

I should speak with great seriousness. Let each of us ask ourselves whether we are quite alive to our duties, and by God's help are becoming equal to them, and in this momentous intercourse which is often required between pastors and their people's souls. Beware lest in the din of unhallowed controversy we allow words to be lightly spoken which may encourage the ungodly or careless pastor to feel contented with his want of power, arising from his want of spiritual-mindedness, to minister any consolation to distressed sinners.

It is the duty, moreover, of the ministers of Christ, according to their Ordination vows, seeking "for His sheep that are dispersed abroad, and His children that are in the midst of this naughty world," to use both "public and private admonitions and exhortations as well to the sick as to the whole within their cures, as need shall require and occasion be given." And we dare not with exactness define the amount of plain speaking as to sin, which, in such monitions, may be necessary to arouse a slumbering conscience. A pastor, in his dealings with sinners' consciences, must indeed be very discreet and very reverent, but also he must not flinch from being faithful. We hear all this distinctly in mind, though it is certain that these weighty matters have not unfrequently been forgotten in the exciting discussions which this subject of the Confessional has of late raised.

Moreover, I would observe, for myself, that it is no wish of mine to insist on other people adopting my opinions as to the exact nature of the Presbyter's office, and thus to narrow those bounds of a wise comprehensiveness, according to the which the Church of England has always allowed her children, if they chose, to believe that some very especial blessing and comfort to the penitent soul is derived from listening to the promise of God's mercy, pronounced by His minister on those limited occasions, when alone the formularies have authorised him officially to pronounce them as absolution. What I do utterly disapprove of, and what I feel constrained most strongly to protest against, is something very different from the common pastoral intercourse which is indicted in the three passages of the Prayer-book I have cited, and which the Church always must uphold. It has been said that I have not explained myself when I have spoken against a systematic introduction of the practice of confession, as opposed to such common pastoral intercourse. But I really believe, even those who make this objection will, when they reflect, allow—all men of common discernment must know and distinctly recognise—the difference between the pastoral intercourse I have spoken of, and that which is now endeavoured to be set up amongst us under the name of the Confessional. If any clergyman so preaches to his people as to lead them to suppose that the proper and authorised way of a sinner's reconciliation with God is through confession to a priest, and by receiving priestly absolution—if he leads them to believe (I use the illustration I have found employed by an advocate of the Confessional) that as the Greek Church has erred by neglecting preaching, and the Church of Rome by not encouraging the reading of the Scriptures, so our Church has hitherto been much to blame for not leading her people more habitually to private auricular confession—if he thus stirs up the imagination of ardent and confiding spirits to have recourse to him as a mediator between their souls and God, and when they come to seek his aid receives them with all the elaborate preparation which is so likely unduly to excite their feelings, and for which there is no authority in the Church's rules of worship—taking them into the vestry of his church, securing the door, putting on the sa-

cred vestments, causing them to kneel before the cross, to address him as their ghostly father, asking a string of questions as to the sins of deed, word, and thought, and imposing his penance before he confers absolution—then the man who acts thus, or—even if some of these particular circumstances are wanting—of whose general practice this is no exaggerated picture, is in my judgment unfaithful to the whole spirit of the Church of which he is a minister. And if it so chance that the person thus brought under his influence be a female, and the questions which he asks—perhaps with the best intentions, but, under such circumstances, with the most deplorable want of sound discretion—include minute inquiries into sins of impurity, he cannot be surprised if his conduct is condemned as bringing grave scandal on the Church. My reverend brethren, I know that I carry you and the Church of England with me, when I express my strong disapproval of such practices. I do most earnestly trust that the zealous, self-denying men, who have felt disposed incautiously to encourage such practices, will seriously consider with themselves, and before God, that they are not acting as they ought. Depend upon it, real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, such as the Church of England holds to be the effectual cause of the soul's salvation, is not strengthened by teaching our people thus to lean upon the unauthorised mediation of man. And let me say plainly, also, to any who may be engaged in the attempt to introduce such a system amongst us, that I rejoice to have a full conviction that they are labouring in a hopeless task. The overwhelming majority of our pious and intelligent clergy, to whichever of our acknowledged schools of theological sentiment they belong, as well as of our laity, is determined to resist it. We may be ready to admit that the clamour raised respecting the Confessional is often unwise, but quite independently of any clamour, there stands a firm resistance of good and thoughtful men, who know and value the character of our Reformed Church, and love it for its Apostolical and Bible teaching, whom no sophistry on this subject will be able to mislead. If there were any probability of those who advocate those innovations succeeding in their attempts to indocinate the body of the clergy their success would be ruin; they would soon find themselves deserted by all but a very small minority of their flocks, and our Church would soon become a Church of clergy without laity. But there is no such probability. We, the clergy, know wherein our strength consists. We trust to hold our ground from enjoying the confidence of our people while we teach them Christ's truth; we feel that we shall justly lose their confidence if we strain after the unwarranted influence of a mediatorial priestly power.

I cannot but earnestly trust that the discussions on this subject which have lately arisen, and even the improper heat which has been exhibited, will be overruled by God to make men more cautious how they trifle with any of these dangerous weapons, by which some of our clergy have been disposed of late vainly to think that they might strengthen themselves while borrowing from the armoury of Rome.

PENAL DISCIPLINE, WHERE NECESSARY.

But if any will not be stayed by mild remonstrance and affectionate warning, those invested with authority in the Church must use the other means of influence which they find their position gives them to prevent evil. How that influence shall be wielded in particular cases it must rest with the Bishop's own discretion to decide, whether in some less penal form, or necessarily by severe examples of discipline, such as it has

greatly pained me of late to feel myself constrained to use against a zealous and pious and truly well-meaning, but mistaken brother. All I can distinctly intimate on this public occasion is, that if what I deem a dangerous systematic invitation and admission of their people to confession is endeavoured to be maintained by any clergyman in this diocese, I shall feel myself bound to watch his proceedings very carefully, and shall hold him most deeply responsible for any evils that shall ensue; considering carefully, in each particular case, what power the law gives me to correct what is amiss. One thing I wish to add, that if I have abstained hitherto from giving in any church distinct directions on this subject, it has been because I have received no assurance that my directions are likely to be obeyed. Clergymen who seek to introduce this bad system may, indeed, express a general readiness to follow my advice as to the mode in which they will carry it into practice, thus endeavoring to gain for it the aid of my authority. On such terms I am not likely to give advice. What I do advise and urge is, that they abstain altogether from seeking to introduce amongst their people any systematic and habitual confession, such as I have described. Believe me, my rev. brethren, our Church has not erred in being so guarded and cautious in this matter. There is within the limits of her calm and reverent piety full opportunity to satisfy all the really spiritual longings of the faithful soul, while she leads it to direct personal intercourse with the Lord Jesus Christ. Other longings, which her system has made no provision to satisfy, we shall be right to scrutinise very carefully, before we think well of them; putting on the guise of religion, they may be but some subtle form of the yearnings of the unregenerate heart. Be it yours, in such matters gently to restrain and guide the morbidly sensitive, and to teach your people daily better to understand and appreciate the blessings offered in the authorised system of our own Reformed Church.

I have spoken, my rev. brethren, strongly, because, as I have said, if there were any prospect of such attempts as I have described making much progress amongst us, the danger would indeed be great. But I am reminded, while I speak thus strongly, that I must be very cautious not to encourage strife. I know that the most zealous of our brethren, for whom in such matters we apprehend danger, do love the Lord Jesus Christ. I would beseech them, therefore, for the Lord's sake, to listen to the affectionate voice of warning. If we act toward them wisely, if we kindly and and considerately point out their danger, and encourage them in what is good, while we carefully guard against anything which may unnecessarily and uncharitably grate against their feelings, we shall not, I think, entreat in vain. And I beseech all of you, the vast majority, who totally disapprove of such things, to be very forbearing. Good men, we cannot but trust, in God's good time will be recalled by God himself. If the path in which they have wandered is one full of danger, the best way to recall them from it is by addressing them always in the spirit of Christian love. There is much in their zeal and self-denial which we all admire. The Lord grant that His Holy Spirit may teach them the real truth.

THE DANGERS OF INTELLECTUALISM.

My voice is uplifted now to warn the younger clergy against being misled by imperceptible degrees—first through a taste for ceremonials of worship, innocent enough in themselves, however frivolous, and secondly, by an exaggerated estimate of their ministerial power—into courses which may injure many souls, and, if persisted in, break up our national Church. But now let us