

Bishop Wilson's Meditations on His Sacred Office, No. 5.-- Thursday

by J.H. Newman

J.H. Newman emphasizes the vital role of a Bishop in maintaining peace and discipline within the Church, grounded in spiritual authority and compassion for the faithful.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 1:17, Ezekiel 2:6, Mark 8:33, Luke 15:22, 1 Corinthians 16:22, 2 Corinthians 10:4, 2 Corinthians 13:10, 1 Timothy 1:20, Revelation 2:20

Topics: "Church Discipline", "Spiritual Authority"

Description

J.H. Newman preaches on the importance of maintaining peace, love, and discipline within the Church, emphasizing the need to correct and punish those who cause unrest or disobedience. He prays for God's assistance in rooting out strife and variance, and for the Church to experience tranquility. Newman highlights the authority given by God's Word for spiritual discipline and the necessity of repentance and pardon for the salvation of souls.

Transcript

Question from the Office of Consecration

Q--WILL YOU MAINTAIN AND SET FORWARD, AS MUCH AS IN YOU LIETH, QUIETNESS, LOVE, AND PEACE, AMONG ALL MEN; AND SUCH AS BE UNQUIET, DISOBE DIENT, AND CRIM1NOUS WITHIN YOUR DIOCESE, CORRECT AND PUNISH, ACCORDING TO SUCH AUTHORITY AS YOU HAVE BY GODÂ'S WORD, AND AS TO YOU SHALL BE COMMITTED BY THE ORDINANCES OF THIS REALM?Â--Ans. I WILL SO DO, BY THE HELP OF GOD.

O GOD of peace and love, make me, thy minister, a messenger and instrument of peace to this people to whom I am sent; that by thy gracious assistance I may root out all strife and variance, hatred and malice, and that this Church and Nation may enjoy a blessed tranquillity. Bless the discipline of this Church in my hands, and make it effectual for the conviction of wicked men and gainsayers. Assist me, by thy good Spirit, that I may apply a proper cure to every disorder; that I may reprove with mildness, censure with equity, and punish with compassion.

O merciful GOD, who wouldest not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live, bring into the right way all such as are gone astray from thy commandments. Vouchsafe unto all penitents, (and

especially unto all such as are now under the censures of the Church,) a true sense of their crimes, true repentance for them, and thy gracious pardon, that their souls may be saved in the day of the LORD JESUS. Amen.

Church Discipline.

However the Church be in some respects incorporated with the commonwealth in a Christian state, yet its fundamental rights remain distinct from it; of which this is one of the chief--to receive into, and to exclude out of the Church, such persons which, according to the laws of the Christian Society, are fit to be taken in, or shut out.

And when temporal laws interpose, it is temporal punishment only, which they design to inflict or set aside. Bishop Stillingfleet.

Ezek. ii. 6. "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words; thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

2 Cor. xiii. 10. "Lest I should use sharpness, according to the power," (namely, of binding and loosing,) "which GOD hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

1 Tim. i. 20. "Whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may not blaspheme." O admirable use and command of Satan! He is GOD'S enemy, and yet does Him service; and an adversary to man, and yet helps to save him. He is the author of blasphemy, and yet teacheth not to blaspheme. That is, One that is stronger than he directs his malice to ends which he did not intend. Satan is set on work to take him down by terror and despair whom before he had tempted to sin. But while Satan thinks to drive him to destruction by despair, GOD stops his course, when the sinner is sufficiently humbled; and then, as it was with CHRIST, Satan is dismissed, and Angels come and minister unto him.--Rouse.

What great man shall we now find, who will not take it ill to be reprov'd? and yet David, a prince and favourite of GOD, when he was reprov'd, even by a subject, did not turn away in a rage, but confessed his fault, and repented truly of his sin.-- St. Ambros. ap. David.

The very office of Consecration, so often confirmed by Acts of Parliament, does warrant every Bishop, in the clearest and most express terms, to claim authority, by the Word of GOD, to exercise all manner of spiritual discipline within his own diocese.-- Codex Jur. Eccl. Angl. p. 18.

Men should be persuaded, not forced, to forsake their sins; because GOD rewards not those who, through necessity, forsake their sins; but such as do so voluntarily.--Chrysost.

Be steady and fearless in the discharge of your duty, without failing in that respect which is due to higher powers.

Grant, O GOD, that I may have an eye to duty only, that I may fear no temporal evil, and be concerned only lest I should not in all respects please Thee my GOD.

Deut. i. 17. "The judgment is GOD'S." As this should oblige all people to be afraid of a judgment or censure passed by men commissioned by GOD, so it should make us very careful that our judgment be such as is worthy of GOD, and agreeable to His will and Word.

1 Cor. xvi. 22. "If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Here is a positive direction to the Church to excommunicate all such as plainly discover that they have no love for JESUS CHRIST, who are scandalous or profane.

Since we are to give an account of the souls committed to our charge, we cannot be debarred of making use of all the means enjoined us by the Gospel to reduce sinners.

We ought to be thankful for the favours which we have received from religious princes; but if our benefactors require of us what is inconsistent with our trust, we then know whom we are to obey.

2 John 10, 11. "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him GOD speed, for he that biddeth him GOD speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." Not to show our abhorrence of sin, is to consent to it. Men do not sufficiently consider the guilt of this, when they converse with notorious offenders without scruple. They partake with them in their sins; they harden the sinner; they forget the fidelity they owe to GOD and to His laws, and greatly hazard their own salvation.

Excommunication was never pronounced except where the case was desperate, by the obstinacy of the party, in refusing admonition, and to submit to discipline. Penit. Disc. p. 41, 42, 75, 120.

Luke xv. 22. "The Scribes and the Pharisees murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." On some occasions, we ought to avoid sinners, for fear of being corrupted, or to put them to shame, in order to their conversion. But to converse with them, as our LORD did, in order to teach them their duty, to encourage them in the way of piety, &c. this is Godlike.

Mark viii. 33. "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou savourest not the things that be of GOD, but the things that be of man." How dangerous is tenderness in matters of salvation! To spare a penitent, is to ruin him by a fatal kindness.

How perilous is the government of the Church, wherein a man becomes guilty of those things which he does not hinder. Rev. ii. 20. "I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferedst that woman Jezebel to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication," &c. 2 Cor. x. 4. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through GOD, to the pulling down of strongholds." We surely mistake the spirit of the Gospel, when we would establish and defend the Church by human policy, and carnal means, by friendship of great men, credit, reputation, splendour, riches, &c. GOD will have us to use other sort of arms, namely, patience, humility, meekness, prayers, suffering, and spiritual censures, to which GOD will join His own Almighty power.

All mankind are agreed that human legislatures can only dispense and make laws in cases purely human.

(To be continued.)

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