

men into a participation of the former, and placing the latter on a level with those sacrifices of the law which needed daily to be repeated, and which could never take away sin. And that instead of inviting and encouraging men to come with boldness to a throne of Grace, through our Great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, it interposes men of like passions with ourselves, between the sinner and the Saviour, and makes the Priest, instead of a Messenger, Watchman and Steward of the Lord, a judicial dispenser of absolution and salvation to his fellow sinners. Hence have arisen many of the unscriptural doctrines of the Church of Rome. Because of this false assumption on the part of the Priesthood, auricular confession and priestly absolution have been introduced; penances and self-inflicted torments have been resorted to as an atonement for sin, and purgatory, with its thousands of years of torments, which are represented as being as bad as those of hell, has been brought in to finish the work of purification which that precious blood, "which cleanseth from all sin," alone can effect.

19 We can never be sufficiently thankful, my Brethren in the Ministry, that, at the glorious Reformation, our Church was delivered from this, among so many other delusions of the wicked one; that the true character of the Christian Ministry was vindicated, and our Lord was restored to that office, which he alone can fill; "the only and all sufficient Priest of his Church and people." Let us ever bear in mind that we are Ambassadors for Christ, that we have the ministry of reconciliation committed to us. "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," and that, therefore, it is our duty to make the godly determination not to know any thing amongst the people over whom we are placed but "Jesus Christ and him crucified." As Messengers then we are faithfully to exhibit the word of reconciliation. We are to invite sinners to be reconciled to God. We are to proclaim the Gospel to every creature. We are to set forth the record that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." In order that this duty may be efficiently discharged, we must have our own minds duly impressed with the saving truths of the Gospel. How can a man entreat sinners to be reconciled to God, who has not experienced this reconciliation in his own soul? How can a man press the acceptance of the record of God concerning Christ upon others, who has not embraced that record with a living faith? It is indeed a melancholy position for a man to occupy, to be a Minister of Christ, but not a real Christian. The external call to the Ministry which we have received according to primitive order, only confers official authority; the internal call is the true Divine vocation without which no man can really perform with effect the office of a Messenger of Christ. What can be more solemn than the question put by the Bishop at the ordination of a Deacon in our Church? "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?" Bishop Burnet, remarking upon this, says, "Certainly the answer that is made to this ought to be well considered, for if any says 'I trust so, that yet knows nothing of any such motion, he lies to the Holy Ghost, and makes his first approach to the altar with a lie on his mouth, and that not to men but to God." My Reverend Brethren, there is such a thing as being outwardly a Minister of Christ, it may be even for many years, without any vital union with him, who is the fountain of all grace, "the head over all things to the Church." Such Ministers may well be compared to clouds without water, no fructifying blessing descends upon

the people through their means. That portion of the field, upon which their shadow rests, is rendered unproductive of spiritual fruit, no harvest is gathered into the garner of the Lord. Bishop Bull has well said, "The Priest who is not clothed with righteousness, though otherwise richly adorned with all the ornaments of human and divine literature, and those gilded over with the rays of seraphic prudence, is yet but a naked beggarly and despicable creature, of no authority, no interest, no use, no service in the Church of God." For the due discharge of our ministry, we are therefore called, in the first place, to take heed unto ourselves and to the state of our own souls. Archbishop Leighton, in a sermon to the clergy, fully and faithfully treats this subject. He says, "We think, that they who savingly know not Christ, should not be fit to make other men acquainted with him. He that can tell men what God has done for his own soul, is the likeliest to bring their souls to God, hardly can he speak to the heart who speaks not from it, again, how can a frozen hearted preacher warm his hearer's hearts, and enkindle them with the love of God? But he whom the love of Christ constrains, his lively recommendations of Christ, and speeches of love, shall sweetly constrain others to love him. Above all loves, it is most true of this, that none can speak sensibly of it, but those that have felt it." There is a great danger, my Reverend Brethren, that from constant habit of speaking and preaching upon divine subjects, our own personal religion may be neglected, that we may be tempted to rest satisfied with what has been well called, "a professional piety." Often the minister who appears warm and energetic in the pulpit is cold and formal in his private devotions. This should be guarded against, we should endeavour to maintain communion with God, in the reading of His word, in meditation upon it and in prayer, that so we may speak out of the abundance of the heart, when we undertake to fulfil the office of Messengers of Christ. The words of Archbishop Leighton, upon this point also, are most valuable. "Upright, meek, humble, and heavenly minds, then, must the Ambassadors of this great King have, and so obtain His intimacy, mounting upon those wings of prayer and meditation, and having the eye of faith upwards. Thus shall they learn more of His choicest mysteries in one hour, than by many days pouring upon casuists, school men and such like. This ought to be done, I confess, but above all the other must not be omitted.— Their chief study should be that of their commission, the Holy Scriptures, the way to speak skilfully from God is often to hear him speak." But we are also Watchmen, and in the discharge of this duty we are to be faithful, placing before men their danger, their ruined and lost state by nature, and warning them to flee from the wrath to come. We are to use great plainness of speech, testifying to all "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," setting before all alike that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His," that "unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." These truths faithfully declared, will not be acceptable to the natural man, but we are bound to perform the part of faithful watchmen, whether the people will hear, or whether they will forbear, our warning must therefore be given with no uncertain sound, we must "declare all the counsel of God, that 'we may be pure from the blood of all men.' This office of Watchmen, we are to perform with all love, with an earnest desire for the salvation of souls, in "meekness instructing them which oppose themselves, if God peradventure will grant them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth." As Stewards, it is required that a man be found faithful, St. Paul (in

1 Cor. iv., 12,) says, "Let a man so account of us as Ministers of Christ and Stewards of the Mysteries of God." As we have been allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, it becomes us faithfully to distrust it; like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, we are to keep back nothing that is profitable to the people. He could not surely be regarded as a faithful Steward of the Mysteries of God, who would deliberately suppress any part of Divine truth committed to him. Following the example of our blessed Lord and His Apostles, the faithful Steward of Christ will endeavour, that everything which God has revealed in his Holy Word for the instruction of men, shall in due measure be presented to them. Thus only can he "fulfil the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

20 Amongst the many means of grace which God has appointed in the Church, and in the diligent use of which we are to fulfil the duties of Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord, the preaching of the word stands pre-eminent. The pulpit is the Minister's great battle-field. There he conquers, or is overcome. And here, I would address myself more particularly to my young brethren. It is of the utmost importance that you should give all diligence to prepare yourselves for the efficient discharge of this most important part of your ministerial duty. The exhortations of St. Paul to Timothy, concerning his ministry at Ephesus, show us what a prominent place he assigns to the preaching of the word, in the 4th chap. of the 1st Epistle to Timothy he thus writes: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, neglect not the gift that was in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all, take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee," and again, "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth," and again, in this most solemn address which we find towards the close of the 2nd Epistle. "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." From these, amongst many similar passages from the writings of the Apostles, we learn what a high value he set upon the ordinance of preaching. He evidently recognised it as God's ordinary means for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. It has been well said by an able writer of our day: "Of all the methods of diffusing religion, preaching is the most efficient. It is to preaching Christianity owes its origin, its continuance, and its progress." Our blessed Lord in his last interview with his disciples, thus delivered to them their commission "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." And we read, that in compliance with this command, "They went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Preaching, then, must be regarded by the Christian minister as the primary instrument, in the Divine economy, for the gathering in of Christ's sheep, that are dispersed abroad, and for the edification of his children who are in the midst of this naughty world. Hooker has thus described this ordinance. "So worthy a part of Divine service we should greatly wrong, if we did