever been in vain, and has issued in weakening and degrading those who have resorted to it; and the reason is obvious: Principles, religious principles especially, are presumed to be well considered—adopted as the best, and on the highest authority. To hold them then, as things that may be dispensed with, may be accommodated, may be yielded, is viewed as the mark of a weak or an insincere mind.

To act upon this expectation then, is to court defeat, while it is at the same time to expose ourselves to contempt, as men of lax principles and designing conduct. A stigma of all others the most severe upon a minister of religion; who, in common with all christians, but in a higher degree, ought to have his

conversation in the world, in simplicity and godly sincerity. And what has been the effect of such a course, in the trials that have unhappily been made by Episcopal clergymen. Has our communion gained or lost by it? Where is the addition obtained by this surrender of private and public principle? It has lost, my reverend and lay brethren, by this Judas like method of betraying it into the hands of its enemies, with a kiss.

And what have the individuals, who have thus acted, gained by it? They have gained the name, perhaps, of liberal and charitable; and have lost the esteem of all sound churchmen: while they have not gained the confidence of those, who nevertheless flattered their enlarged views of christian liberty and evangelical piety; because, in the midst of this flattery, they are obliged to view them as false to the most solemn pledges that can be given of sincerity of opinion, and integrity of practice.

In all such cases, the question with an Episcopal clergyman, is not, whether our general principles, or our method of conducting public worship by a fixed form, be scriptural, profitable, or even evangelical; this ought to have been settled on the most serious investigation, before he assumes the orders of the Church. Whatever discretion he had as to this and other points of required conformity, is then given up; nor can he continue to wear the livery of the Church, and thus act, without the guilt of the most sublimated perjury.

Alas! that it should be necessary to warn against the influence of such an example elsewhere. But as the evil exists, and this view of the subject includes every plea for nonconformity to the doctrines and worship of the P. E. Church in the United States, I think it due to you, and to the sincerity with which I am bound to act, to shew distinctly, at the commencement of my administration, the principles by which I am guided.

Fourthly. For the increase and advancement of true godliness, let me recommend the observance and cultivation of family religion.

Without this root and spring, under God, of all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, hope is vain for the Church and the State; we shall sink into a nation of infidels.

That the practice has declined in the families of professing christians; that it is abandoned in all others, is known by all

who hear me at this moment. And that the consequences are the bitter fruit of increasing crime and profaneness, is recorded in every court, and witnessed by every sabbath.

But, my brethren and hearers, could this be so, were the principles of our holy religion, early and carefully instilled into the minds of the rising hope of this great and growing christian nation? Was the fear of God, and the reverence of his most holy name, and the observance of his worship, and the knowledge of his life-giving precepts, inculcated and manifested in our families, would so little of it be seen in the world? Awake, then, from this torpor, ye christian fathers and mothers—from this deadly delusion of adulterated religion, which is so fast swallowing up the dearest hope you can entertain of a happy eternity, with those who are dearest to you here. Trample under your feet, those pestilent doctrines which inevitably lead to this criminal neglect, by confiding the hope, and by necessary consequence, the duties of the gospel, to a chosen few. Arise to the blessed assurance of God's public message by his only begotten Son—"that he hath not appointed you or them to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ;" "who by the grace of God, tasted death for every man." Believe this his true and faithful word, against all the sophistry of men; diligently use and apply the means provided by the wisdom and goodness of God, for your advancement in knowledge, and growth in grace; and no longer suffer your children to grow up like the wild asses colt, alike ignorant of God and of themselves, of the word of his grace, of his sabbaths, his ordinances, his mercies, his judgments, and that eternity, in which all these end, and where you and they must meet, to enjoy or to suffer forever, according to the improvement or abuse here, of the talents committed to your trust.

Oh! it is an awakening thought to contemplate a godless gospel family, assembled before the judgment seat of Christ, and to carry out the consequence to the misery that awaits them; and that misery doubled by the near and dear ties which connect them; Hell made hotter by the endless reproach—we neglected our children's souls—my father and mother hardened me against God—they trained me to perdition.

Oh! it is a heart-cheering, soul-enlivening vision, to go in

the mind's meditation, with the faithful father and mother, to the same awful tribunal, and see the holy confidence with which they stand and say—"Behold us, Lord, and the children thou hast given us." We have taught them thy fear; and by thy grace kept them in the way; we surrender them to thy mercy, through thy dear Son. "Well done, good and faithful servants, ye have been faithful in a few things, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." But who can speak that joy, when all the dear ties of nature in this life shall be refined, purified and perpetuated in glory; when conjugal, parental and filial love, shall be swallowed up, but not lost, in the love and enjoyment of God for ever.

And is this, dear brethren, a result, in the one case to be shunned as destruction; in the other to be desired as life? Oh, if it be! (and what christian parent does not feel that it is all this?)—let the plain and certain road to the attainment of this blessedness, be pursued by all. Discard for ever, my brethren and hearers, this murderous neglect of the souls of your children and servants; and as you are able, call them round the family altar, and invoke the blessing, the promised blessing of God, upon your holy purpose; restrain them from all violations of the Lord's day; cultivate his fear in their hearts; and shew, by the example of your lives, that you fear his name, and hope in his mercy.

Especially upon you, my Episcopal brethren, is this primary duty enforced, by every principle you profess, by every obligation that can be undertaken, and by every sanction known to time and to eternity. Your baptismal sponson for your children involves it, by the solemn stipulations then entered into; and the promises of God therein sealed to them, is your full and sufficient warrant, to engage in this fruitful work, with assurance of success. Let, then, the inscriptions on your dwellings be, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." To this source of supply, the Church looks, for the enlargement of her border, the extension of her communion—for the spread of the gospel, and its triumph over all its enemies.

—And to what other source can we reasonably look, my brethren, not only for the advancement, but for the continuance of religion among us. Let us ask ourselves, and reflect seriously upon it—what proportion do the conversions, which we occa-

sionally hear of, bear to the numbers annually coming into and going out of life? In this state, do they amount to 500 in the year—to one for every 100,000 of its population? I know not; but I doubt it. But say they amount to five times this number, and are all sound conversions of the heart to God—what is this to the annual drain by death, of souls dead to God, unprepared for eternity; what to the multitudes who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who have grown up without him, and must in all probability die without him; what is this to the thousands coming forward into life, the hope of days to come, equally unfurnished—O let the alarming calculation startle us from this delusion of double death, and convert us from dependence on the extraordinary, to the serious use of the ordinary means which God has provided, commanded, and promised to bless, in training up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that his converting grace may change their hearts, transform their lives, and enrich the Church and the world, with sound and instructed believers, serious and experienced christians, and firm professors of the hope of the gospel. Thus, and thus only, shall the objections of the infidel be done away; the vain reasonings of the disputer of this world be answered and refuted; and the means corresponding with the end, and the fruit crowning the work, make all men see, that God is with us of a truth. Thus adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, by the union of profession and practice, Jacob shall arise, and his light shine. Thus shall his seed possess the gate of his enemies, and the Lord whom we seek shall suddenly come to his temple, and “the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Lastly.—Our pecuniary means must be reserved for the wants of our own communion.

This is so plain and obvious a duty, that at first sight, it would appear superfluous to mention it; yet certain it is, that in this respect, Episcopalians have manifested an easiness in yielding to the solicitations of other denominations, which can be justified on no sound principle of regard for the Church, or feeling sense of the wants and privations of their immediate brethren; and the time I think is come, when it is absolutely necessary to act differently. Jacob is small, and he must con-

tinue so, if his patriomony is squandered upon strangers. It is the dictate of inspired wisdom, my brethren, "that if any provide not for his own, especially those of his own house—he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." This rule, both of reason and religion, will apply in the closest manner, to the present condition of the Church in this diocese, and to the present duty of all the members and friends of our communion, and should regulate and restrain, the indiscriminate expenditure of her means, for purposes, which if not hostile, are certainly unprofitable.

If I could paint to you, as vividly as I have witnessed, and now feel, the destitute condition of our brethren—men agreeing in faith, doctrine and worship with ourselves, and the general call there is, "come over and help us,"—the necessity as well as propriety, in the truest religious sense, of adopting and acting henceforth upon this principle, would need no enforcement from me. Your hearts would feel, for congregations destitute of ministers and ordinances; Jacob's feeble hands would not be lifted up in vain; the Church of your fathers, and of your affections, would no longer be dry-nursed, to succour her opponents; but all would be united for one object, and your bounty flow in one enriching stream of nourishment, growth and strength to our Zion. Oh! if I had but the thousands, which have heretofore been drawn away from her exigencies, how easily would all our wants of this kind be supplied. It is gone, however, and regret will not bring it back. But if it shall teach us to adopt and adhere to a different course for the time to come, it will so far be a gain, and there is yet enough left in the piety, and affection and affluence of the Episcopal body in this diocese, to meet all our reasonable demands. All that is required, is to act upon principle, by system.

Much will be said against this my advice to you, my brethren; and I doubt not it will be called illiberal, uncharitable, perhaps unchristian. But by whom will such truly unchristian terms be applied to it? By those only, whose interest it is that you should not discriminate. By those, who act themselves as a body, and rigidly too, upon this very principle—who have drawn largely on the easiness, or indifference of your liberality; but have never returned a cent for the dollar, to our wants.

and never will ; or by those who cloak real disregard to all religion, under the motley mask of equal regard for all denominations. Regard them not, therefore, my brethren ; but strong in the soundness of the principle, and the obligation of the duty, as christians and Churchmen, reserve what you have to spare in the service of religion, for the wants of your own communion. That certainly has the first and highest claim upon your ability, upon your bounty ; a claim which no sophistry can invalidate—which no mistaken views of liberality and charity towards the opinions or the practices of others, should either weaken or defeat.

According, then, as the distinctive character of the Church, is understood in its principles, applied in the use, and regarded in the hearts of its members, will it be cherished and flourish. According as the walk and conversation in the world, of those who call themselves Episcopalians, shall be as becometh the gospel of Christ, will its high, because heaven-descended claims, be owned, acknowledged and acted upon, in the regeneration of a fallen world ; and according as we shew, that it is all this in our estimation, my clerical and lay brethren—by the zeal and earnestness with which we unite and persevere in the work we have in hand, “will Jacob arise”—“Will a little one become a thousand, and a small one, a strong nation.”

To this work you have called me ; to this work the Lord through you hath devoted me ; and to your service, such as I am, I give myself without reserve. Accept, then, the first fruits of the deep concern I feel for your advancement ; of the observation and experience I have had opportunity for, and of that sacred regard for your present and eternal welfare, which occupies my thoughts, my prayers, my labours. And may He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand ; who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, be with us in all our undertakings, to bless and prosper us in building up the old waste places ; in raising up the foundations of many generations ; that we may indeed be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.

Now unto Him, &c.