

the blessing of eternal life and making him partaker of his everlasting kingdom." Again, in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood,—behind the visible form of the human Celebrant, beyond the outward and visible elements of Bread and Wine—the true communicant can recognise the same Invisible Presence, pronouncing in tones which the heart only hears the blessed words of institution and of gift; and can see the Invisible Hand giving into the depths of the hungering soul the Living Bread which alone can satisfy its cravings.

In all cases the position of the Minister is that of the mere officer,—his individual character a matter of no moment—so far as regards the efficacy of the act of ministration. The treasure is purposely committed to an earthen vessel, "that the excellency of the glory may be of the Lord, and not of men." Thus far he is the mere Minister. But there are two forms of ministration in which his individuality must come to the front, in which he is called upon to approve himself as "a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," in other words, as a *Steward*, "a faithful and wise steward." It is all important that both priest and people should take heed to this aspect of the matter. The two forms to which I refer are of course *first* that of public preaching and teaching,—*secondly*, that of private admonition, counsel, visitation, especially of the sick, the sorrowful, the straying, the sinful. In these departments "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did intreat you by us." "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Here then we have room for *personal* influence. Here we are more than mere ministers,—we are stewards of mysteries.

Did it ever occur to you to enquire into the true reason why a Clergyman should always preach his own sermons? True, he may on occasions, when he sees it advisable, read to his people the thoughts and opinions of others, being always careful in so doing to acknowledge them as such. But I am now speaking of his preaching, properly so called. Why is it that, with the writings of the best, the most learned, most eloquent, *most* deeply spiritual of all ages at his command—a plentiful store of matter which he may feel to be so much more excellent and forcible, than anything that he can himself hope to produce,—he is

yet bound (as he certainly *is*), instead of copying from these, to give his hearers the result of his own thoughts and meditations, inferior though he may feel them to be? It is for this reason:—that he is not a mere Reader, but an Ambassador of Christ. It is his office to declare, not only the Truth, but the Truth which has already entered his own being, and become part of his own spiritual life; and issues from his lips weighted with all the nerve-power of the mind which gives it utterance. He must do this, if he would hope to "persuade men." What he says must be the outcome of his own experience,—the offspring of his own heart's strivings.

True, he may, and he *must* (as his Ordination vows require) be "diligent in reading of Holy Scripture, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same." It is necessary that he should himself "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the word which he is to in part to others. Thus, though the matter be not in itself new, it acquires a freshness through being assimilated with the life of the individual, and comes from him clothed with that life.

Never then let any man say—"I won't go to Church because I can read a better sermon at home." Setting aside the important consideration that the first and highest motive in going to Church is that of joining with our brethren in the worship of God,—remember that God has a special message for you through the mouth of His special messenger. The question is not whether you like the preacher—whether you admire him—it may be for his own sake, his personal qualities, or for his abilities in the discharge of his duties;—or, on the other hand, whether you are dissatisfied with him,—think his sermons too long or too dry, the truths too trite and oft-repeated, and so forth. Both considerations are equally dangerous (I had almost said fatal) as motives for regard or disregard of a preacher. The true point is—Remember that he stands before you as a Messenger, with the charge—"I have an errand for thee"—to every soul of his flock committed to his care. As in the other ordinances, so in the sermon, Christ stands behind him, and speaks by his mouth. "Whatsoever he be," George Herbert says, "God set him there." Keep this in mind, O brethren of the laity! "God set him