

The BEREAN.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts xvii. 11.

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EZEKIEL xiv. 23.

And ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.

I weep, but not rebellious tears—
I mourn, but not in hopeless woe—
I droop, but not with doubtful fears,
For whom I've trusted, him I know;
Lord, I believe, assuage my grief,
And help, oh help my unbelief!
Blind eyes! fond heart! that vainly sought
For lasting bliss in things of earth—
Rememb'ring but with transient thought
Thy heavenly home, thy second birth—
Till God in mercy broke at last
The chains that held thee down so fast.
In heaven, that holy, happy place,
I soon shall know as I am known—
And see my Saviour face to face—
And meet, rejoicing, round his throne,
The faithful souls made perfect there
From earthly stains and mortal care!
Thoughts of Peace.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

SERMON PREACHED BY THE RIGHT REV. C. P. McLAINE, D. D., BISHOP OF OHIO, AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE REV. ALFRED LEE, D. D., TO BE BISHOP OF DELAWARE.

CONTINUED.

"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."—1 TIMOTHY iv. 16.

But this leads us to the second particular under the injunction of taking heed unto the doctrine.

Take heed unto the doctrine, not only that every part be according to the rule, but all parts, in their several relations, so held and exhibited as to be according to the proportion of FAITH.

There is a proportion of faith, because there is a body of faith—a system of faith, with a beauty of symmetry in the whole, as well as the parts; a harmony of relation, without a discernment of which the full value of no one member can be understood. In one sense, it is right to say that all parts of revealed truth are essential. Essential to the complete integrity of the system they certainly are. In another sense, it is right to say that all parts are not essential. Essential to the vitality of religion they certainly are not. There are truths, without the confession of which the soul can live unto God, though it may suffer loss; and there are others, without which it cannot; just as there are members of our bodies without which we can survive, and others without which life must be extinct;—all essential to integrity—not all to vitality.

The pattern of the tabernacle which was shown to Moses in the mount had its various parts, from the net work of the outer court, to the most fine gold of the inner sanctuary; and every cord of that net work was as essential to the perfect integrity of the pattern, as any crowning of gold about the mercy seat. But who can say that the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat within the veil were not more vitally important than the whole frame work around them? So, in the doctrine of the gospel, there is a proportion of importance; some parts more prominent, more necessary, while none can say to any, "I have no need of thee;" all compacted together by that which every joint supplieth," all nourished by the same central fountain, animated by one pulse, depending on one head, even Jesus Christ, "from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

To preach the truth, in this, its right shape and proportion, is a great duty. All we say may be scriptural; we may keep back no single feature of the whole body of revealed truth; and yet our representations may be so confused, disjointed, unshapen; the greater points so hid in the undue prominence of the less, means so confounded with ends, the stream of life with its channels, the symptoms of health with its properties, outward motion with inward life, the mode of professing with the mode of obtaining grace; no separate statement untrue, but each in its relative bearing so confused, as to leave an impression scarcely better than that of positive error.

Three main objects we must ever seek, if we would save them that hear us, viz. to convince men of their depraved, guilty, lost condition; to show, and lead them to embrace the sure refuge in Christ, as well that their condemnation may be removed, as their sinfulness purged; and then, when they are "in Christ Jesus," to promote their continual growth in grace, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." We are to estimate the relative prominence of each doctrine by its connection, more or less intimate, with these great objects. The position of various doctrines in our ministry must be adjusted by our having these objects always foremost. But when it is considered, that in almost every congregation, are all grades of hearers, from those who have yet to see their ruined estate, to him who is inquiring the way to the remedy; and then to those who have found Christ, and are "found in him;" that to each class is to be spoken the word in season, and this not once, or twice, but continually, so that every case may be met, every weapon of our warfare used, every snare of the devil encountered, every difficulty of the weak removed, every false hope of the presumptuous exposed; when it is considered how the great variety of circumstances under which we preach, must needs control the manner and proportion in which we are to bring out the several parts of the "whole counsel of God," it must be manifest that what St. Paul calls "rightly dividing the word of truth," can be no work for an

indolent, heedless, formal labourer. A skill is needed which none can possess, whose own personal experience of the power and preciousness of divine truth, in its application to the various wants of the sinner, is not deep and abiding. The guidance of books can take us but a short way in this duty. Wisdom from above is the only sufficient counsel. Prayer and devout study of the Scriptures, with reference continually to the state of our own hearts, are the great means of growing in such wisdom. The way to speak skillfully from God is often to hear him speak. "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned" (saith the prophet, giving the language of the Messiah) "that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Yes, brethren, the tongue of such learning, infinitely more precious than any other learning for a minister of the Gospel, must be given of the Lord, or we have it not. No wisdom of man can furnish it. It is a learning in which we may advance without end. And the more we realize of the greatness and difficulty of our work, and the better we are fitted in point of spirit for its duties, the more humbly shall we feel our need of that learning, and the more constantly be found at the feet of Jesus, that we may learn of him.

It must be obvious, brethren, that the limits of this discourse do not allow me to take any more than a glance at the wide range of important topics, to which the injunction of the text, "take heed unto the doctrine," directly leads.

Had I more time, I would speak earnestly upon the prominence to be given in our ministry at all times to that great topic which St. Paul considered of such overmastering claims that he desired to preach and live, as if knowing nothing else among men—"Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The person, and offices of Christ; what he has done to save sinners; what he is now doing at the right hand of God for all that come unto God by him; the universal embrace of his atonement; the full, free, and complete salvation provided, in his death and intercession, for the chief of sinners; the boundless love which that death displays; the precious invitations and promises which proceed therefrom; the nature of that godly sorrow—that spiritual regeneration, that true conversion, by which alone the sinner can be turned unto the Lord; the nature and agency of that living faith, by which alone the penitent heart embraces the atonement, puts on the righteousness of Christ, is justified freely and perfectly through the imputation of that righteousness, as soon as he believes with the heart, and thus is "accepted in the beloved," as completely as if he had never sinned; the prominence, the constancy, the devotedness, the earnestness with which a minister of Christ should preach these chief doctrines; with the several truths directly and necessarily connected therewith; then the great importance of scriptural simplicity in the mode of presenting them, so that their aim may not be hindered by confusion of purpose, nor their point blunted by fear of offence, nor their force weakened by combination with "words of man's wisdom," but that the truth, "as it is in Jesus," may be delivered in the spirit of Jesus, according to "the mind of Christ," so that the blind may see and the feeblest mind may understand, and sleeping consciences may be aroused. Then the great importance of making all our preaching doctrinal, and yet all our doctrine practical; never severing the truth from the duty which results from it, nor ever preaching the duty without the doctrinal principle on which it depends; never representing gospel doctrine as if it could have any vital interest with us but as it is embraced in the heart and carried out in the life; nor ever, any more, exhibiting Gospel practice as if it were possible that it should exist, in any degree, but upon the single basis of distinctive Gospel doctrine; all these are most important matters indeed, but at which we can do no more than thus briefly glance. I trust the very imperfect view which has now been given, may under the divine blessing, be the means of impressing more deeply upon my brethren in the ministry, "how studious they ought to be in reading and learning the Scriptures; and for this selfsame cause, how they ought to forsake and set aside, as much as they may, all worldly cares and studies—giving themselves wholly to this office wherunto it hath pleased God to call them, so that, as much as lieth in them, they may apply themselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all their cares and studies this way, and continually pray for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost, that by daily reading and weighing the Scriptures they may wax ripper and stronger in their ministry." Thus, with increasing wisdom, will they learn to preach the truth, the truth only and entirely, the truth as it all leads to Christ, testifies of Christ, derives its power and preciousness from Christ; and the truth seasonably, rightly divided and appropriated according to the various wants and conditions of the hearers. But we must proceed to the second injunction of the text.

II. Take heed unto thyself. With great wisdom, indeed, does the apostle enjoin the minister to take heed to his doctrine, by first taking heed to himself; the clearness of our perceptions of truth depending so greatly on the purity of our affections towards it; the vigour and simplicity of our study of Christian doctrine depending so essentially upon the submissiveness of our hearts to the will of God, and our abiding sense of the infinite value of his every word. "There is (says Bishop Taylor) in the things of God, to them which practise them, a deliciousness that makes us love them; and that love admits us into God's cabinet, and strangely clarifies the understanding by the purification of the heart. So long as we know God only in the ways of man, by contentious learning, by arguing and dispute, we see nothing but the shadow of him. But when we know him with the eye of holiness and the intuition of gracious experiences, with a quiet spirit and the peace of enjoyment; then we shall hear what we never heard, and see what our eyes never saw; then the mysteries of godliness shall be opened unto us, and clear as the windows of the morning—for though the Scriptures themselves are written by the Spirit of God, yet they are written within and without; and besides the light that shines upon the face of them, unless there be a light shining within our hearts, unfolding the leaves and interpreting the mysterious sense of the Spirit, convincing our consciences and preaching to our hearts—to look for Christ in the leaves of the Gospel, is to look for "the living among the dead."

How much reason have we to suppose, as we read the history of the church, that it is to a heart inexperienced in divine things, insensible to its own conceptions, and its need of the sanctification of the Spirit, having never "tasted that the Lord is gracious," and therefore having never desired, "as a new born babe, the sincere milk of the word;" or if essentially given to God, living in a perpetual winter of spiritual life, with all its spiritual appetites and discernment in bondage to a spirit of self-indulgence and worldliness, so that pride and ease, and the fear of man and the easily besetting sin, have had much to say on every question of doctrine and duty; how much reason to suppose that to such an unheeded self are to be ascribed the most lamentable errors of doctrine which have plagued the church, as well as much of the confusedness and feebleness with which the truth has been often held and preached.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, (saith the wise man,) for out of it are the issues of life." Yea, minister of Christ, "with all diligence," for on the state of thy heart depend all the issues of life in thy ministry. The minister, in his public work, is in a great degree what, as a Christian, he is in his secret exercises of heart, with God. Out of his praying and watching comes his effectual preaching. As he takes heed to his own soul, will he see carefully, faithfully, to the souls of others.

To be continued.

MEDITATION FOR LENT.

LUKE xxii. 41.

There are several particulars in this remarkable narration from which instruction and encouragement may be derived.

1. Observe, that Christ is not less earnest in prayer, when God has apparently deserted him, than he has been at any former period of his life. It is God who is now putting him to grief; it is God who has turned his hand against him, and set him "as a mark for the arrow;" it is God who fills him with bitterness, and makes him "drunken with worm-wood." Yet, in the bosom of that God he casts his burden, to that God he still expresses the most affectionate devotion; he still addresses him by the tenderest of titles, and even reiterates that appellation, which so strongly marks his love and confidence, crying, "Abba, Father." Let us learn, in like manner, to regard our God as a gracious parent, even when we are under his sharpest correction: and after we have cast all our cares upon him, let us receive back again, without repining, such a portion of them as it may not seem fitting to his infinite wisdom to remove. When God returns the sorrows which faith has poured into his lap, they come back sanctified with his blessing, and sweetened with the endearments of his love.

2. Another circumstance very observable is, that although our Lord, after such respites as his exhausted nature made necessary, returned again and again to prayer, yet he constantly used the same words. Though in him were "hid all the riches of wisdom and knowledge;" though he could speak as never man spake; yet on this occasion he utters but a sentence or two, which he repeats a second time, and then a third. Was it that the anguish of his soul was too great for utterance? Or was it that all his thoughts being concentrated in one object, he could not for a moment divert them to any other? When the feelings of the soul are strong, it is not curious in its language. The poor publican, whose heart was wholly possessed with one desire, declares that desire to God in the simple but impassioned cry; "God be merciful to me a sinner." Let the poor wretched penitent find comfort in this example of his Lord. A sob, a tear, a sigh, may avail more at the throne of grace, than the longest prayer, set off with the most choice and varied expressions. What God regards is not the form, but the fervency, of our supplications. He delights less in a voluble tongue, than in a full heart. Provided our souls be lifted up with true devotion, and with ardent desires after pardon and grace, it matters little whether our words be many or few.

3. We are informed by St. Matthew, that our Saviour in the midst of his conflict visited the spot where he had left his three disciples; but instead of finding them engaged, like himself, in earnest intercessions with God, he finds them asleep. They are "sleeping for sorrow." The weakness of their nature prevents them from doing what that weakness especially demands,—continuing instant in prayer. What a proof of his wretchedness did the blessed Jesus exhibit! Though his own soul is filled with darkness, and racked with intolerable pangs, he still is tenderly alive to the situation of his frail disciples; and he takes every precaution to secure them from evil, while he himself is en-

during the extremity of anguish! Let the shepherd suffer, provided the sheep be spared.—It is a benefit beyond computation, my brethren, to have such a guardian to take care for us; such an advocate to manage our cause! When, through carnal infirmity, we intermit our vigilance, or the lukewarmness of our spirit makes our prayers flat and lifeless, he is always watching for our good, and recommending our cause to the Father with irresistible urgency. Still we shall do well to remember our Lord's purpose, in interrupting for a moment his vehement wrestlings with God. That purpose was to warn his disciples to watch and pray against temptation. Momentous, indeed, must be the duty of prayer and vigilance, to be thus inculcated by our Lord, at such a moment. If the three chief apostles could grow remiss, and yield to animal infirmity, while such a scene as the Saviour's agony was transacting before them, it surely becomes us to distrust our own firmness, and to take heed lest we fall into temptation unawares. It is but for a little while that we are called upon to bear the cross, and to endure the fight of afflictions, under the banner of the Prince of holy martyrs. Compared with his pangs and sorrows, or with the glory that is reserved for those who are faithful unto death, our affliction is light indeed; it "is but for a moment." Then let us continually stir up our hearts to watchfulness and prayer. Instead of sleeping, as do others, let us be constantly on the alert; and not fall into the power of a sleepless enemy through our own supineness.

4. The last remarkable circumstance in this scene of amazement and terror, was the descent of an angel from heaven, to strengthen the holy Sufferer. His importunity had not been in vain. He was not indeed unbound from the altar: the uplifted knife was not laid aside; but such relief as could be granted, without prejudice to the work he had engaged in, was sent by his pitying Father. Still it was not till he had prayed three times, that any consolation arrived. But the vehemence of his prayer increases with the violence of the pain; and he goes on praying until the strength he needs has been imparted. But what a spectacle is this, my brethren, to every thoughtful soul! The Son of God oppressed and helpless,—panting, and gasping under the rod of his Father's wrath,—is strengthened by a servant! The Creator of the universe is prostrate on the ground;—the Father of eternity faints, and on his "eyelids is the shadow of death;" and it is not till a creature has come to his succour that he revives, and is comforted! He has interposed a curtain between his own soul and the manifestations of his Father's love, which one of those bright spirits who minister to the heirs of salvation is empowered to withdraw; for he disdains not to be himself first beholden for help to those, whom he has commissioned to assist his people hereafter. It is likely that, in order to augment his agonies, the blessed Jesus had fixed his mind exclusively on the sufferings to which he was devoted, and had purposely shut out from his thoughts the reward that was to recompense the travail of his soul. He may, therefore, have permitted the angel to recal his mind to consolatory reflections, on the glory that would redound to God from his obedience unto death, and on the incalculable benefits it would produce to mankind. The angel may have set before him the destruction of sin and Satan, and the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness and true holiness, those great and excellent fruits of his passion. And assuredly the thought of innumerable souls, plucked as brands from the unquenchable fire, and set as stars in the firmament of heaven, would be like healing balm to the troubled spirit of the benevolent Jesus. But, however this may be, we should learn from this astonishing event, that weaker creatures than ourselves may, in God's hands, be instruments of recruiting our vigour; and that the hour of deepest darkness, the agony which seems to be just surpassing the compass of our strength, may be the very point at which our gracious Father will interpose for our deliverance.—*Christ Crucified, by the Rev. J. N. Pearson.*

KILKENNY CLERICAL MEETINGS.

Meetings of the clergy for the reading of Holy Scripture and conversation on various points connected with the due discharge of their honourable and important office, have been for some years extremely popular among many (and certainly not the least active) of the clergy of the national Church. We are aware that by some these meetings have been looked upon with a jealous eye, and regarded as little less than hotbeds of dissent; but we are also aware that a large and an increasing number have formed a far different opinion respecting them—an opinion not merely based upon theory, but also established upon experience; and look upon them as safety valves, where the over-heated zeal of the young is cooled by the matured wisdom of the old; and dissenting principles are counteracted by the exhibition of the sounder principles of the church. That Mr. Roe was a warm and attached admirer of Clerical Meetings is well known, to all who had the privilege of his acquaintance; and as he bore no small share in forming that which has now existed for more than forty years in the diocese of Ossory, and has generally been held either in Kilkenny or not more than ten miles distant from it; it may be advisable in this place to enter upon some detail respecting its origin and proceedings.

Some years before the establishment of the Clerical Association of Ossory, the probable utility of assembling his clergy for the purpose of studying the Scriptures together, suggested itself to the mind of the then Bishop of the

diocese, a Prelate of whom the Right Reverend historian* of the Church of Ireland, says—"Episcopal vigilance at the period with which we are now conversant, and an earnestness in prompting his clergy to professional exertions, seem to have especially characterized Bishop O'Beirne." Acting upon his convictions, the Bishop took steps toward the carrying out of his object. He addressed a circular to his clergy, and invited their attendance at his projected meetings, in the following terms:—

"Ossory House, December 1, 1795.
"Rev. Sir—I have to communicate to you a wish which I have very much at heart. It is that the clergy of Kilkenny and of the neighbourhood, within no inconvenient distance, should meet at stated times, for the purpose of improving each other in the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, and in other studies connected with our ministry.

"I am persuaded that your attachment to your profession, and your desire of seeing a succession of ministers, properly instructed and qualified for the discharge of its important duties, secured to the diocese, will of themselves point out to you the utility of such meetings: and that it will require no exhortations of mine to induce you to assist at them.

"Each will contribute his part, as well from his reading as from his experience, to the general improvement; and besides the advantages which I shall reap in this view from such communications, I shall have great pleasure in the more frequent opportunities they will afford me of seeing so many of my respectable brethren.

"I therefore hope for the satisfaction of seeing you at the Cathedral Library, on Thursday the 21st January next, and that you will favour me with your company at dinner on that day.

"I am, Rev. Sir, your faithful and humble servant,
"T. L. OSSORY."

The meetings thus originated seem to have been well attended by those who resided either in Kilkenny, or within "no inconvenient distance." One of who was then a curate in the diocese, and an attendant at the meetings, says—"I well remember Dr. O'Beirne, Bishop of Ossory, presiding at Greek Scripture readings at the library. When the meetings commenced I cannot recollect, but they continued during Bishop O'Beirne's stay in Ossory. He always commented on the portions translated, and in an eloquent manner. I remember his anxiety to engage the attention of his clergy to their qualification and duties; and his prediction of the danger awaiting their order."

Bishop O'Beirne was translated to the see of Meath in the year 1798, and with his removal from Ossory the meetings which he originated came to an end. We do not mean to say that any connection can be traced between these meetings and the Clerical Association subsequently established; but it surely must be interesting to those concerned in such matters, and indeed to all who may be anxious about vital religion in the Church, to state that such an attempt was made, and that too by a member of the episcopal order, long before the spread of what for distinction's sake are called evangelical views.

"Friday, December 5th, [1800.]—This day I had a meeting of clergy at my room; viz.—Hamilton, Pidgeon, Shaw, Ker, Carr, Robinson, and Palmer. We agreed upon having a monthly meeting the first Friday in each month, for the purpose of talking over our duties, the means employed by each for the accomplishment of any particular object, and to animate each other to vigorous exertion and perseverance." This was the first meeting of the Society [The Clerical Association of Ossory] and therefore affords the fittest opportunity for giving the rules and regulations agreed to by the clergy.

"We, the undersigned clergymen of the Established Church, impressed with a deep sense of the nature and importance of the MINISTERIAL OFFICE, and earnestly desirous to improve ourselves in that knowledge which is so necessary to the attainment of the great ends of our holy profession, and to preserve in our minds a constant and habitual attention to its duties, have resolved, with the divine assistance, to form ourselves into a Society for these purposes; and in order thereto

"Resolved, first—That we will meet at Kilkenny on the first Friday of every month, and attend divine service.

"Resolved, secondly—That an appropriate sermon shall be preached by one of our number, chosen in regular succession.

"Resolved, thirdly—That immediately after divine service, we shall retire to the vestry room; and proceed to the discussion of such subjects as shall have been fixed by the president, at the former meeting. That our discussions shall be confined to the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, as contained in the ARTICLES, HOMILIES, and LITURGY of our Church, and the works of such pious and Christian writers as have adhered to those landmarks of our religion, established by the wisdom of our REFORMERS; and that all speculative points, not necessary to our wisdom and salvation, be avoided.

"Resolved, fourthly—That we communicate to each other the means which we have found most conducive to the successful discharge of our ministry, and whatever else may appear to us in any manner calculated to advance the interests of religion; and in order to remind us of the solemn nature of the office we have

* The present Lord Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore, see his History of the Church in Ireland, vol. ii. p. 119.

† The Rev. Francis Fudge, Rector of Rathnure, diocese of Ossory.