

even the Exodus from Egypt. The Advent promise of a kingdom of God, which is also a kingdom of 'righteousness,' here begins to be brought out. Messiah was to be a 'righteous branch' executing judgment and justice on the earth,—a new dispensation, of which the characteristic mark was to be 'righteousness' as opposed to oppression, injustice and evil. The sceptre by which the new monarch was to rule was to be 'righteousness,' good works, love, truth, purity, and the fear of God. So 'good works' are to be the distinguishing mark of the subject of the new kingdom. This righteousness is to be wrought in our hearts by a ready submission of the will to the operations of the Holy Spirit, through whom Christ rules and guides His faithful people.

The Gospel directs the mind backward to the rich feast of grace which has been set before us in the year now passed away. Even now it is not too late to 'gather up the fragments' of what has been wasted or neglected, that nothing may be lost. The compassion of Jesus for the multitude: He lifted up His eyes and took in at a glance the needs of the people who were gathered about Him. Unasked, He blessed them. 'Their needs were their title deeds' to His royal consideration and bounty. He provided royally for all—enough and to spare. The Jews were looking for a prophet like unto Moses, and Jesus proved Himself to be 'that Prophet' by this miracle which recalled the feeding of the Israelites with Manna in the wilderness. The point of the Gospel is in the closing words, 'This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.' Note the 'plenteousness' of the gift of our Lord.

The First Morning Lesson, Eccles. xi, xii, is a call to Faith and effort, and to a steady perseverance in 'well doing.' The faithful husbandman casts in the seed and abides confidently the issue of his toil. He disregards all outward signs of discouragement, v. 4, and goes on in the path of duty,—in the morning sowing the seed, and in the evening staying not the hand. In the beginning of things the end is not to be forgotten. 'The fruit' the result of the sowing. The 'plenteous' reward the crown of hearty and dutiful service under all outward conditions of life. The greater the discouragement the greater the merit. In battle 'the post of honor' is always 'the post of danger.' Early piety recommended as a preparation for days of sorrow and times of trial. The conclusion of the whole matter: 'Fear God and keep His Commandments: this is the whole duty of man,' the end for which man is created and his supreme glory.

The Second Morning Lesson, St. James iv., warns against those sins which detach the soul from God and weakens its devotion, hindering the development of 'the fruit' of righteousness. Covetousness, pride, rash judgment, over-confidence in material things, are some of the sources whence come weakness and unproductiveness in the spiritual life. Obedience to God and an habitual drawing nigh in the ordinances of religion, the only safeguard against apostasy and final rejection as 'fruitless,' as having failed of the grace of God. To know to do good, v. 17, and to do it not by reason of lack of resolution, is sin. How needful then the prayer of the Collect that we should arouse ourselves at this season to a newer and more determined effort to make our lives fruitful in good works. How salutary are afflictions, mourning, tears of penitence, v. 9, if they draw us to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, and secure for us the fruit of the promise that 'He will lift us up.'

The First Evening Lesson, Hagg. ii. to v. 10, is an appeal to Israel of old to renewed effort in rebuilding the Temple, an example of the Lord 'reviving His work' in the midst of the years. The appeal is based upon their experience of

the past mercies of Jehovah. 'Be strong and work'—the call of the Church to-day. The reward promised a 'plenteous' one: 'I will fill this house with glory.' 'In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.' 'I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts.'

The Second Evening Lesson, St. John ix to v. 39, reveals the Messiah as the source of Light to the world—spiritual and physical. He thus vindicates his claim to be 'The Light' that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The darkness of ignorance and prejudice contrasted with the light of experience and faith, v. 11, 16, 31, 32, 33. The result of conviction, confession and worship of the Christ, v. 38. The boldness of the man's confession in the face of the contempt and revilings of the Pharisees a proof of his sincerity. The simplicity of his testimony: 'One thing I know that whereas I was blind, now I see.' This simplicity and boldness revealed the Divine strength which had been bestowed upon the man in the course of holy obedience. 'He went his way, therefore, and washed and came seeing.'

THE LAWFUL ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS.

(From the Penny Post.)

When our Lord and Saviour had broken the portals of the grave, He stayed a while upon earth to cheer and support His Disciples in the doubtful and dangerous circumstances in which they found themselves. It was this very solemn time which He selected for investing them with that high and awful commission to preach the Gospel, and to baptize all nations in the name of the ever blessed Trinity. It was in the evening of the first day of the week that the little band of faithful ones were met together with doors shut for fear of the Jews. Suddenly Jesus stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained &c." Such was the evening of the first Sunday ever observed in the world. And when the Master ascended up on high He repeated this commission, and added, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world &c."

Such was the beginning of the Christian Priesthood. By this divine ordination all grace had been given to the Apostles; they were the rightful fountains from whence all Church authority was to flow. By virtue of this power they added to their own number St. Matthias; and afterwards, as the needs of the Church increased, they consecrated St. James, a relation of our Lord, bishop of Jerusalem: St. Paul consecrated Timothy and Titus bishop of Ephesus and Crete, and St. Peter consecrated St. Mark Bishop of Alexandria. None were to preach who were not sent, none had the gift in them, save by the laying on of hands. When the visiting of the sick, the distribution of alms, and baptizing, multiplied in the hands of the Apostles, they constituted the Order of Deacons; of whom St. Stephen and St. Philip were chief ornaments; and lastly, we read of their "ordaining elders," or, as it is in the Greek, "presbyters, in every city, praying with fasting, and commending them to the Lord on whom they believed &c."

These three Holy Orders of Apostles or Bishops, Priests and Deacons, were thus established. From the earliest times down to

the present have they been by God's good providence preserved in the Church. The laying on of hands can be traced from the apostles downwards in a long succession of Bishops throughout the whole world; and so absolutely necessary was Apostolic Ordination considered in primitive times, that St. Ignatius, a contemporary of the Apostles, distinctly says, "Without a Bishop, Priests, and Deacons, there is no Church!" Indeed I cannot give a better or clearer view of this than by quoting a passage from this same holy Father, the Friend of St. Peter and St. John. He thus writes to the Churches of Ephesus and Smyrna:—

"On this account it is fit ye should obey your Bishop, which thing also ye do. For your deservedly blessed presbytery, which is worthy of God, is so fitted into your Bishop, as strings in a harp; wherefore in your unity and musical love Jesus Christ is sung; and be ye all and each of the Chorus, that being in tune and of one spirit, ye may lift up the song of God in unity, and sing with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, that He may hear you, and know you by the things which ye do to be very members of His Son. Let no man be deceived; if any one is not within the altar, that man falleth short of the bread of God; for if the prayer of one or two hath such power, how much more that of the Bishop and the Church? Ye are the stones of the Father's temple, prepared for the building of God the Father, lifted up on high by the scaffolding of Jesus Christ, which is His cross, using for a rope the Holy Ghost: and your faith is that which bears you upward, it is that good way which leadeth unto God. Obey your bishop as Jesus Christ obeys the Father, and the presbytery as the Apostles and reverence the deacons as the commandment of God. No one shall baptize or consecrate the feast of love, but the bishop, or those whom we shall approve."

I have thus compressed into as brief a space as I possibly could the doctrine of what is commonly called the *Apostolical Succession*. The importance which was attached to the doctrine in the best and purest ages contrasts strongly with the neglect into which it afterwards fell. It was then one of the main reasons which attached our forefather to the Church. Without this ministry how could they be sure of the blessed sacraments? For fifteen hundred years the whole Church had held that out of this ministry there was no legitimate Priesthood—what were they that they should dare to set up a new priesthood for themselves? All this they felt; and therefore, "with singleness of heart, they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship &c." I need not dwell longer upon this subject. I have, I trust, said enough to show that when men are inclined to think lightly of change in the Church, or disposed to refashion it after their own imaginations, they should remember that they are meddling with an ordinance of God, and not with an institution of man.

F. W. F.

|| Acts ii. 42.

Overdue Subscriptions.

We regret very much to be obliged again to call attention to this matter. A very large number of those *in arrears* have paid no heed to former notices of similar character, and the amount due us in small sums is so great as to seriously impede our work. Will not every subscriber oblige us by examining label on paper and by remitting amount due with *renewal* order, and if possible one new name? In the latter case renewal will be given for one dollar (instead of one dollar and a half.)

† John xx. 19—23.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 20. § Acts xiv. 23.