

Richard Nelson I. Bishops, Priests, and Deacons

by J.H. Newman

J.H. Newman explores the historical and theological significance of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in the Christian ministry.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:1

Topics: "Church Government", "Apostolic Succession"

Description

J.H. Newman preaches about the importance of understanding the historical orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, emphasizing the roles of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Through a conversation with a humble parishioner named Richard, the significance of apostolic succession in the ministry is explored, highlighting the need for reverence towards ordained ministers and the authority given to them by God. Richard's diligent study of Scripture, Church history, and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers leads him to a deeper appreciation of the threefold distinction of Christian ministers and the importance of adhering to the established order within the Church.

Transcript

"It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of Ministers in CHRIST'S Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."

Pref. to the Ordination Service.

IN the course of this last summer of 1833, I had the pleasure of a visit from an old and valued friend, one of the most respectable merchants in the city of Bristol (and this, in my opinion, is no small praise).

We were discussing one day the subject of National Schools, their merits and demerits. He was pleading strenuously for them; and to confirm his arguments, "I will mention," said he, "a circumstance which happened to me when I was in this part of the world about eleven or twelve years ago I was travelling on a coach somewhere between Sheffield and Leeds, when we took up a lad of fourteen or fifteen years of age; a rough country-looking boy, but well mannered, and of an intelligent countenance.

"I found, upon conversation with him, that he belonged to a National School in the neighbourhood which he was, he said, on the point of leaving. This gave me occasion to ask him various questions, which he answered with so much readiness and vivacity, yet without any self-conceit in his manner, that when the coach stopped (I think it was at Barnsley) for a short time, I took him with me into a bookseller's shop, and desired him to select some book which I might give him as a testimony of my approbation. After looking at a few which the bookseller recommended, he fixed on a 'Selection from Bishop Wilson's Works,' whose name, he said, he had often heard. He begged me to write his name in it, which I did, and we parted with mutual expressions of good-will; and I will be bold to prophesy that that boy (or young man as he must now be, if he is still alive) is giving, by his conduct, stronger testimony in favour of the National School System, than a thousand of your speculating philosophers can bring against it."

"Well," said I, "you are apt to be sanguine in your views, but, as I must confess they are very often right, so I will hope you may not have been deceived in this instance."

It so happened, that two or three days after this conversation, we were taking a walk together, and discussing various topics, such as the present state of things might well suggest, when we met a young man, a neighbour of mine, a mason, who detained us two or three minutes, while he asked my directions about some work he was doing for me.

After he was out of hearing, "that," said I, "is one of the most respectable young men I know. Soon after I came here, more than four years ago, he married a young woman of a disposition similar to his own, and they live in that cottage that you see there, to the right of that row of beeches."

"I see it, I believe," said he, hardly looking the way I pointed, and not altogether seeming pleased at having our conversation thus interrupted.

"He has two or three little children, and I believe sometimes it goes hard with them, as in the winter work is short hereabouts, and he does not like beating about far from home I sometimes tell him he ought to look farther, but he is so fond of his home, his wife, and children, that I verily think he would rather live on potatoes seven days in the week with them, than have meat and beer by himself. And besides, I know he does not relish the companions he must work with at the town. However, on the whole, they do tolerably well, as they have a garden of a fair size, and he never spends an unnecessary penny."

"I am glad to hear it," said he; "but we were talking; about the value of an apostolical succession in the ministry, were we not? and of the great ignorance and neglect now prevailing on the subject."

"We were," said I; "but to tell you the truth, though I have bestowed considerable attention on the subject, and examined the various opinions which have been put forth on it, yet I have scarcely learned so much hereon from the works of learned theologians, as I have from repeated conversations with that very young man we just now met."

"You surprise me," said he.

"You may be surprised, but it is, however, true, and, if you have no objection, I will tell you how it was."

"By all means," he answered.

"When I first came to the parish, I looked about for some person to take charge of the Sunday School, as the master was old, and so deaf as to be unequal to the work. I was recommended to apply to Richard

Nelson; (that is the man's name) Here my friend interrupted me, saying, "Richard Nelson ? why, now I remember, that was the very name of the boy I travelled with." "Indeed !" said I, " then doubtless it is the same person: for his age will agree with your account very well, and I know he was bred at National School." "Well," said he, "I am quite delighted to find myself a true prophet in this instance." "Perhaps," said I, "you will be still more pleased when you have heard all I have to tell you: you will find that your little present was by no means thrown away." "Go on," said he, "I am all attention."

"I was telling you, I believe, that I requested Nelson to be come master of the Sunday School. After some little hesitation, he declined my offer, under the plea that he could not give constant and regular attendance; though he was willing to attend occasionally, and render what assistance he could. So it was arranged that the old master should still remain; and I afterwards discovered that an unwillingness to deprive him of the little emolument was Nelson's real reason for declining my offer. As the Sunday School is nearly three-quarters of a mile from my house, in a direction beyond Nelson's, along the Beech Walk, as we call it, it frequently happened that we joined in company as we went to and fro. We generally talked over such subjects as had reference to the School, or to the state of religion in general; and, amongst other topics, that on which you and I are conversing, the authority of Christian ministers. I remember it was on the following occasion that the subject was started between us: I thought that I had observed one Sunday that he was making the boys of his class, (our school professes to be on the Bell System,) that he was, I say, making his boys read the nineteenth and some other of the Thirty-nine Articles relating to the ministerial office, and that afterwards he was explaining and illustrating them, after his usual manner, by referring them to suitable parts of Scripture. On our walk homewards, I enquired if I was right in my conjecture. He said, Yes; and that in the present state of things he could not help thinking it quite a duty to direct the minds of young persons to such subjects. And on this, and many subsequent occasions, he set forth his opinions on the matter, which I will state to you, as far as I can remember, in his own words.

"My good mother," he said, "not long before her death, which happened about half a year before I came to live here, said to me very earnestly one day, as I was sitting by her bed side, 'My dear Richard, observe my words, never dare to trifle with GOD ALMIGHTY.' By this I understood her to mean, that in all religious actions we ought to be very awful, and to seek nothing but what is right and true. And I knew that she had always disapproved of people's saying, as they commonly do, 'that it little matters what a man's religion is, if he is but sincere;' and 'that one opinion or one place of worship is as good as another.' To say, or think, or act so, she used to call 'Trifling with GOD'S truth;' and do you not think, sir, (addressing himself to me,) that she was right?"

"Indeed I do," said I.

"And," he said, "I was much confirmed in these opinions by constantly reading a very wise, and, as I may say to you, precious book, which a gentleman gave me some years ago, whom I met by chance, when I was going to see my father in the infirmary. It is called a 'Selection from Bishop Wilson's Works,' and there are many places in it which show what his opinions were on this subject; and, I suppose, Sir, there can be no doubt that Bishop Wilson was a man of extraordinary judgment and piety."

"He has ever been considered so," I answered.

"I could not think much of any one's judgment or piety either, who should say otherwise," he replied; "and what Bishop Wilson says is this, or to this effect: 'That to reject the government of Bishops, is to reject an

ordinance of GOD."

"That 'our salvation depends under GOD, upon the ministry of those whom JESUS CHRIST and the HOLY GHOST have appointed to reconcile men to GOD."

"That 'the personal failings of ministers do not make void their commission."

"That 'if the Unity of the Church is once made a light master, and he who is the centre of Unity, and in CHRIST'S stead, shall come to be despised, and his authority set at nought, then will error and infidelity get ground; JESUS CHRIST and his Gospel will be despised, and the kingdom of Satan set up again here as well as in other nation.' With many other expressions like these.

"And yet, Sir," he continued, "the gentleman who lives over there, (pointing to a great house in sight four or five miles on down the valley,) who is said to be a person of much learning, and who does a great deal of good, he does not take the matter in the same light. For he told a man of ' , whom I was working with, that if a person preached what was right and good, that was the best sign of his being ordained a minister, without the ceremony of laying on a Bishop's hands upon his head. And the man that told me very much admired the opinion, in regard (he said) of its being so very liberal, or some such word. Though I confess I could not exactly see what there was so much to admire. Because; if the opinion were true, it was good, and if it were false, it was bad, equally as much (to my thinking) whether it were called liberal or bigoted."

"Doubtless you were right," said I. "And," he proceeded, "it seemed to me, (and I told the man so,) like going round and round in a wheel, to say, if he is GOD'S minister, he preaches what is good; and if he preaches what is good, he is GOD'S minister. For still the question will be, what is right and good? and some would say one thing and some another; and some would say there is nothing right nor good at all in itself, but only as seems most expedient to every person for the time being. So for my own satisfaction, and hoping for GOD'S blessing on my endeavour, I resolved to search the matter out for myself as well as I could. My plan was this. First to see what was said on the subject in the Church Prayer Book, and then to compare this with the Scriptures; and if, after all, I could not satisfy myself, I should have taken the liberty of consulting you, Sir, if I had been here, or Mr. ' who was the minister at ' , where I came from."

"Yours was a good plan" I said; "but I suppose you had forgotten that the chief part of the Church Services which relate to these subjects, is not contained in the Prayer Books which we commonly use."

"I was aware of that," he answered, "but my wife's father had been clerk of ' parish, and it so happened that the; churchwarden had given him a large Prayer Book in which all the Ordination Services were quite perfect, though the book was ancient and in some parts very ragged. This book my wife brought with her when we came here, and indeed she values it very highly on account of her poor father having used it for so many years. Thus you see, Sir, with the Bible and Prayer Book, and, (as I hoped,) GOD'S blessing on my labours, I was not, as you may say, unfurnished for the work."

"Indeed, Richard, you were not," I replied.

"Well then," he proceeded, "I first observed, that the Church is very particular in not allowing any administration of the Sacraments, or any public service of ALMIGHTY GOD to take place, except when there is one of her ministers to guide and take the lead in the solemnity. Thus not only in the administration of Baptism, and of the LORD'S Supper, but in the daily Morning and Evening Prayers, in the public

Catechizing of Children, in the Solemnization of Marriage, in the Visitation of the Sick, and in the Burial of the Dead;--in all these cases the Christian congregation is never supposed complete, nor the service perfect, unless there be also present a minister authorized to lead the devotions of the people. And yet I also observed that neither minister nor people, not even with the leave of the Bishop himself, had power or authority given them to alter or vary from the Rules set down in the Prayer Book. And often have I thought how well it would be if Ministers and people too would be more careful to keep to the rules."

"Yes," said I, "it is too true; we are all to blame."

"But," he proceeded, taking a small Prayer Book out of his pocket, "the question I had next to ask was,--who are meant by these ministers so often referred to in the Church Service. To this question I found a general answer in the Twenty-third, Twenty-sixth, and Thirty-sixth Articles; where the judgment of the Church is thus plainly given."

"1st. That it is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same."

"2ndly. That those are lawfully called and sent, who are chosen and called to the work by men who have public authority given them in the Congregation to call and send Ministers into the LORD'S vineyard."

"3rdly. That though sometimes evil men may have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments; yet, forasmuch, as they do not the same in their own name but in CHRIST'S, and do minister by His commission and authority, we may use their ministry with full hope of GOD'S blessing."

"4thly. That whosoever are consecrated and ordained according to the Rites there prescribed, are rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated and ordained."

"But here, Sir, I will take occasion to ask you whether it would not have been better, instead of calling the second order of Ministers Priests, to have used the word which is frequently found in the New Testament applied to them, "Elders," or "Presbyters."

"Why," I said, "I have no doubt the wise and good men who framed the Prayer Book had a good reason for retaining the title of Priests. But in truth it is one of the very words you mentioned, only somewhat shortened by our forefathers in their pronunciation of it--Presbyter was made Prester, and that by degrees became Prest or Priest."

"That," said he "is very remarkable, and proves that we ought to enquire before we find fault. But to go on with what I was saying--I next proceeded to read over, and I assure you, Sir, I did it with great care, the three Services in our great Prayer Book--namely, for Consecration of Bishops, Ordaining of Priests, and Making of Deacons. And I must confess to you that I could not but greatly admire them; and at the same time feel much astonishment at two considerations which they brought to my mind."

"What were they, Richard?" I enquired.

"The one was," he said, "to think that after such a solemn dedication to the ministry, there should be such a thing as a care less or a wicked Clergyman. And yet, Sir, is it not also astonishing, that after such a solemn dedication of ourselves as we all make to GOD in Baptism, there should be such a thing as a careless or a wicked Christian?"

"So it is," I said, "when we judge others we condemn ourselves. But what was the other ground of your surprise?"

"Why it was this; that there should be any doubt what the opinion of the Church is respecting the Christian Ministry. Comparing the Ordination Service with the liturgy and Articles, it seems to me quite clear, that in the judgment of the Church, none can show themselves duly authorized Ministers of CHRIST, who do not belong to one or other of the three orders, of Bishops, Priests, or Deacons.

"But, said I to myself, other Churches have erred, why may not this then be the misfortune of the Church of England also? and this very opinion may be one of her errors. You see then, Sir, the next thing I had to do was to consult the Scriptures on the subject, and (if it be not too bold in such a one as I to say so) to try the Prayer Book by the Bible."

"Your method was the best possible," I said. "But, if you please do not use the expression, the Church of England, but the Church in England."

"Why indeed, Sir," said he, "in the present state of things perhaps it would be more proper. But to proceed with my enquiry. I first observed that in the history of the Jews, as contained in the Old Testament, as well as in that of Christians in the New, the ALMIGHTY seems almost or, quite always to have communicated His will to mankind through some chosen Minister; some one, whether it were angel or man, who could give suitable evidence of the authority by which he spoke or acted. But there seemed to me to be this great difference between Jews and Christians, in this as in other cases; that in the Jews' religion, all the rules and regulations were set down so plainly and distinctly, that no one could mistake their meaning; for instance, in the Levitical laws concerning the priesthood; of what family and tribe the Priest and High Priest should be, what their respective duties, and what their dress, &c. Whereas in the Christian religion, the rules and regulations, however important, and even necessary, are yet not so exactly set down. And I remember hearing a very good and wise clergyman say in a sermon at a Church, that this is probably what St. James means, when he calls the Gospel a Law of Liberty; namely, that its rules and directions are not so plainly set down, on purpose that Christians might have freer space, (I remember that was his expression,) and opportunity to exercise their faith and love for their Redeemer. And I have sometimes thought myself, that what St. Paul says about the difference between walking by faith and by sight, seems to suit the different cases of Jews and Christians. They walked by sight, we must walk by faith; and faith in this world we are told, can see but as through a glass darkly."

"It seems so," I said.

He proceeded.

"With this view I went on to examine the New Testament, expecting to find therein some general instruction respecting the institution and authority of Ministers in the Christian Church. But I did not expect that these rules should be as particular and distinct as those on the same subject in the Old Testament, any more than I should expect to find a command to Christians to observe the LORD'S Day set down as distinctly as the command to observe the Sabbath was set down for the Jews. And yet, Sir, I suppose all will agree, that no one who wilfully neglects the LORD'S Day can be a true Christian."

"There are strange opinions now afloat," said I: "and if many despise the LORD'S Ministers, it is no wonder if many also despise the LORD'S Day?"

"Indeed, Sir," said he, "it is not to be wondered at. But to go on with my statement. On carefully perusing the New Testament history, I remarked that our LORD did not grant ministerial authority to His disciples in general, but first to twelve, and then to seventy; that of those twelve, one was among the wickedest of mankind, and that our LORD knew (St. John vi. 64. xiii. 18.) his character when he appointed him; and possibly some of those seventy also might be unworthy persons; that our LORD, just before His departure, gave what may be called a fresh commission to His apostles, which they should act upon after His ascension; that after that event the twelve Apostles were the leading persons in the Christian Church, having under them two orders or degrees, viz. Bishops (sometimes called Elders) and Deacons; that this threefold division of Ministers in the Church lasted as far as the New Testament history reaches, the Apostles having set men over different Churches with Apostolical authority, to preside during their absence, and co succeed them after their decease. This sufficiently appears from places in St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus."

"Do you remember any of the passages?" I asked him.

"I cannot," he said, "call to mind chapter and verse. But I have with me a little paper of memorandums which I use at the school, and which, if it be not too much trouble, I will thank you to look at."

The paper was as follows:--for I thought it well to copy what he had written into my pocket memorandum-book.

It appears that Timothy had authority at Ephesus to check false or unedifying Teachers. I Tim. i. 3, 4;--to select persons proper to be ordained Bishops, iii. 1--7;--and also Deacons, iii. 8--13.

That he should have particular regard to the Elders who rule well, v. 17.

That he should be cautious of receiving accusations against Elders. v. 19.

That if any [Elders] were convicted, it was his duty to reprimand them publicly. . v. 20.

That in his decisions he should be strictly impartial. v. 21.

That he should be very cautious on whom he laid his hands. v. 22.

That Timothy was in a station which even the rich and great might respect, vi. 17.

That Timothy had been ordained by St. Paul himself, once, if not twice, 2 Tim. i. 6.

That at his ordination or consecration there was something remarkable in the Sermon. 1 Tim. iv. 14; i. 18.

That he was to commit what he had heard from St. Paul to faithful men, who should be able to pass it on to others. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

That Titus had authority to set in order what was wanting in the Cretan Church; Tit. i. 5; and to ordain Bishops in every city; i. 5. 7.

That he was to be cautious whom he selected for this office. i. 6--9.

That he should rebuke false teachers sharply. i. 13.

That if Titus himself was a pattern of good works and a teacher of truth, the whole Church would gain Credit. ii. 7, 8.

That he should rebuke with all authority. ii. 15.

That he should suffer no man to despise him. ii. 15.

That after one or two admonitions he should reject heretical persons. iii. 10.

"Now, Sir, it seems to me evident, from these and other similar passages, that there were certainly in the Church, as far as the Testament History reaches, three different ranks or orders Ministers one above the other."

"It is plainly so," I said.

"But," said he, "there was one point which rather perplexed me, and I was some time before I could make out such an explanation of it as was satisfactory to myself."

"What was that," I asked.

"Why," said he, "it was this. I considered that any person to whom the Apostles granted Apostolical authority, (Timothy, for instance,) was from that time higher than a Presbyter or Bishop, and yet could not properly be called an Apostle. What then could he be called? I at last remembered a place in Bishop Wilson's little book, which led me to reflect, that surely as there were Angels, (whether it might mean guardians, or heavenly messengers, or missionary bishops, as we might say,) of the seven Churches in Asia, so Timothy might have been called the Angel of the Ephesian Church; and Titus, of the Church of Crete; and the same in other cases. And it came into my thoughts, that, perhaps, after St. John's decease, whether out of humility, or because (the Churches being settled,) the Ministers need no longer be missionaries, the title of Apostles or Angels was laid aside, and that of Bishops limited to the highest of the three orders.

"Thus I seemed to myself every where to have traced the threefold order, down from the beginning of the Gospel; the authority and distinction peculiar to each being preserved, a difference in name only taking place.

"Thus at first they were Apostles, Elders, Deacons. [sic]

"After the decease of some of the Apostles, or at least, while St John was yet livingAngels, Bishops, Deacons, [sic]

"At some period after St. John's deceaseBishops, Priests, Deacons." [sic]

" I do not see how what you have said can be contradicted," I replied.

"But," he proceeded, "there is one thing I must, Sir, confess to you, and it is this;--that I have often said to myself, what a comfort it would be, if it had pleased GOD to preserve to us some few writings of the good men who lived close after the Apostles, that so we might have known their opinion on matters of this kind and we might have known, too, by what names they distinguished the different orders of Ministers, one from another. For, surely, what they would think most proper in such cases must be safest of all rules for us to follow; unless, (which is a thing not to be supposed,) their rules should be contrary to those of the

Apostles, as set down in Scripture. So, Sir, I have often thought, if any such writings could be found, what a precious treasure they would be."

"What!" said I, "Richard, did you never hear of those who are called the Apostolic Fathers: Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius?"

"I believe I have heard of them," he answered; "but I observed that you, Sir, and other Clergymen, scarcely ever notice them in your sermons: and the man I mentioned just now told me that Mr. Cartwright, who is the minister of the Independent chapel at the town, and who is reckoned to be a very learned man and an admired preacher, that he should say in a sermon, that the works of the Fathers were very imperfect, and their opinion not much to be trusted to."

"But," said I, "Richard, if a person, whose word you could take, were to show you an old book written by persons who had seen our SAVIOUR; who had heard St. John and St. Paul preach, and had been well acquainted with them; should you not value such a book, and wish to know whether there was any thing in it which could throw light on the history of those early times of the Church, and especially with reference to the subjects you and I have been now conversing on?"

"Indeed, Sir, I should," he said.

"But if what Mr. Cartwright said is true, it is too much to expect that any such treasure should be found by us."

"No, Richard," I said, "it is not too much. The kind Providence of GOD has permitted some of the writings of those good men to be preserved to this day. And there is no more doubt that they are their genuine writings, than that Bishop Ken wrote the Evening Hymn, or Bishop Wilson that little book you like so much."

"If this is indeed as you say," he replied, "we have great reason to be thankful for such a proof of GOD'S care for His Church. But I beg you, Sir, to tell me, whether there is any thing in these writings you speak of, which confirms what I have been venturing to state to you as my opinion gathered from Scripture, concerning the threefold distinction of Christian ministers."

"Next Sunday," said I, "you shall see and judge for yourself."

As we came home from church in the afternoon of the following Sunday, he reminded me of my promise, and I gave him a written paper, containing a few extracts, which I had translated from the works of the Apostolical Fathers, telling him that I might possibly have made a mistake here and there in the rendering, but that he might depend on such being the general force and meaning of the passages.

The extracts I gave him were the following:

"Clement, with other my fellow labourers."--Phil . iv. 3.

"Ignatius and the holy Polycarp, the Bishop of the Smyrnaeans, had formerly been disciples of the holy apostle John."--Martyrdom of St. Ignatius.

"The Apostles, preaching throughout countries and cities, used to appoint their first fruits, after they had proved them by the Spirit, to be Bishops and Deacons of those who should hereafter believe."--St. Clement to the Cor.

"The Apostles knew that there will be dispute about the name of Bishoprick or Episcopacy, wherefore they appointed the aforementioned, and gave them authority beforehand, in order that if themselves should fall asleep, other approved men might succeed to their ministerial office."--The same.

"All of you follow the Bishop as JESUS CHRIST followed the FATHER; and the Presbytery as the Apostles; and reverence the Deacons as GOD'S ordinance. Let no man do any of those things which pertain to the Church without the Bishop. He that honoureth the Bishop, is honoured of GOD; he that doeth any thing without the privity of the Bishop, doeth service to the Devil."-- S. Ignat. to the Smyrn.

"Have regard to the Bishop, that GOD also may regard you. My soul for theirs who are subject to the Bishops, Elders, and Deacons: and may it be my lot to have a portion with them in GOD."--S. Ignat to Polycarp.

"The Bishops who were appointed in the farthest regions are according to the will of JESUS CHRIST; whence it becometh you to go along with the will of the Bishop."--S. Ignat to the Ephes.

That ye may obey the Bishop and the Presbytery, having your mind without distraction, breaking one bread."--The same.

"Some indeed talk of the Bishop, yet do every thing without him: but such persons do not appear to me conscientious; on account of their congregations not being assembled strictly according to the commandment."--S. Ignat. to the Magnes.

"I exhort you to be zealous to do all things in divine concord: the Bishop presiding in the place of GOD, and the Presbyters in the place of the council of Apostles, and the Deacons, (in whom I most delight,) intrusted with the service of JESUS CHRIST."--The same.

" For as many as are GOD'S and JESUS CHRIST'S, these are with the Bishop." --S. Ignat. to the Philadelph.

"Be ye earnest to keep one Eucharist, for the flesh of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is one, and there is one cup in the unity of His blood, one altar, as one Bishop, together with the Presbytery, and Deacons, my fellow-servants."--The same.

"Hold to the Bishops and to the Presbytery, and Deacons. Without the Bishop do nothing."--The same.

"When you are subject to the Bishop as to JESUS CHRIST, ye appear to me as living not according to man's rule, but according to JESUS CHRIST."--S. Ignat. to the Trall.

"He that without the Bishop, and Presbytery, and Deacon, doeth ought, that person is not pure in his conscience."--The same.

"Polycarp, and the Presbyters who are with him, to the Church of GOD, sojourning at Philippi."--S. Polyc. to the Philipp.

"Being subject to the Presbyters. Deacons, as to GOD and CHRIST."--The same.

Two or three weeks afterwards, as we were walking homewards after Evening Service, he gave me back the paper, with expressions of great satisfaction and thankfulness; and added, that he blessed GOD for having led him to make the inquiry, and that he was sure, if many religiously-disposed persons, who now

think little of such matters, would turn their minds to them without partiality, they would fear to separate from a Church like ours, which, whatever may be its imperfections, is substantially pure in its doctrine, and in the apostolical succession of its ministry.

"Sir," said he, "I am a poor, hard-working man, as you know; but the interests of my soul, and of those dear to me, are of as great importance in the sight of Almighty GOD, and ought to be to me also, as if my lot had been cast in a higher station. It is to me, therefore, no matter of indifference, (as many have told me it should be,) what is the truth on these great subjects; but I am more and more sure that it is a Christian duty first to enquire into them, and, when we have found the truth, to act up to it humbly but resolutely.

"The times are bad, I confess: but yet, young though I am, I do not expect, as the world now goes, to see them much better.

"What our LORD said about iniquity abounding, and love growing cold, seems to be but too suitable to our present state. I have often thought it and said it, though I have seldom met with anyone who would agree with me in the opinion. The Church of England, I can plainly see, more plainly perhaps than a person in a higher station, is in a manner gone. The Church in England? GOD be thanked, however afflicted, remains, and ever will, I trust, whether the world smiles or frowns upon her.

"I have therefore determined, Sir, by GOD'S grace, to look to myself, my wife, and children, and not to trust the world to do us any good, either in time, or in eternity.

"And if by following THE TRUTH now, we shall all be together hereafter in the society of Prophets, Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs, you know then, Sir, we shall have nothing more to wish for, nothing more to fear; every doubt will be satisfied, every difficulty removed. And I assure you, Sir, it is the very comfort of my life to spend a portion of every Sunday in looking forward to that happy time."

"God bless you, Richard," said I, as we parted at his garden gate; and, when I came home, I could not but fall on my knees and thank GOD for having given me such a parishioner.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jh-newman/richard-nelson-i-bishops-priests-and-deacons/>

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