

long and dreary interval between His departure and His return—the gift of the ministry. For we are told, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, that “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: until we are all come in the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” The Apostle magnifies the Christian ministry in its origin, as the gift of the ascended Lord; in its object, the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, and in its duration “until we are all come, in the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.” And now we are met this afternoon to advance this blessed ministry among the masses of our people. The Resolution which I have just read to you implies, in the first place, I think, that there is a supply—not perhaps an adequate supply—but still that there is a supply of men who are faithful to the reformed doctrines, and loyal to the order of our beloved Church. And never was such a supply more needed than now: never was such a supply more precious, never was such a supply of faithful men more entitled to the cordial support and sympathy and confidence of the faithful laity of this country. I say the confidence of the laity, because, what with the attempts of some to reintroduce the Confessional and the Mass, and what with the Jesuitical doctrines of others, there is no doubt that in some cases the confidence of the laity has been greatly shaken. Sometimes, indeed, we hear persons speaking as if there were no such men still standing in the old paths, and holding fast the old truths. There is a great tendency to speak of the former days being better than the present, and to speak of the righteous perishing out of the earth. I hope that we have not all yet quite perished. I remember some twenty years ago being rebuked for this spirit myself. An occasion had arisen in the Diocese of Salisbury, in which it became needful for the defence and confirmation of Evangelical truth, that we should take up a position which placed us in opposition to a Bishop whom we personally very much loved. And there were, I think, about sixty incumbents of the Diocese of Salisbury who came forward. I remember saying to an old minister of Christ how disappointed I felt that so small a number of clergy had come forward to take up the cause of Divine truth. But he said to me in reply, “My dear young brother, instead of being so discouraged you should thank God; for I remember my father telling me that when he first commenced his ministry in Dorset he was one of three men who were known to be preaching the Gospel of the grace of God in that county.” Therefore, I say, let us rejoice in the fact that there is a supply, and I believe there never was in the history of the Church of England so large a supply of faithful men as now, preaching Christ within our churches. I will grant that there are not many giants in these days, but there are at least a large number of dwarfs, and peradventure an army of Liliputians, if they have God’s blessing, shall do God’s work. I sometimes speculate whether, after all, there is such a great difference in the amount of vital, spiritual energy existing in the country at different times. I am not sure whether it is not rather this—that sometimes it is more condensed, and then at other times more diffused; whether sometimes the gold is not to be found in great nuggets, whereas at others it is beaten out into thin leaf, gliding a very large surface, but perhaps wanting in depth and solidity. But this Resolution also implies that there is a danger of the failure of the supply of those men who are faithful and true; and certainly the failure of the supply of faithful ministers in our Church would be dreadful calamity. It would, my dear friends, be next to a death-blow to our beloved Church. I do not undervalue lay-agency. Thank God, the Church Pastoral-Aid Society and other kindred Societies have fought and won the battle of lay-agency. I only earnestly trust that the employment of lay-agency will spread much further, and that the clergy of our parishes will more and more develop unpaid lay-agency, that they will open their eyes, as we ought to do, to the fact that there is a precious mine of gold to be employed in the service of our Lord and Master in the working classes within our parishes. I believe that it is a great mistake to endeavour to bring in so much outside aid to our parishes. We should try to work more and more with the people God has given us. I thank God heartily for every advance that is made in the work of lay-agency. But I am not prepared to lessen or lighten down the importance of the ordained ministry. I believe it is of supreme importance. If you want proof of this, you have only to go into a parish where there is not a faithful minister of the Church of England; what follows? Why, you find

the labours of devoted laymen are sorely let and hindered. You find that Nonconformity itself is almost paralyzed. There is a great tendency at the present day amongst our young men—especially in the Universities—to think that they can do equally good, perhaps better, service for Christ as laymen than as clergymen, and I am sorry to say that feeling is keeping many earnest, devoted young men out of the ministry of the Church of England. It is a great mistake. I do not believe that there is any position on earth so glorious; no man on earth ought to be able to sway so mighty an influence for Christ, as the man who is called of God, as an Aaron, not to be a priest of the old law, but to be a minister of the everlasting Gospel. But, my Lord, I must confess that my great fear is not so much a failure in the number of young men who may come forward. What I dread most of all is a deterioration in the Evangelical spirit in the ministry. I take it that it was especially to His ministers and messengers that Jesus said, “Ye are the salt of the earth. Salt is good; but if the salt have lost his savour wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.” Salt is good. It was highly esteemed; it was indispensable to every sacrifice. Its great power was to pervade, and to penetrate, and to preserve; to keep fresh, and sweet, and wholesome whatever it was sprinkled upon; and that is what the Evangelical body, and specially its clergymen, have to do. They need to be saturated through and through with the doctrines of the grace of God; so that they may be a savour in the midst of their Church, to check, if they cannot wholly prevent, the progress of corruption. There is great danger lest the salt shall lose its saltiness, and that it may be deprived of its pungency. If so, it becomes insipid; it loses its powers to penetrate and preserve; it looks like salt, and yet it is tasteless. This is our danger; the danger of the Evangelical body is of becoming unsalted. The atmosphere in which we live is one which is not congenial to our saltiness. The very activities of our life, especially in the cities; the multitude of our very religious duties, if they do not quicken, rather deaden; if they do not hallow, they unhallow us. And that which is the most trying to us all is this—that we are obliged to be more or less in the company with the world, and most of all with worldly Christians; and when we are brought into contract with these—whether Ritualists or Rationalists—they lower the standard of the Gospel and we are then in danger of lowering our own standard. The danger is near, and it is real and subtle, because the path is not steep and sudden, but gentle and sloping. *There need not be any great act of compromise of truth. A little want of watchfulness in prayer, a little indulgence in things that are doubtful, or an excess in things that are even lawful, a little dalliance with error on the right hand or on the left, and the thing is done.* And I do not see what is to preserve us ministers in these days unless there be much self-examination, unless we constantly pause and ask ourselves, as in the sight of God—Is there any loss of my first love? Is there less of the self-denying labour for Christ which gave fervency to my early ministry? Is there any want of unction in my own soul? Is there any want of savour in my ministry? Oh, solemn thought for us all! If the salt lose its savour, it shall be cast out and trodden under foot. You know that there is an old saying that the corruption of the best is the worst, and you will find that that is so. Just in proportion to the higher organization of body does it become loathsome in death. The withered flower is lovely, but the body of man, when the spirit has left it, becomes so loathsome that we long to bury it out of our sight; and so you may rest assured, that beautiful and excellent as is the Evangelical body, when it is animated by the living spirit of evangelicism, if it be a mere dead body, if the quickening spirit be gone it will become the most contemptible of all things. When a Church, or a body within a Church, loses its savour, it perishes not immediately by the hand of God—that were too noble a destiny, but it is trodden under foot of men, and often of the very men it has sought to conciliate by becoming as one of them. I am satisfied that *the Evangelical body in our Church will never gain real love, much less real respect, through sacrificing the keen sharp edge of Evangelical principles.* Men may for a time pay a lip homage to those who lower their theology and try to adapt “the faith once delivered to the saints” to the requirements of a shallow and shifting generation; but rest assured that the time will come when the true world and the true Church, when the spiritual man and the carnal man must part company, and when the alternative shall be this, that as a body you must be either hated or despised. May God give the old Evangelical body and the old Evangelical clergy therein grace to choose to be hated rather than despised. Such hatred we may, we shall be able to survive, and our very enemies may become our friends, and come bowing down to us, acknowledging that God is with us of a truth; but contempt is fatal, there is no recovering

from that. But the Resolution speaks of the duty of endeavouring to maintain a supply of faithful men. How is that to be done? Of course God alone can give the supply—“not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts”—but I verily believe that, under God, the maintenance of the supply of a faithful ministry mainly depends upon the Bishops of the Church. Whether or not the Bishops have power to refuse to institute to livings persons whom they believe to be breakers of the law, there can be no question about this, that they have perfectly absolute power to decide whom they will admit into the ministry. Let Bishops exercise the strictest caution in the selection of men for the sacred office of the ministry; let them refuse courteously but courageously all in whom they perceive the slightest leaven either of superstition or of speculation; let them set their foot strongly and firmly down as the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Manchester, and some other prelates are doing; let them say plainly that they will not admit into their dioceses those men who would bring back the Mass into our churches, and then I believe there will not be wanting a supply of decided and faithful young men for the ministry. And, my Lord, let me say this, that decided and faithful young men are now deterred from entering the ministry for this reason, that they believe that if they did enter it there would be no probability of their receiving fair treatment, receiving promotion and advancement from many of the rulers of the church. They find that Ritualism appears to be becoming popular among the higher classes. They find too, that many people are prophesying that the Church of England will become Popish. Now I do not believe that the Church of England will become Popish, but what I do believe is that there is an immense influx of Ritualism among us, and that a spirit has begun to stir among the masses of the people as stern as that of the old Puritans, and that if Ritualism is not checked before very long they will most decidedly get rid of those rags of Popery, and probably revolutionize or even destroy the Church which has harboured them. I believe that at the present time the Church of England is on her trial before the people, if she eject the Popery that is in her, but not of her, she will stand more firmly than ever, but once let the people of this country come to identify the Church of England with Popery, and they will get rid of both, and don’t let us forget that there are plenty of Nonconformists who are of a very genealogical turn of mind, and who are quite prepared to prove our Romish origin and our Romish identity. I believe that at the present time it rests, under God, with the Bishops to save the Church of England, the Bishops of the Church of England have twice saved that Church. At the Reformation the Bishops became personally Reformers, thereby showing the nation the difference between Popery and prelacy; and, whereas in Scotland and Switzerland, where no single Bishop became a Reformer, the people identified prelacy with Popery, and got rid of both, in England the people distinguished between episcopacy and Popery, and they got rid of Popery and retained episcopacy. And then again, at the Revolution, just the same kind of thing occurred. The Bishops, by refusing to obey the unlawful commands of the Crown, and preferring to go to prison rather than forfeit the high privileges and prerogatives of their Church, created such a ferment on the banks of the Thames and throughout the kingdom, that the people hurled the Popish Monarch from his throne. And now, again, for a third time, the Bishops might, I think, save the Church by becoming personally Reformers. Let them stand in the gap for England’s Protestant faith, and England’s Protestant Church, and the Protestant people of England will not forget the service, nor confound them with those traitors who would papistatize their Church; but if the Bishops allow clergymen under them to undermine the very foundations of their Church, if they practically encourage Ritualism by promoting to livings and archdeaconries breakers of the law; if they appoint these men to be their diocesan missionaries, and our young men come to feel that episcopal favor goes most in that direction, what must be the result? A young and able clergyman of the Church of England said to me not long since:—“The Bishops are so timid or so forgiving that the way to make a Bishop your friend is to give him a slap in the face,” and the Ritualists seem to be almost always bullying the Bishops. They are threatening secession. I wish to God they would carry out their threat. We, the Evangelical body, don’t threaten, and we don’t talk because we don’t think about secession; but still we have a voice, and that voice is entitled to be heard, and it is still a mighty power in this country; and I think that if I had the command of the ears of the rulers of our Church, I should feel very much tempted to say to them what Joab said to David, “Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, that

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