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A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

FIFTY-SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE DIOCESE OF
NORTH CAROLINA, IN ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, SALIS-
BURY, WEDNESDAY, MAY 29TH, 1872.

MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF CHRIST—STEWARDS OF HIGH TRUSTS:
THEIR CONSEQUENT DUTIES OF THE DAY.

“It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”—1 Cor. iv. 2.

The mission of the Church is the conquest of the world:— The *peaceful* conquest of the *whole* world. Our Lord Christ, the great Head of the Church, is “*the Prince of Peace*,” “and the work of righteousness shall be *peace*; and the effect of righteousness *quietness* and *assurance* for ever?” (Isaiah xxxii. 17.)

The character and extent of this mighty mission of the Church appear on the very face of its charter. And how unmistakable the declaration of the power and authority,—as was first necessary—from which that commission emanated. “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and evangelize all nations.*” “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*” “*The field is the world,*” the *whole* world. “*The kingdoms of this world are (to) become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.*” The Church is therefore distinctively and essentially *aggressive*:—“*The Church Militant.*” A faith that is not worth propagating is not the faith of the Gospel of God. In the very act of becoming subjects of this Kingdom of Christ, we enlist under his banner as soldiers—for what are soldiers, if not to *fight*? Our very vow of allegiance is to “*fight manfully* against sin, the world and the devil, unto our life's end.”

This conflict of the Church with the world is an inevitable and an irrepressible one; “for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an *infidel*?” “The carnal mind” and “the friendship

of the world " are they not " enmity with God ? " " Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world *hateth* you."

" Good and evil, set against the other's being, *strive*,"—and *necessarily* so. It is the Master's word : " Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." " He that is not with me is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." There can be here no *neutral*, and no *common* ground as well. I repeat, the issue is inevitable ; the conflict irrepressible. " Is there not a warfare to man upon earth ? " (Job vii. 1.)

This, then, is a first principle of the faith abundantly evident:—The Church of God on earth is distinctively and essentially *the Church Militant*. And equally clearly revealed in the Word of God is that closely kindred truth, that this victory—ultimately under God full and complete—this victory of the Church over the world is to be achieved by the power of *Faith*. " This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (St. John.)

And so it is, brethren, that these few, familiar words of St. Paul in the text seem to me to embody truth whose various phases and applications will infallibly furnish remedies for the removal of whatever may in any wise hinder the extension of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. To obviate or overcome all possible difficulties—" It is (only) required in stewards that a man be found faithful"—*full of faith*.* Not less pointedly and plainly does this same Apostle put this truth in several of his other Epistles. " Fight the good fight of *Faith*" is his exhortation to his son in the Faith and in the ministry.—St. Timothy. This daily walk of the Christian is necessarily—as we have seen—an unceasing warfare. It is a *fight*. And it is, and will ever be for

* It has been questioned whether the use of this phrase " full of faith " for " faithful " is authorized. To which I reply : First, It is so used on the authority, and after the example of Archbishop Leighton and others. Secondly, " Harrison on the English language " (Second American Edition, page 240) says, " with respect to the signification of adjectives, one broad distinction is to be found in words ending in *ful*, and those ending in *less* ; the former denoting *possession of*, the other *absence of*." " Faithful " is manifestly a compound of " faith " and " full," and therefore means *primarily and literally*, " *possessed of*," or " *full of faith*." Its more common signification, " firm in adherence to truth and duty," " of true fidelity," is secondary, and in this way easily and naturally acquired, viz. : As a man *believes*, so he *lives*. This is true, whatever men may profess to the contrary. Our duties and truth we live up to, *just in proportion* as we *really and truly believe in them*. In other words, we are *faithful* just in proportion as we are *full of faith*. Lastly, the original "*πιστός*" has the force of the active participle "*πιστεύων*" and signifies " believing," " yielding belief and confidence " and still more specially and locally " believing in Jesus," " a believer," " Christian," in numerous passages of the New Testament. See particularly John xx. 27 ; Gal. iii. 9 ; Acts x. 45, xvi. 1, 15 and others.

all time, and everywhere, here on earth, pre-eminently a *fight of Faith*. And so in that other striking Scripture how beautifully and forcibly are we taught the same truth! Soldiers of Christ, fighting under the great "Captain of our Salvation," in his own Divinely Organized army—his Church are exhorted to "take above all the shield of Faith, where-with they shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." The proper place of this shield of Faith is "above all"—covering all—the entire armor, the whole Christian man. The entire panoply of God, beside, is wholly ineffectual for the successful waging of this warfare with the world without the overshadowing protection of this "shield of Faith." How prone men are to go out of their way to make difficulties here! Because of the frequency, as it should be, with which the necessity of Faith, in the economy of grace, is urged from the pulpit, they are apt to imagine that it is something very different from what it is—that it is some more or less inextricably involved theological dogma, some more or less vague and obscure religious tenet; whereas, as a matter of fact, the difficulty of its apprehension consists solely in its very simplicity. Saving Faith is that which has its highest exemplification in the spirit of the humblest little child. It is simply taking our Blessed Lord at *His word*, doing as dutiful children what he commands, on the assurance of his *Love*. Surely "Thus saith the Lord" is quite enough for men on earth to know. Now, exactly what this Faith is, in its exercise and efficacy, seems to me to be the point mainly brought out in the text. This Faith "that overcometh the world" is "the evidence of things unseen."

It is "the faculty (not by which we conceive, but) by which we realize these things, feel them to have a body and a substance." To imagine the truths of Religion is not to believe them; the believing them is the having such a conviction of their reality, as to live under their influence, and to be in some measure, at least, governed by them.* It is not theoretical or speculative or historical only, but especially practical. It is the ready assent to these "unseen" things of God, not only of the mind—the intellect—but that of the *will* as well, and of the *heart* and of the *life*. It is not enough that we have the power of believing, we must show that we exercise that power of *realizing* faith in our daily lives. It is not enough that this trust is committed to us—that we are stewards. "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

The principle here laid down is one—as I am thoroughly persuaded—that will meet all the difficulties in the way of the work given us of God to do.

Ought we not to have first regard to it, in all our deliberations for the extension of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth? We come together, elders and brethren, for a few days yearly, not to discuss theories of little or no practical bearing, nor to revive issues—however important

*Goulburn's "Pursuit of Holiness," Chapter III., p. 21.

once—now long settled. “Let the dead bury their dead.” We are here the rather, I take it, to take counsel how best to meet and overcome or obviate the difficulties that make themselves known to us in our daily work for Christ and His Church. And whatever may be the result of our deliberations to this end, still, all that we may do must bear the test of this teaching of the text. Whatever powers are committed to the Church for the evangelization of the world, they are efficacious only as they are used *faithfully*. This is the very obvious line of thought here suggested.

To everyone on earth hath God given a work to do, “every man in his own order,” “to each according to his several ability.” To be sure, St. Paul is here speaking with primary reference to the Christian Ministry, as is sufficiently evident from the immediate context.

A certain faction at Corinth endeavored to disparage that ministry that the Apostles exercised among them. He writes to vindicate the claims of his office, asserting its divine appointment, and its high, two-fold functions. “Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” And then immediately follows the text, in which the Apostle does not, you observe, restrict what is said to the Christian ministry alone of which he was just speaking; but rather gives expression to a well-known general principle of universal applicability: “It is required in stewards,” in general, as is well-known, “that a man be found faithful.” That all men are after some sort stewards of God, is plainly taught us in two at least of our Lord’s parables, and in various exhortations of His Apostles. “Unto *everyone* of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” “As *every man* hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good *stewards* of the manifold grace of God.” We all—clergy and laity—come fairly under the terms of the text.

What, then, are those special trusts committed to our stewardship? and what, in consequence, that special faithfulness in the use of such trusts that is “required” of us? I say *special* trusts and *special* faithfulness advisedly: for we are not now concerned to inquire into the nature of that stewardship that we have of God in common with all other men, as that of the exercise of our reason, and of the proper use of the means and opportunities given us of ascertaining “what is truth,” and of doing our duty in general “in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call us.” But as Churchmen of this day and generation, and in this land, what special measures of trust and of responsibility are those committed to us of God? A very little reflection will suffice to show that they are of peculiar and vast weight and responsibility.

Just a year ago were these words of warning given us by the chief watchman upon the walls of our Zion: “Unbelief and immorality are becoming more and more prevalent, apparently, throughout the

world—certainly in our own country—and if these gigantic evils are to be effectually checked, it must be by the power of true religion. We believe our Church is pre-eminently qualified, because divinely gifted for this very work.”*

The powers and resources and agencies of the Church are amply adequate to the magnitude of the task, however great. To suppose otherwise would be to charge God with folly. Is not God’s work *well done*? And just here is that essential mark of religious truth, that men in this age seem especially prone to overlook, and the disregard of which seems immediately to underlie modern unbelief. God’s truth is *positive, objective revelation*. “The Faith was *delivered* to the Saints,” and “*once*” for all.

When the canon of the Sacred Scriptures was closed, that work was full and complete and perfect, wanting nothing. We may not add thereto or take therefrom one jot or tittle, except at our peril (Rev. xxii.: 19.) And, therefore, our whole duty is to ascertain “what hath God said,” and therein only to be “*faithful*.” And so, as it has been well expressed, “The Church principle is adherence to antiquity, because antiquity represents original revelation and consentient witness.” And so also that oft-quoted maxim of St. Vincent which so concisely embodies an essential mark of the Catholic Church:—“*Quod semper, Quod ubique, Quod ab omnibus*.” Even Macaulay, whose religious faith was certainly not of the most dogmatic or positive kind, even he declares: “It is plain that in divinity there cannot be a progress analogous to that which is constantly taking place in pharmacy, geology and navigation. “A Christian of the fifth century,” he continues, “with a Bible, is neither better nor worse situated than a Christian of the nineteenth with a Bible; candor and natural acuteness being, of course, supposed equal. It matters not at all that the compass, printing, gunpowder, steam, gas, vaccination, and a thousand other discoveries and inventions which were unknown in the fifth century, are familiar to the nineteenth. None of these discoveries and inventions has the smallest bearing on the question, whether man is justified by faith alone, or whether the invocation of saints is an orthodox practice.”†

Now it is exactly this characteristic of God’s revealed will to man—its fulness and completeness and finality, so to speak—It is exactly this truth that it is the tendency of the teaching of modern science, falsely so called, to depreciate if not absolutely to deny. Its tendency is to reverse the old theological maxim, and to teach that what is *new* is *true*; and what is *old* is *therefore false*. But let God be true and every man a liar, “the old is better.” Certain old-fashioned truths, for many long ages wholly unquestioned, and such as lie at the very

* Bishop Atkinson’s Convention Address, 1871.

† From Lord Macaulay’s “Review of Ranke’s History of the Popes,” quoted in Sadler’s “Church Doctrine Bible Truth,” p. 371. (3d English Edition).

foundation of the Faith are now considered behind the spirit of the age; suited perhaps—so they put it—to the blind credulity of the dark ages, but entirely incompatible with modern progress. We live in an age when self constituted teachers of the people do not scruple to deny all positive truth.

Brethren of the clergy, upon us are the vows of God. We are the chief custodians of the *unalterable* truths of a God, “the same yesterday, to-day and forever.” We are the highest stewards of the highest trusts.

There is in our land a growing disregard of rightly constituted authority. The times demand that we should distinctly assert the high claims of our office. We have no right to claim for it less than what God’s word declares it to be. It is not an act of faithfulness to that Master whose servants we are, to derogate in the least degree from the dignity of our office.

It is not of men, but of God. Of course it is “the altar that sanctifies the gift;” only the office and not the man for which these claims are made. Who feels as we do that “this treasure is in earthen vessels?” If the great St. Paul, at the very moment of working a wondrous miracle of cure, found it necessary to remind his hearers that he was a “man of like passions with other men,” how much more have we of this day and generation such need. But for all that the office is *God-given*, and of *divine* functions and powers. We are not likely to mistake the purport of such language as this: “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you *by us*; we pray you in *Christ’s stead*, be ye reconciled to God.” “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,” *et al. freq.*

Thus on the very face of our letter of instructions, does it appear beyond all doubt, that these high functions pertain to our office. They are in general—as distinctly stated in the immediate context—twofold. We are first, “Ministers of Christ,” and secondly, “Stewards of the mysteries of God.” Our duties in consequence, are correspondingly twofold; that is, first, as “Ministers of Christ” to “preach the word of reconciliation committed unto us,” (II. Cor. v.: 19,) “Jesus Christ and him crucified,” and secondly, as “Stewards of the mysteries of God,” to dispense to the family of the Faithful, the sacraments and ordinances of His Church. Herein are included all that “is required” of us. It is only necessary that we be found faithful. What this age especially demands of us is that unwavering fidelity, that inflexible steadiness and stability and boldness in setting forth the immutable truths of God committed to our stewardship, that was so conspicuous a characteristic of that great type and precursor of the Christian ministry, St. John Baptist. “What went ye

out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" (St. Matt. xi. 7.) Let us go out into the wilderness of the world, if we will, to see reeds shaken with the winds; but let us hope never to see so great an anomaly in the Church of the changeless God. Let the Gospel trumpet above all things else, give the same old and that no "uncertain sound!" Let there be at least one spot on earth where we may find an asylum and quiet seclusion from a jarring, clamorous, boisterous world. Let "the city of our refuge" be our zion, "the city of our God," where ~~ever~~^{we} may we only hear again and again the same old truths, walk in the same "old paths;" use the same old prayers of our fathers, and have our souls filled with the same old heavenly strains! Let novelty and innovation and chance and change characterize aught else beside; but let them never come near the Church, and her immutable principles and teachings! Let the broken reeds of Puritanism and fanaticism bend and cringe—as they have ever done—to the sweeping currents of popular passions and prejudice. But let the Church, in her uncompromising integrity and rectitude, continue as ever of old, a sure refuge from and standing protest against such utter abominations! Let us never on any account, suffer to be lowered in one jot or tittle the Church's high standard of her sacred ministry—its God-given authority and commission and province and prerogative! Let "a reed shaken with the wind" be emblematic and typical of anything else rather than the ministry of "the Church of the living God which is the pillar and ground of the truth." But this general principle has certain applications in this our day of special importance.

In the most solemn act of our lives, we have promised "to be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word." The enemies of the Church of to-day are more from within than without. The errors that are most to be dreaded are those taught in the name, and under the guise of religious truth. In this age of free thought and a liberal religion, men need to be often reminded that there is such a thing as faith on the earth, and positive truth the object of faith. And there is such a thing as positive error as well. We may not mince matters of such moment. What more fruitful source of error in the religious world than that very popular fallacy that it is of "no consequence what a man believes, so that he does right." How radically wrong is such teaching so rife in our day! It strikes at the very root of the revelation of God—at the very foundation of the Faith, and its tendency is the utter overthrow of all positive truth. This "strange doctrine" is moreover—as I am thoroughly persuaded—more than any other one thing, the cause of the countless and disgraceful divisions among "those who profess and call themselves Christians," that harden men in their contempt of Christ and His Church. It isn't that it is so difficult to ascertain "what is truth"—

what those invariable marks are, by which the Catholic Church has always been, and may always be, known. But men are taught—and are ready enough to believe—that it is of little or no consequence to search after, and endeavor to ascertain them. “*It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s Church—bishops, priests and deacons,*” * * * and that “*no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon, except he * * * hath had Episcopal consecration or ordination.*” (*Preface to the original.*) *Ordinal*)

The evidences are plain enough, but men are taught that it is of little or no importance to investigate them. Nor is this all. Not only is that infallible mark of the Church Catholic denied, but its very opposite is asserted. How often is it said that the different religious organizations, though holding opposing doctrines, are, nevertheless, for the best interests of the cause of truth and of Christ, on the principle that opposition, frequent agitation brings to the surface only the true metal. Why, isn’t it a notorious fact that he who directs the religious thought of the largest congregation on the continent, or, at any rate, he whose sermons and lectures are heard and read by more people than those of any other man now living in our land—isn’t it a well-known fact that it is the teaching of the Plymouth pulpit that “there should be five or six different religious denominations at the least?”

But again, “let God be true, and every man a liar.” “What God hath cleansed, that we may not call common.” I remember no stronger expressions—and they are very numerous—in the Word of Truth, than those in which our Lord and His Apostles rebuke divisions, and exhort to unity in the Church—His Body. *Where* did St. Paul speak more sharply or pointedly than in this very Epistle of the text, *where* he rebuked certain embryo schisms in the Corinthian Church? *When*

Take these passages as but a small part and fair specimens. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all *speake the same thing*, and that *there be no divisions* among you; but that *ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*” And again, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause *divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.*” Is there not deep significance—not to cite other passages—in the fact that the last prayer our Lord uttered before his Blessed Passion, was for the unity of the Church; “*That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us:*” and why? “*THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME.*” The unity of the Church was to be a proof of its Divine origin and mission, and that which was to draw men to it. There is more ~~there~~ than appears on the surface of those words of St. Paul just quoted. “Mark them which cause *divisions and offences, &c.*” Divisions in the Church are causes of offence to the world, whose effect is to

keep men from Christ and His Church. And don't we see it so every day? How often do sincere and earnest men—to say nothing of those who are neither—say, “Whom are we to follow among such a multitude of counselors, teaching doctrines directly contrary the one to the other, with equal sincerity and equal confidence?” In this lamentable state of things, we may be sure, is one of the chief hindrances that the cause of Christ has to contend with in the world.

As God's Holy Word is true, there is such a thing as *schism*, and it is a *sin*. And when just these truths are presented, though it be in the very words of the Scriptures themselves, how almost invariably are they met with the false teaching of Popes oft-quoted couplet:

“For modes of Faith let senseless bigots fight ;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right, ”

as sheer “*ad captandum*” cant as ever was penned. Who is to decide when one's “life is in the right” in the absence of a positive and definite Faith? In the want of such a Faith, what seems very right to one man, not *may*, merely, but actually *does* seem very wrong to another, equally sincere. As has been well said, such talk “was the cant of a Godless time, the most sickening of all cant, the cant of liberality. What it comes from is just this utter heresy—a very deep and radical one in New England—the belief that there is no such thing as religion, as a revelation of objective fact, that it is simply the subjective state of mind of the man toward God. Provided the man be inspired to devout feeling and correct behavior, Christ as the human teacher only, or Christ as the Divine Son, are matters of no moment. These are only ideas by which religion is effected. Whichever idea makes most religion is best. Truth is laid wholly out of the question.”* But surely the religion of Christ is not wholly or even mainly a matter of emotion or opinion. It is a matter of principle and of revelation of *positive, objective truth*.

The times and the prevailing forms of religious error imperatively demand that men should be plainly taught that “*Sincerity is no equivalent for Truth*.” To say that it is, however common or popular, is nevertheless “doctrine” plainly “contrary to God's Word.” When “Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark, when the oxen stumbled,” he doubtless thought—if he thought at all—that his good intentions, the sincerity of his motives, would excuse this breach of God's law; yet “the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark; and there he died before God.”—(I. Chron. xiii.) God's immutable truth and righteous laws must be vindicated. How many awful instances are given us for warning, of such vindication! “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall

* “The (Hartford) *Churchman*” for Feb. 12th, 1870—Art.: “What a Christian is.”

He not do it ? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good ?” St. Paul declared that he was “not meet to be called an Apostle, because he persecuted the Church of God :” and yet at the time of that persecution he “verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” Even he that “*knew not*” his Lord’s will—and consequently could plead a better excuse than sincerity and good intentions—“and did it not,” though “beaten with few stripes,” was nevertheless “*beaten*.”

It is not true that it is of little moment what a man believes, or what he understands the Church of Christ to be, provided he is only sincere in that understanding and consistent. It is worse than absurd to say that two creeds or systems of religion diametrically opposed the one to the other, are both equally true and alike acceptable to God. Opposing principles beget opposing practices, and “a house divided against itself, falleth.” Truth is truth however honestly opposed : and error is error however conscientiously maintained. The religion of Christ is a positive, objective revelation of the will of God, and not a contradictory system of tenets and principles varying with every caprice and whim of ambitious, prejudiced aspiring leaders and teachers. Merely human institutions have ever been thus characterized more or less : But “the Church of the living God” *is not of men*, and it *is the pillar and ground of the Truth*.”

But besides these obvious errors that the functions of our office, as “Ministers of Christ,” oblige us with all faithful diligence to endeavor to banish from the Church, there are others suggested by our duties as “stewards of the mysteries of God.” There *are* enemies from *without* as well as those from within. The Rationalistic tendency of the age is to deny the Faith *in toto* ; to teach that what is not clear to man’s puny reason is not to be “required” of any man to be believed.

There *are* “mysteries of God.” A mystery is that which we do not understand. St. Paul acknowledged that there were such even to him, an inspired Apostle ; and not only mysteries, but *great* mysteries ; and that this was a truth so evident as to be beyond all doubt or controversy. “*Without controversy GREAT is the mystery of godliness*.” (1 Tim. iii. 16.) Shall we not expect them to be the same to us ? They are of God, proposed to our *Faith*, not to our *understanding*. Let Rationalism know this *first principle* of our Holy religion. If all were knowledge where were Faith ? God is in heaven, we are upon earth. The Church is “the kingdom of *Heaven* ; but it is the kingdom of *Heaven on earth*.” This “treasure is in earthen vessels.” We “walk,” “live” here “by Faith, not by sight.” “Now we *can* know but in part.” We must, grovelling here, “see through a glass darkly.” Faith is not opposed to reason, it is only *above* it.

“It is said that once in a company of literary gentlemen, Daniel Webster was asked if he could comprehend how Jesus Christ could be both God and man. “No, sir,” he replied ; and added, “I should be

ashamed to acknowledge Him as my Saviour if I could comprehend Him; He could be no greater than myself. Such is my sense of sin and consciousness of my inability to save myself, that I feel I need a super-human Saviour, one so great and glorious that I *cannot comprehend him.*" That, brethren, is the philosophy of Faith. What is on our level we may respect; what is below us, we despise; we can reverence and adore and worship, as creatures should the Great Creator, only that which is removed far above, out of our sight and understanding.

Mysteries of God? Certainly. Let this Apostolic phrase be answer enough to all the foolish babblings of Rationalistic infidelity. They are the legitimate objects of Faith; that Faith that "justifieth" and bringeth "the peace of God which passeth all understanding;" that Faith that cometh before Hope and Charity; that Faith that "availeth in Christ Jesus" above "circumcision or uncircumcision," "that worketh by love," and

* * * "Humble love

And not *proud reason*, keeps the door of heaven:

Love finds admission where proud science fails."—(Young.)

"Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all *believers.*" Of these "mysteries of God" are we "stewards." They are committed to our keeping and to our teaching. Especially are the "two only sacraments as generally necessary to salvation" "mysteries" of life-sustaining grace, "ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." These God forbid that we should handle with irreverent touch. They are memorials of God's gift of His dear Son, that mystery of mysteries. They are channels of grace. They are ours as stewards to distribute to the family of the Faithful; and "it is required in stewards that a man be found *faithful.*"

Finally, Brethren,—and I fear you will think I am long in saying it, we are stewards of the manifold gifts of God, both as ministers and members of His Church; and "it is *required* in stewards that a man be found faithful."

What a peculiar measure of responsibility rests upon Churchmen of this day and generation, and especially in this land! Surely it is but the part of wisdom briefly to recall these very obvious signs of the times, and the relations that our branch of the Church Catholic now sustains to the Christian world.

The errors and corruptions and innovations of Rome have well-nigh, to all human appearances, culminated in the blasphemous promulgation of the dogma of the personal infallibility "of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass." (Isaiah li. 12.) Her wisest and best sons are seeking to rid the Old Catholic Faith of all that is false, and are looking about them for a basis on which "all who profess and call themselves Christians" may unite. In the language of the Bishop of Illinois: "The hope of the world, as the re-

fuge and rallying point for unity, and the adaptive to the unrest, cravings and experiments of our social state, is the ANGLICAN COMMUNION, with its ancestral fidelity to the Divine Faith and appointments ; its comprehensive liberty in opinion ; its Catholicity in spirit and practice ; its protest against the arrogance of the Papacy and the insidious wrongs of Romanism, and its wise and gentle yearnings for the restoration of unity.* And certainly this is but a just expression of the truth as we can but see and know it.

In the most enlightened portions of the Old World, and in our own country, accessions to our communion from other bodies of professing Christians were, perhaps, never so numerous as at present.

"Dr. Guthrie, one of the most prominent Presbyterians of Scotland, and well-known in this country by his printed sermons, lately made the statement at a public meeting in Edinburgh, that there was "on every side a growing inclination toward the Episcopalian Church, and that he feared that the Presbyterian Church would soon be supplanted by its more liberal rival." (The *Hartford Churchman* for April 27th, 1872.)

The rate of increase of the Church in our own land—as ascertained from actual statistics—is nearly *fifty* per cent. greater than that of any other body of professing Christians.† We scarcely see a Church paper

* Bishop Whitehouse's Convention Address, 1870.

†This is exactly the statement made in the sermon as preached. At the time it was prepared, the statistics referred to were not at hand.

Writing from memory only and resolved to be on "the safe side," I stated *just half* the truth. The fact is, *the rate of the Church's increase in this country for the last fifteen years is just ONE HUNDRED PER CENT. greater than that of any other body of professing Christians*, as the subjoined statistics, compiled by the "New York Observer," in one of its issues published in the early part of this year (1872), will show, viz :—"The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States reports an actual accession to its Communion, last year, of 24,124, being a larger per centage upon its whole number of members, (224,995) than any other Church. The Methodist Episcopal Church reports an increase of 58,387, and a total membership of 1,172,099. The Reunited Presbyterian Church reported as received on examination, last year, 27,770, and a total of 455,378 members. The Congregationalists had 13,501 added by profession, and a total membership of 306,518. The Presbyterian Church (South), reported (1870) a total membership of 87,529, and additions on profession of 5,302. The regular Baptists report a total membership of 1,410,403, and 77,795 added by baptism, and 15,636 excluded, and 2,271 erased."

Thus, as Dr. S. P. Parker, in his sermon preached before the Seventieth Convention of the Diocese of New Hampshire, in St. Thomas' Church, Dover, May 25, 1870, entitled "the Church's Law of Interpretation of Scripture," page 26, says : "Of the two largest Christian bodies in the country, the Methodists have increased 21 per cent. and a fraction, and the Baptists 21 per cent. and a smaller fraction, throughout the country within fifteen years. The Episcopal Church has increased 42 per cent. throughout the country in the same time." That is *just double*.

that does not record the accession to the ranks of our ministry of some one or more tired of the disintegrating process, and multitudinous and contradictory forms of faith, of Dissent. The recent General Convention at Baltimore gave evidence of a growth of the Church throughout the entire borders of our land, and especially in the great and rapidly growing Northwest and West, positively marvellous. So rapid indeed as very naturally to suggest at least the possible fear that such wondrous growth may be more nominal than real, or too rapid to be healthful.

What fair proportions, towers of strength, and mighty bulwarks of our Zion did that great gathering of Bishops, Elders and Brethren manifest to the world! How confidently and generally in the public press was it predicted that at least the initiation^{YE} of a schism in the Church would be taken at that meeting! And how triumphantly, thank God! did the action of that body disprove and dispel such painful forebodings and confident predictions! Earnest men, of well-known ability and widely diverging views, by the "constraining love of Christ," grounded their differences, and that great gathering of the faithful, after a lengthy session, and harmonious under the circumstances to an extent that nothing but the overruling guidance of the Holy Spirit could have brought about, dispersed to "preach the word" literally to the very ends of the earth; refreshed and strengthened and blessing God that His Church is stronger to-day than ever before in our midst, and apparently^{so}, also, throughout the world.

But do I go out of my way to speak of these things in a vain-glorious spirit? God forbid! I see, rather, in these things only a more urgent enforcement of this teaching of St. Paul before us. So mighty for good are these trusts committed to us of God, there is only the more need of increased faithfulness. Men everywhere are "searching for the old paths to walk therein." There is nothing like the light of *faithfulness in our* Christian profession to direct them thither. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "We must speak the truth in sincerity, but we must speak it also *in love*. If we contend that our creed is more pure and our Church more Scriptural than those from whom we differ, a double woe will be ours if the spirit in which we differ be not more heavenly, and the daily temper more chastened and subdued." We may, nay *must* "*reprove*" and "*rebuke*" as well as "exhort," but it must be "with all *long suffering*."

"The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage." We have a primitive faith; a time-honored "form of sound words" that has attracted the admiration of the world. It is but the part of faithfulness to such a high trust to "*hold it fast*," nor violate by excess or defect the spirit or letter of its least provision.

But however encouraging and pleasant the prospect that this outlook from the walls of our Zion discovers, there is a less extended one

that it the more concerns us timely and wisely to note, though it be far less flattering or agreeable. Surely we fall very far short of that faithfulness required in stewards of such trusts and opportunities for good, when in a diocese numbering 3,500 communicants there is not even one Church paper ; no permanent Episcopal fund ; an annual and considerable deficit in the small assessments imposed in consequence on the parishes for the support of the Episcopate, and a still greater falling off in the small amounts promised and due our parochial and missionary clergy. And what changes, and how prejudicial to the cause of Christ in our midst, does this sad state of things make every year necessary ! Every year is the announcement made of the loss to the diocese by removal, of one or more of her clergy ; compelled to leave their charges to which they were strongly attached, and where they had been in most cases, signally useful, and forced to seek homes out of the State among strangers, and all for want of the bare necessities of life for themselves and their families. And how many such parishes thus left, are still vacant or only enjoy an occasional missionary service ! Upon whom rests the responsibility for such spiritual destitution ? I know very well how sadly things are changed with us at the South, but that does not prevent our giving back to God a certain proportion of the little left us. And I verily believe had we of our abundance given more we should not now so generally have to lament the loss of well nigh all. “He that hath little let him do his diligence *gladly to give of that little.*” This is the rule imposed by God.

Missionaries are now in this diocese preaching over an area of 100 miles or more, and endeavoring to live on miserable little pittances of \$300 or \$400 a year, and even that amount too frequently reluctantly doled out not as a *debt due*, but forsooth as a *gratuity*, a *charitable offering* ! And these very men, from their natural ability, and scholarly attainments and untiring labor, might easily, in any other profession or occupation, command, if not wealth, at least a competency abundantly sufficient for their comfort and that of their families. But because the vows of God are upon them, and they devote all their labors to Him and the good of their fellows, feeling that they are “separated for this work,” and unwilling to engage in secular pursuits incompatible with, or that would necessarily hinder this holy work, they are harrassed and worried by day and by night,—*and their work for God is retarded*—for want of the *bare necessities of life*. My brethren of the laity, I am not stating the case too strongly. I know these self-sacrificing servants of God of whom I speak ; and I know *that* about them that you and the world will never know, because they are the last men in the world to parade their necessities before the public. But that faithfulness to God-given trusts, which avails most in bringing men to acknowledge “the truth as it is in Jesus,” is the daily life of *consistency* in our Christian profession. This is the one great argument that weighs most with all men. “By their fruits ye shall know them,” is the oft-

repeated test of the Master. *"If ye love Me keep My commandments."* *"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments."* Here surely may all be agreed as to that faithfulness "required in stewards."

"See how these Christians *love one another*," was that which most impressed the heathen of old. With all the many and peculiar advantages of our heritage of faith as Churchmen, let us especially guard against the prayer of the Pharisee: "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." May such words never be on our lips, nor the spirit which prompted them ever in our hearts! The prayer that fits us best—and even ^{at} here on earth, must it be so—is the rather that other: "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" The sum and substance of all necessary warning for us of the clergy—may we bear it ever in mind—is embodied in that single, quaint, and comprehensive saying of Bishop Hall: "*The sins of teachers are the teachers of sin:*" while for us all, ministers and members of Christ, aye, and those alas! who are neither, yet "*stewards of the manifold grace of God*," are those other words of warning and this plain teaching of the text: "*It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.*"

And when at the last Great Day, we shall be called upon—as we surely shall, every one, priest and people alike—to "give an account of our stewardship," may for each of us those words of the Master be said: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." God in mercy grant it! Amen.



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