

The Church Guardian.

Upholds the Doctrines and Rubrics of the Prayer Book.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—Eph. vi. 24.
"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3.

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THE FOLLOWING SERMON

BY

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is taken from the edition of 1848, and is printed, we believe, word for word, as therein contained. The italics are as in the original:—

SERMON CXV.

THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.

"No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."—Hebrews v. 4.

1. There are exceeding few texts of holy Scripture which have been more frequently urged than this against laymen that are neither Priests nor Deacons, and yet take upon them to preach. Many have asked, "How dare any take this honour to himself, unless he be called of God, as was Aaron?" And a pious and sensible Clergyman some years ago published a sermon on these words, wherein he endeavoured to show that it is not enough to be inwardly called of God to preach, as many imagine themselves to be, unless they are outwardly called by men sent of God for that purpose, as Aaron was called of God by Moses.

2. But there is one grievous flaw in this argument, as often as it has been urged. "Called of God as was Aaron!" But Aaron did not preach at all: he was not called to it either by God or man. Aaron was called to minister in holy things;—to offer up prayers and sacrifices; to execute the office of a Priest. But he was never called to be a Preacher.

3. In ancient times the office of a Priest and that of a Preacher were known to be entirely distinct. And so every one will be convinced that impartially traces the matter from the beginning. From Adam to Noah, it is allowed by all that the first-born in every family was of course the Priest in that family, by virtue of his primogeniture. But this gave him no right to be a Preacher, or (in the scriptural language) a Prophet. This office not unfrequently belonged to the youngest branch of the family. For in this respect God always asserted his right to send by whom he would send.

4. From the time of Noah to that of Moses, the same observation may be made. The eldest of the family was the Priest, but any other might be the Prophet. This, the office of Priest, we find Esau inherited by virtue of his birth-right, till he profanely sold it to Jacob for a mess of pottage. And this it was which he could never recover, "though he sought it carefully with tears."

5. Indeed, in the time of Moses, a very considerable change was made with regard to the priesthood. God then appointed that, instead of the first-born in every house, a whole tribe should be dedicated to him; and that all that afterwards ministered unto him as Priests should be of that tribe. Thus Aaron was of

the tribe of Levi. And so likewise was Moses. But he was not a Priest, though he was the greatest Prophet that ever lived, before God brought his first-begotten into the world. Meantime, not many of the Levites were Prophets. And if any were, it was a mere accidental thing. They were not such, as being of that tribe. Many, if not most, of the Prophets (as we are informed by the ancient Jewish writers) were of the tribe of Simeon. And some were of the tribe of Benjamin or Judah, and probably of other tribes also.

6. But we have reason to believe there were, in every age, two sorts of Prophets. The extraordinary, such as Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others, on whom the Holy Ghost came in an extraordinary manner. Such was Amos in particular, who saith of himself, (vii. 14, 15) "I was no Prophet, neither a Prophet's son; but I was an herdman; and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." The ordinary were those who were educated in "the schools of the Prophets," one of which was at Ramah, over which Samuel presided. (1 Sam. xix. 18.) These were trained up to instruct the people, and were the ordinary Preachers in their synagogues. In the New Testament they are usually termed Scribes, or *νομικοι*, "expounders of the law." But few, if any, of them were Priests. These were all along a different order.

7. Many learned men have shown at large that our Lord himself, and all his Apostles, built the Christian Church as nearly as possible on the plan of the Jewish. So the great High Priest of our profession sent Apostles and Evangelists to proclaim glad tidings to all the world; and then Pastors, Preachers, and Teachers, to build up in the faith the congregations that should be founded. But I do not find that ever the office of an Evangelist was the same with that of a Pastor, frequently called a Bishop. He presided over the flock, and administered the sacraments: the former assisted him, and preached the word, either in one or more congregations. I cannot prove from any part of the New Testament, or from any author of the three first centuries, that the office of an Evangelist gave any man a right to act as a Pastor or Bishop. I believe these offices were considered as quite distinct from each other till the time of Constantine.

8. Indeed, in that evil hour, when Constantine the Great called himself a Christian, and poured in honour and wealth upon the Christians, the case was widely altered. It soon grew common for one man to take the whole charge of a congregation in order to engross the whole pay. Hence the same person acted as Priest and Prophet, as Pastor and Evangelist. And this gradually spread more and more throughout the whole Christian Church. Yet even at this day, although the same person usually discharges both those offices, yet the office of an Evangelist or Teacher does not imply that of a Pastor, to whom peculiarly belongs the administration of the sacraments; neither among the Presbyterians, nor in the Church of England, nor even among the Roman Catholics. All Presbyterian Churches, it is well known, that of Scotland in particular, license men to preach before they are ordained,

throughout that whole kingdom; and it is never understood that this appointment to preach gives them any right to administer the sacraments. Likewise in our own Church, persons may be authorized to preach; yea, may be Doctors of Divinity, (as was Dr. Alwood at Oxford, when I resided there,) who are not ordained at all, and consequently have no right to administer the Lord's Supper. Yea, even in the Church of Rome itself, if a lay-brother believes he is called to go a mission, as it is termed, he is sent out, though neither Priest nor Deacon, to execute, that office, and not the other.

9. But may it not be thought, that the case now before us is different from all these? Undoubtedly in many respects it is. Such a phenomenon has now appeared, as has not appeared in the Christian world before, at least, not for many ages. Two young men sowed the word of God, not only in the churches, but likewise literally "by the highway side;" and indeed in every place where they saw an open door, where sinners had ears to hear. They were members of the Church of England, and had no design of separating from it. And they advised all that were of it to continue therein, although they joined the Methodist society; for this did not imply leaving their former congregation, but only leaving their sins. The Churchmen might go to church still; the Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Quaker, might still retain their own opinions, and attend their own congregations. The having a real desire to flee from the wrath to come was the only condition required of them. Whosoever, therefore, "feared God and worked righteousness" was qualified for this society.

10. Not long after, a young man, Thomas Maxfield, offered himself to serve them as a son in the Gospel. And then another, Thomas Richards; and a little after a third, Thomas Westell. Let it be well observed on what terms we received these, namely, as Prophets, not as Priests. We received them wholly and solely to preach, not to administer sacraments. And those who imagine these offices to be inseparably joined are totally ignorant of the constitution of the whole Jewish as well as Christian Church. Neither the Romish, nor the English, nor the Presbyterian Churches ever accounted them so. Otherwise we should never have accepted the service either of Mr. Maxfield, Richards, or Westell.

11. In 1744 all the Methodist Preachers had their first Conference. But none of them dreamed that the being called to preach gave them any right to administer sacraments. And when that question was proposed, "In what light are we to consider ourselves?" it was answered, "As extraordinary messengers, raised up to provoke the ordinary ones to jealousy." In order hereto, one of our first rules was given to each Preacher, "You are to do that part of the work which we appoint." But what work was this? Did we ever appoint you to administer sacraments; to exercise the priestly office? Such a design never entered into our mind; it was the farthest from our thoughts: and if any Preacher had taken such a step, we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of this rule, and consequently as a recantation of our connexion.