

who were engaged as scribes, were not to alter any writing, although in their own minds they might think it proper, without first receiving the sanction of the Abbot. With regard to the Scriptures the most critical care was enforced. Monks advanced in age were alone allowed to transcribe them, and after their completion they were read—revised—and re-read again, and it is by that means that so uniform a reading has been preserved, and although slight differences may here and there occur, there are no books which traversed through the dark ages, that preserve their original text so pure and uncorrupted as the copies of the Scriptures, the fathers of the church, and the ancient writings of the classic authors; sometimes, it is true a manuscript of the last order is discovered possessing a very different reading in some particular passage; but these appear rather as futile emendations or interpretations of the scribe, than as the result of a downright blunder, and are easily perceivable, for when the monkish churchmen tampered with ancient copies, it generally originated in a desire to smooth over the indecencies of the heathen authors, and so render them less liable to corrupt the holy contemplations of the devotee; and while we blame the pious fraud, we cannot but respect the motive that dictated it.

The paucity of the sacred volume, if it rendered their pens more liable to err, served to enforce upon them the necessity of still greater scrutiny. On looking over a monastic catalogue, the first volume that I search for is the Bible; and I feel far more disappointment if I find it not there, than I do at the absence of Horace or Ovid—there is something so desolate in the idea of a Christian priest without the Book of Life—of a minister of God without the fountain of truth—that however favourably we may be prone to regard them, a thought will arise that the absence of this sacred book may perhaps be referred to the ignorance of the monkish pen, or to the laxity of priestly piety. But such, I am glad to say, was not often the case; the Bible it is true was an expensive book, but can scarcely be regarded as a rare one; the monastery was indeed poor that had it not, and when once obtained the monks took good care to speedily transcribe it. Sometimes they only possessed detached portions, but when this was the case they generally borrowed of some neighboring and more fortunate monastery the missing parts to transcribe and so completed their own copies.

But all this did not make the Bible less loved among them, or less anxiously and ardently studied, they devoted their days, and the long hours of the night, to the perusal of these pages of inspired truth, and it is a salumny without a shadow of foundation, to declare that the monks were careless of scripture reading. They were strictly enjoined by the monastic rules to study the Bible unceasingly. The statutes of the Dominican Order are particularly impressive on this point, and enforce a constant reading and critical study of the sacred

volume, so as to fortify themselves for disputation; they were to peruse it continually, and apply to it before all other reading.

Directions how to hear Sermons.

“Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.”—These words will be found in the eighth Chapter of Luke's Gospel, verse eighteenth. They were primarily addressed by our Lord to the Apostles in reference to his own discourses delivered in their hearing, but they are equally applicable to all who have been privileged to sit under the preaching of the Gospel. And it is a very important consideration that if even the Apostles, men who were chosen out of the world to be the instruments for promulgating it after his departure—if even they required to be thus earnestly exhorted to an earnest diligence and attention in the use they made of his divine words—how much more the great mass of professing Christians living, it may be in the midst of Gospel light and ordinances, and who yet pay but an outward homage and respect to Christianity, being hearers only, and not doers of the word.

It is scarcely necessary for us here to pause in order to show that every one, who has the fear of God before his eyes, ought to embrace all opportunities of hearing sermons. This will be admitted by all who believe the Bible to be the word of God. They must at once recognize this both as a privilege and a duty. All along, throughout the whole history of the Church, down from the earliest times, ministers have been regularly constituted and appointed by divine authority. God has never left himself without a witness. At sundry times, and in divers manners, he spake unto the fathers by the prophets, and he has, in these last days, or in the dispensation under which we now live, spoken unto us by his Son. After his resurrection, Christ gave commission to his Apostles, and through them to all succeeding ministers and preachers of the Gospel to “go and preach the Gospel to every creature,” promising to be “with them even to the end of time.”

Preaching then is most unquestionably an ordinance of God, a means appointed by Jesus Christ himself, for promoting his Kingdom among men. It becomes all, therefore, to take heed how they hear; and in order that they may listen to sermons with profit and advantage, we propose to submit a few brief directions, in the hope that they may not be altogether without their use to some of our readers.

1. The first direction is, to go to hear sermons, not out of curiosity, but from a sincere desire to know and do your duty.

Formality and hypocrisy in any religious exercise is an abomination to the Lord. To enter his house merely to have our ears entertained and not our hearts reformed, must certainly be highly displeasing to the Most High God, as well as unprofitable to ourselves. Hence it is that so many remain unconverted, yea, unaffected even under the most evangelical preaching. To avoid this let them flee curiosity, and prepare their hearts by a humble disposition to receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save their souls.

2. Not only to prepare our hearts before we hear, but also to give diligent heed to the things that are spoken from the word of God.

And this precisely because what they hear

is the word of God, and not of man. It is not the discussion of mere speculative matters, the doctrines or teachings of men, that they are listening to, but the most holy and sacred truths, the great mysteries of Godliness—truths which the wise and good of past ages have desired to know, but have not been permitted to enjoy so great a privilege. If an earthly monarch were to send a message which affected our individual interests how attentive should we be to the terms of it, and if the King of Heaven, Jehovah, Lord of All, has communicated his will to man, and has appointed certain means for proclaiming it, who would be guilty of dozing or sleeping in their seats, while so high a message is announced to them! Can they not watch with the blessed Lord one hour!

3. Not to entertain any, the least, prejudice against their minister.

It is too much the fashion of the present day to find fault with ministers of the Gospel. Every one seems to know better than another what a minister ought to be and what he ought to do. In the case of any other profession, interference of this kind would scarcely be dreamt of. Moreover, the imperfections, and it may be the failings of clergymen are too often made an excuse for our own wickedness. We are to remember that the clergy are men of like passions with other men; and though we should even hear a person teaching others to do what he has not learned himself, yet this is no sufficient reason for rejecting his doctrine; for ministers speak not in their own name but in Christ's name, as his ambassadors. We know well it was that commanded the people to do whatsoever the Scribes and Pharisees should say unto them, though they said but did not. Hearers, therefore, should be careful not to entertain prejudices of any kind against their minister. It is not for his own sake, but for the sake of Him in whose name and by whose authority he speaks, that his office is to be respected, and his words, as the words of God, listened to with reverence and attention. They are to take heed how they hear; for could a preacher speak with the tongue of men and angels, if his audience are prejudiced against him, he would be but a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

4. As hearers ought not to be prejudiced against, so should they be careful not to depend too much on a preacher, or think more highly of him than they ought to think.

There is danger here also, though it can scarcely be doubted upon the whole that men are more apt to undervalue than to overrate the characters and labours of their ministers. In some cases, however, the minister may almost be said to usurp the undivided attention—to be in a measure an object of veneration—and hold the place of prophet, priest and king. This tendency is not confined to modern times, but was prominently displayed in the days of the Apostle Paul—a fault which was condemned in the Christians. For, whereas one said, “I am of Paul,” another, “I am of Apollos;” are ye not carnal, says he; for who is Paul and Apollos but instruments in God's hands by whom ye believed?

5. To make a particular application of everything that is delivered to our own hearts.

This is a most important direction, and by far the most profitable manner of hearing sermons. There are few discourses delivered from any pulpit so poor but that they may sup-