

The Questions of the Ordinal

by W.H. Griffith Thomas

A sermon on the importance of a Divine call and the due order of the Church of England in the ministry.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:8

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Divine Calling"

Description

W.H. Griffith Thomas preaches about the importance of a Divine call to the ministry, emphasizing the necessity of being inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost. He highlights the proofs of a Divine call, including an intense desire, converging circumstances, indications of qualifications, approval of wise friends, and a measure of blessing on one's work. The sermon also stresses the assurance that comes from being inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, balancing confidence with humility in responding to God's call.

Transcript

Every Christian is called and expected to be a witness (Acts 1:8), but not everyone is called to the ministry. The questions put to the Deacons and Priests at their Ordination show with clearness what is the view of the ministry held by our Church. They should be studied with all possible attention, their order and character carefully observed, and the searching nature of the inquiries earnestly pondered.

Section 1. The Divine Call.

The question is plain: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this Office and Ministration, to serve God for the promoting of His glory, and the edifying of His people?"

The true note is struck at the outset. A Divine call is imperative.

I. Its Necessity.

What are we to understand by a Divine call to the ministry? A friend of mine who has to interview candidates for the ministry once told me that many of the men who came before him were quite unable to adduce any definite proofs of a call from above. Indeed, they were without an idea on the subject, hopelessly confused about any such thing. And yet all true ministry must commence here. The call must come from God and not from man. It must be in some way the immediate appeal of God to the soul: "Son, go work today in My vineyard." This call will not be primarily through the Church or the Bishop, but is the internal work of the Holy Spirit. And as such it will be an "effectual call"; such a man will inevitably reach the ministry.

Why do we insist on this necessity of a Divine call? Scripture is full of it. Old Testament prophets were all called of God, as we see from the stories of Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and others. The New Testament Apostles were similarly called of God: the Twelve, St. Paul (Gal. 1:1), and Timothy. Of the ministry we may say what is recorded of the Aaronic priesthood. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God." (Heb. 5:14). The very nature of the case suggests the same thing. The minister is called an "ambassador". He is said to have "received" his ministry, and to have it "committed" to him. Human governments illustrate this principle. A man must be called to his office. And if it should be argued that the Bible illustrations are special cases, it may be replied that Church History bears testimony to the same profound principle. If we think of men like Ambrose, Augustine, Luther, Latimer, Knox, Wesley, Whitefield, and many others, we cannot help being conscious of the working of Divine grace. God never calls without equipping, and the very fact of equipment proves the call. The Lord ascended to give gifts, and He still bestows the varied gifts of ministry (Eph. 4:11).

II. Its Proofs. How may a man tell whether he has received a call from above? The call may be proved in various ways; there is no precise law of detail or method, but a few marks may be confidently stated. 1. An intense desire. This may come early in life, or after conversion, or after confirmation, or at some still later time. But it will come. It will not be an unreasoning desire, but full of serious and earnest thought. It will be a disinterested desire, and motives will be pure and true.

And it will be a persistent desire. It will come again and again. The man will say, "I ought, I want; and please God, I will." Dr. Forsyth has put this point finely from his own personal experience: - "It has been said by one who is fond of the truth as it is in paradox, that nobody ought to enter the ministry who can by any means keep out of it. And nobody should encourage another to enter it if he can possibly dissuade him. If the impulse is strong and steady enough to survive all the cold water that can be thrown on it, there is some reason to think that it may be the first stage of a call.

So it has been said. Now, without going all the length of the paradox, I think the longer we lids in contact with the matter the more truth we feel to be in it. For instance, if a man comes up to us for an entrance examination in which he fails, and if he accepts one rebuff it much eases my mind. For I then feel that he has made good proof that the rejection was right." 2. Converging circumstances. These are different in different cases. Sometimes they may be expressed in the desire and prayer of our parents.

At other times we may see the hand of God in the provision of means and the opportunity for training. But whatever they may be, and however they may reveal themselves, circumstances will converge and indicate the will of God. 3. Some indications of qualifications. There ought to be physical qualifications. A minister must be prepared to "endure hardness". A serious defect in the voice, or some pronounced bodily infirmity, may well make a man question seriously whether God is calling him to the ministry.

It may be going too far to insist on the old Aaronic requirement of absence of physical blemish, as is done, we believe, in the Church of Rome today, but the underlying general principle is sound, whatever may be the precise personal application. Intellectual qualifications will necessarily be included. A man ought to have brains for the ministry, some mental aptitude, and no looseness of intellectual machinery. Greatest of all are the moral qualifications; steadfastness of character, stability, self-control, and some concentration of purpose.

These are the qualifications essential to ministerial life, and the man who is really called of God must not be known to have failed in every other calling. 4. Approval of those around. The opinion of wise friends will

be valuable on this point. Not merely the opinion of mother and sisters, nor necessarily of the opposite sex at all, but the judgment of men friends and acquaintances who really know us, fellows of our school days, men of our University and College. And not least of all, the opinion of the best men of the Church which we attend and where we are known.

"A good report of them that are without" will be a further qualification to support the idea of a Divine call. 5. A measure of blessing on our work. If we have not already done something for our Master, it is hardly likely that we are being called to the ministry. We ought to have endeavoured to win someone for Christ, or to have tried to help some weak young Christian to a firmer footing in discipleship. When these five characteristics exist - desire to enter the ministry, providential circumstances pointing in that direction, some evidence of qualifications, the approving judgment of those we can trust, and some experience of Christian work - we may "assuredly gather" that God is calling us to preach the Gospel.

III. Its Assurance.

"Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost. ... I trust so."

Mark the confidence of this answer. There is no doubt in the man's mind. He has faced the situation, and he can speak forth because of his knowledge of the Holy Ghost in his life.

But mark also the humility. "I trust so." His confidence is not baseless, but founded on a genuine Christian hopefulness and humility. He does not venture to say "I know," because he might possibly be mistaking the Divine Voice and Providence. But in the true spirit of Christian trust and self-distrust he responds to the inquiry, "I trust so," and waits to obtain further verification in actual experience.

This is the Divine call, and it is the foundation of all else. Let us face it before we enter the ministry lest we find out our mistake afterwards. Is it not terrible to think of any man daring to respond to this solemn inquiry, into which the Holy Ghost is actually brought, without possessing that spiritual experience which alone can warrant the reply? Who shall dare to say "I trust so" unless he has such definite personal dealings with God the Holy Ghost as will enable him to feel sure that he is in the pathway of God's will? The personal experience of the Holy Ghost is at once the most solemn and the most blessed reality of the Christian life.

Section 2. The Church Commission.

The Divine call settled, it follows next that we become assured as to the place wherein we are to exercise our ministry. And so Question 2 naturally follows the first: "Do you think that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the due order of this Realm, to the Ministry of the Church?"

I. The First Proof (Divine).

"Do you think that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Once again, at the risk of repetition, the spiritual element is emphasized by another reference to a Divine call. Let us, following this plan of repetition, briefly recall the aspects of "the will of our Lord Jesus Christ" in regard to the ministry.

1. The will of Christ may be deduced from Holy Scripture. In the various elements of the ministry and its purpose of "serving God for the promoting of His glory and the edifying of His people" we learn "what the will of the Lord is."

2. The will of our Lord Jesus Christ may be learnt from personal providences in life. As we review our pathway we should be able to see "all things working together for good" in relation to our entrance upon the ministry.

3. The will of our Lord Jesus Christ may be gathered from the marks of personal fitness we possess. Body, mind, and soul should combine to prove that we are ready for this "office and ministration."

4. The will of our Lord Jesus Christ may be deduced from a consideration of our spiritual experience. The witness of the Spirit within, and our knowledge of and fellowship in things spiritual, ought to bear their culminating testimony to the other lines of evidence of a Divine call.

Let us therefore face this afresh and make sure of our call to the ministry of the Church "according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. The Second Proof (Ecclesiastical). We are expected to know and confirm our belief in a call to the specific ministry of the Church of England. "According to ... the due order of this Realm." "Realm" and "Church" were two aspects of the national Christian life in the sixteenth century. Convocation represented the clergy and Parliament the laity, and the Church and Realm were thus coterminous, though looked at from different points of view. It was thus that the Article could say, "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England," meaning thereby the Church of the entire nation.

But what is the "due order of this Realm"? It has several bearings in relation to modern life, and it is essential for a clergyman to know what is implied. 1. The "due order" must be related first of all to Holy Scripture. Article VI is the sheet anchor of the Church of England in this respect, and indicates quite plainly that Holy Scripture is our supreme authority in all Church matters. Articles XIX and XX point in the same direction, and show that the Church is subordinate to the Word of God.

So that "the due order of this Realm" will mean first and foremost a general agreement with Scripture in regard to the fundamentals of the faith. The doctrines of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and the various aspects of the Divine Redemptive Person and Work of our Lord, as taught by the Church, will be accepted because they "may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture." And as with the Church in general, so with the Ministry in particular, we must believe that the "due order of this Realm" is Scriptural.

The ministry of the New Testament, as we know, is that of a presbyterate, and "the Ministry of the Church" will necessarily be the same if it is "according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ," and on the basis of Article VI. 2. The "due order of this Realm" must also be considered in relation to the Church of Rome. The repudiation of Roman supremacy in the sixteenth century carried with it consequences which last until the present day, and our Prayer Book and Articles enshrine for us what is up to the present, and will be apparently for a long time to come, the permanent position of our Church in relation to Rome.

Both in doctrine and discipline the Church of England stands committed to a particular position which necessitates an attitude of definite opposition to Rome. This is not stated for the purpose of mere controversy, but for the sake of that clearness as to our position which it is incumbent on every true English Churchman and clergyman to know, emphasize, and maintain. The history of three and a half centuries, and the attitude of the Church of Rome today, leave us no alternative but to insist with all possible definiteness and force on the spiritual validity and the ecclesiastical value of the Church of England. 3.

The "due order of this Realm" has also an important bearing on the Nonconformity and Dissent of our land, and there is scarcely any point on which Churchmen need to be more accurately informed in order to avoid two extremes which are rife in the present day. Our safe and sure ground will be to consider certain facts of history if we are to form a right judgment on this important and complex matter. (a) We cannot fail to note the fellowship at the Reformation between our own Reformers and the non-Episcopal Reformers of Germany, Switzerland and Scotland.

Cranmer, Ridley, Parker, and Jewel, to whom we owe all that is best in Anglican theology, were in constant and close association with foreign Reformers, while the influence of the Confessions of Augsburg and Wirtemberg on our Articles, as seen in their phraseology to this day (Articles XIX, etc), bears the same testimony. (b) Nor can we omit a reference to the action of the Church authorities against the Elizabethan Puritans, which led so high an authority as Bishop Creighton to say of the Elizabethan Church that - "It tended to lose the appearance of a free and self-governing body, and seemed to be an instrument of the policy of the State.

Its pleadings and its arguments lost half their weight because they were backed by coercive authority. The dangerous formula, "Obey the law," was introduced into the settlement of questions which concerned the relations of the individual conscience and God." [Lectures and Addresses.] (c) This spirit inevitably led to reprisals, and when the Puritans obtained the upper hand they made short work of the convictions even of moderate Churchmen. "The Presbyterians had now succeeded the Laudians, and their intolerance was as great as those whom they had supplanted." [Butler's Life and Letters of Archbishop Leighton, p. 192.] (d) Then again, when Charles II succeeded to the throne, a Church reaction took place, with the result that what in Elizabeth's day had only been Nonconformity within the Church became Dissent outside the Church, with a gulf made impassable by persecution and oppression. (e) And the action of the Church in the eighteenth century is not to be overlooked.

No one doubts that John Wesley never wished or intended to leave the Church of England, but was really compelled to do so by the attitude adopted by the authorities of the Church of that day. As the Church Quarterly Review has truly said: - "We are not prepared to defend either the spiritual life of the Church of England in the eighteenth century, or the spiritual self-assertion of the Wesleyan movement. Schism means sin in the past and needs penitence and reparation in the future." [July, 1908, p. 279.] (f) While, therefore, in view of all these facts we are careful about our use of the term "schism" when Dissent is being considered, it will not prevent us from maintaining a firm adherence to our own position as Churchmen as that which is the most Scriptural, most historical, most useful form of Church government and life.

The strongest Protestantism against Rome and the warmest sympathies with the spiritual teaching of Evangelical Nonconformity, are not incompatible with the firmest convictions and the most loyal devotion as Evangelical Churchmen. "Are you a Churchman?" a well-known man was asked. "Yes," was the reply, "I am a Churchman definitely, but not exclusively." [A further and fuller statement of what seems to the writer the true attitude of Church to Dissent may be seen in his Manual, The Catholic Faith, pp. 361-9.] 4.

The "due order of this Realm" must also be considered in relation to what are called Church parties. There have been such ever since the Reformation, and their existence has been found quite compatible with true Churchmanship. While thoroughly agreed in substance, they have differed in outlook and emphasis, and thus, though diverse they were not divergent in view. Such men as Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, Latimer, Jewel, Parker, Hooker, represented different types of Churchmanship, while heartily at one on the great

fundamentals of faith and life.

This diversity of view has been seen at all periods since those days, and men like Andrewes, Jeremy Taylor, Ussher, Barrow, Tillotson, and later on, Venn, Newton, Simeon, Coleridge, Kingsley, Hare, Arnold, Whately, Burgon, and many more, have represented various phases of thought while heartily agreed on the essentials of true Churchmanship. And this is as natural as it is welcome, for no one could wish to have absolute unanimity of thought and entire agreement of practice in so wide, varied, and complex a community as the Church of England.

But of course such diversities must have their limits; and while we may have our preference in this or that direction, the great principle of loyalty to the Prayer Book and Articles should be the dominant factor. By loyalty we mean an honest and true adherence to the doctrines and practices of the Prayer Book and Articles in the light of their emphasis at the Reformation, and of the subsequent history of the Church of England in relation to Rome and in relation to our national life.

Granted this, and then our differences of thought and life will be productive of nothing but good. The fact is that a man can belong quite definitely and acceptably to a Church party without being a partisan. The so-called "non-party" Churchman is as a rule either a molluscos individual of no service to himself or to others, or else he turns out to be as definitely a party man as anyone else. Party without partisanship should be the motto of all loyal Churchman. Preferences but not exclusions should be our aim and ideal.

As we review the consideration of "the due order of this Realm" in relation to Scripture, to Rome, to Dissent, and to Church parties, we cannot help seeing the true meaning and real force of the Prayer Book phrase, "sober, peaceable, and truly conscientious" sons of the Church of England. There is such a thing as a definite Anglican tradition, which has been maintained amid all differences since the Reformation, and to this we shall find it our wisdom to adhere, whatever particular tint our Churchmanship may take. [For a further treatment of the attitude to take to Church parties, perhaps I may refer to *The Catholic Faith*, pp. 369-373.]

And true Churchmanship will always be characterized by these three elements. 1. Definite Convictions. The mind must be made up on certain matters, and our position held with tenacity. Such subjects as the Deity of Christ, the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit, the Redemptive Work of Christ, should be settled, never to be reopened. It is only by definite convictions that any Churchmanship worthy of the name can live and work. 2. Wide Sympathies. While definite we must not be narrow; although possessing preferences we must make room for other outlooks.

While our convictions are part of ourselves and are founded firmly on the Rock of Ages, our sympathies should be as wide as they can be. It is the "intensive" man who can safely be "extensive". It is only the shallow man who is in danger of losing everything definite by extending his sympathies. 3. Genuine Spirituality. This will give warmth to our convictions and strength to our sympathies. The men to be feared and avoided are (1) the man of convictions only, who is narrow, cold, hard and perhaps bitter, without the warmth of spiritual experience: and (2) the man of genial indifference to settled doctrine, and of easygoing acceptance of all types of thought and effort, without the safeguard that comes from a true spiritual life. But when convictions, sympathies, and spirituality meet and blend in reality and proportion, we have the true Churchman contemplated by our Prayer Book.

Section 3. The Belief of the Scriptures.

The first question refers to the Source, the second to the Sphere, and the third which follows, appropriately deals with the Message. There are two questions about the Scriptures: (1) Its place in the Minister's life. (2) His use of it in his work. "No other Church requires this from Deacons and Priests, only from Bishops, because no such commission was given to Deacons and Priests." [Burnet, quoted by Bishop Diggle, Addresses on the Ordinal, p. 17.] It is of the utmost importance that our attention should be directed to this first question on the Holy Scriptures, for it is vital to all else.

"Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?"

I. The Church's View of Holy Scripture. In order that we may appreciate properly the force of this question put at a solemn moment to the one about to become a minister, we must inquire generally what the Church of England holds as to the place and power of Holy Scripture. 1. It teaches the Supreme Authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice. Of the two characteristics of the Reformation, one was the appeal to Scripture. We see this in Articles VI, XX, XXI, and many others.

As Article VI says: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or to be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Article XX says: "It is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another."

Article XXI, speaking of General Councils, says, "things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture." 2. It teaches the Spiritual Sufficiency of Scripture. This second characteristic of the Reformation was the insistence on Religion as personal and as not necessarily mediated through an institution or a man. The title of Article VI shows this clearly. "Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation."

So that according to the Church of England, Scripture is (a) the Source of Doctrine, (b) the Spring of Duty, (c) the Final Court of Appeal. 3. The Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture were based on the conviction of its possession of a Divine Revelation guarded by Inspiration. This Revelation meant that God had spoken, and that His will had been made known and could be understood and followed in Holy Scripture. Inspiration was never defined or described (beyond the phrase, "God's Word written," Article XX), but was assumed, taken for granted.

It is sometimes said that the Church of England lays down no theory of Inspiration. True, but why is this? Because Inspiration was presupposed. The Church in the sixteenth century was not engaged on the proof of Divine Inspiration. That was not a question in dispute, and being everywhere allowed, it was assumed and taken for granted. What the Church of England was doing was to assert that these Divinely inspired Scriptures were the supreme authority for Christian men and Churches.

The use of Scripture, and the reference to it as authoritative, showed that the Church believed the Scriptures revealed the presence of the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Truth ("Thy Word is truth," John 17:17), and the Spirit of Holiness ("Thy Word is very pure," Psa. 119:140). Revelation and Inspiration are best proved by the Gospel contained in Scripture, as it affects in transforming power our lives and the lives of others. It is the uniqueness of Scripture which is the great thing, its authoritativeness for life as a revelation from God.

And whatever may be our precise theory of Inspiration, we shall be well advised if we adopt none that tends to diminish our reverence for the Bible as the work and instrument of the Holy Spirit. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." We are on a sure foundation when we accept, without attempting to explain, the two statements of God's Word: "All Scripture is God-breathed" (or, "Every Scripture is God-breathed," 2 Tim. 3:16), and "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

II. The Ministerial Attitude to Holy Scripture. 1. The question is definite. "Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?" That is, are we prepared to accept their truth and acknowledge their authority. It should never be forgotten, amid all the critical controversies of today, that the fundamental question is as to the historical trustworthiness of Holy Scripture. It is not a question of any precise theory of Inspiration, but whether the account given in the Old and New Testament of God's revelation of Himself can be relied upon for its historical trustworthiness.

Some words of a modern scholar are worth quoting on this: - "What is of vital concern to the Christian Church is not questions of literary analysis or minor points of literary history and criticism, but whether the story of Israel's history from the call of Abraham down to the preaching and writing of the last Apostle is, as to all its essential and characteristic features, correct; whether, in particular, what it tells us of the part God took in it, is as objectively true as what it tells us of the part men took in it.

We need not be troubled if an inaccuracy be found here and another there, whether of thought, or sentiment, or date, or name, or number, or any other subject; for neither a nation's nor an individual's whole history can be discredited because mistakes may have crept into the literature by means of which its life has found expression, and through which later generations have to learn what it was. What the Christian Church needs to be on its guard against, is the acceptance of a reconstruction of the history of Israel which eliminates the special Divine acts, revelations, and inspiration, whose purpose was the reconciliation of God and man; in a word, all that has constituted, and still constitutes, its distinctive value." [Principal Simon, Some Bible Problems, p. 284.]

The minister must be clear here, or else he had better not think of the ministry. Error on this point is fatal to usefulness and power. "How canst thou go, seeing thou hast no tidings ready." 2. The question is searching. "Do you unfeignedly believe?" This is a call for sincerity; and if a man lacks that, he lacks the essential of all ministry. Sincerity leads inevitably to reverence, and no one will ever use the Bible aright unless he is reverent to it. All Bible problems should be approached from the point of view of spiritual religion.

Literary study alone is useless. And reverence in turn will lead to spiritual power. 3. The question is to be answered without any hesitation or qualification. "I do." It is a confession of personal experience. The difference between the "I trust so" of the first answer, and the "I think so" of the second is profoundly significant. It means that the man knows by experience what the Scriptures are. The response, "I do," expresses at once his confidence, his conviction, and his courage.

From all this we see that our attitude to Scripture determines all else. It comes in at every point. The Bible must be our Fount of Doctrine. Its Authority must be our deciding factor. The Life of the Bible must be our ideal, and the Grace of the Bible our dynamic. Indeed, the first and most natural view of everything in the ministry ought to have a close relation to the Bible. And this will of course mean a firsthand experience of the Bible as the Word of God. The mind must be saturated with its truth, the heart inspired by its love, the

conscience made sensitive to its law, and the will submissive to its grace.

Then, then only, then always, will our life be fragrant and our ministry fruitful to the glory of God. Note. - It will be observed that the second question in the Ordering of Priests differs fundamentally from the above question about belief in the Canonical Scriptures. That question having been asked of the Deacon is not needed again, and so the Priest is questioned as to his belief in the sufficiency of Scripture for saving doctrine, and his determination to preach and teach for salvation only what he finds therein.

"Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? and are you determined, out of the said Scriptures, to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?" It ought to be obvious that this question cannot possibly be regarded as an equivalent for that discussed above.

It does not call for separate treatment here because it is implied in the following question from the Ordering of Deacons, and is also emphasized quite fully in the long exhortation in the Ordering of Priests which is to come before us in due course.

Section 4. The Use of the Scriptures.

From the minister's own personal attitude to Holy Scripture we naturally pass to the consideration of his use of Scripture in ministerial life and work.

"Will you diligently read the same unto the people assembled in the Church where you shall be appointed to serve?"

I. The Place of Scripture in the Church of England.

There is no Church in Christendom which uses so much of Scripture or gives it so prominent a place in its services.

1. In the Articles it is the supreme standard of doctrine and the final court of appeal.
2. In the Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels it is used daily and weekly for instruction.
3. In the Psalms it is employed for worship daily through the month.
4. In the Prayers, the substance of the petitions is often verbally identical with, or evidently based on, Holy Scripture.
5. In the Ordination Services special prominence is given to the Bible by the presentation of a Testament to the Deacon and a Bible to the Priest with the words, "Take thou authority to read the Gospel in the Church of God." "Take thou authority to preach the Word of God." We have only to compare, or, rather, contrast these with the words spoken in pre-Reformation times as (not the Bible, but) the sacramental vessels were given with the words, "Take thou authority to offer sacrifice to God, to celebrate the Mass for the living and for the dead." Our Ordinal by this significant change lays the chief emphasis on our work as "Ministers of the Word".

II. The Ministerial Use of Scripture.

1. The Reading of the Lessons. The value of this part of the Service cannot well be over-estimated. Let us make the most of it and do our best to make the "hearing of His most holy Word" the means of grace it is intended to be.

2. Preaching. As the Bible is necessarily the source of our sermons, so it should be their substance and their inspiration. We are to "preach the word"; we are to be "faithful dispensers of the Word"; our work is primarily a "ministry of the Word". If our sermons are not Biblical, they cannot properly be Christian. The Bible must enter into every part of our preaching work.

3. Teaching. In the various methods of instruction employed by all Churches - Bible classes, Sunday schools, day schools, church services - the teaching must be above all things Biblical. Our people need to be "built up in their most holy faith," and this faith is drawn primarily and preeminently from the Word of God. No Church that is worthy of the name dare neglect the teaching of the Bible, or fail to give it a prominent place.

4. The clergyman is pastor as well as preacher, shepherd as well as teacher, and the Bible must be as prominent in this as in other spheres of his work. It is only "by the ministry of God's Word" that he is able to dispense "the benefit of absolution" together with "ghostly counsel and advice". It is only by "the wholesome medicine of the Gospel" that he will be able to heal the spiritual diseases of his people. For the weary, the sorrowing, the despondent, the hardened, the fearing, the despairing, the Bible will naturally and necessarily be the minister's vade mecum, his indispensable help. And the more he studies it with this practical pastoral end in view, the more effective and the more blessed will be his ministry. Our minds and hearts should be so stored and saturated with the Bible that the Scripture view of things should instinctively be the first that occurs to us. No time is too long, no trouble too great, that is spent with the Bible in relation to pastoral preaching, teaching, and service.

III. The Secret of Ministerial Use of Scripture. The minister must know his Bible, and his knowledge will be threefold; Intellectual, Devotional, Homiletical. 1. He must first master its contents. Whatever may be his methods of study he must know the contents of his Bible. To this end a few suggestions may perhaps be given. (a) Let us study the Bible itself first and chiefly, instead of what is said about it. Dr. Campbell Morgan recently said that the weakness of Free Church preaching today is its uncertainty, the absence of any clear note, and he attributes this to the lack of Bible Study.

"I feel very strongly that a great deal of this is due to their almost total neglect of study, prayerful study, of the Bible. Many have been so busy dealing with it as literature that they have entirely neglected its spiritual note. They can read it in Greek and Hebrew, but scores of them leave their theological college utterly unable to pass the simplest examination in the Bible. Many a humble old woman in their Church knows her Bible far better." Is not this equally true of the Church of England?

Are there not many who could give the arguments, pro and con, as to the criticism of Deuteronomy, the unity of Isaiah, and the Apostolicity of the Fourth Gospel, who would find it difficult to pass an examination on the actual contents of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and St. John? While we do not fail to make ourselves acquainted with all the modern scholarship within our reach, we must first of all make ourselves acquainted with the actual contents of the Bible. And another thing follows. (b) Let us study the books as they are, before we concern ourselves with their real or supposed sources.

To resolve a book into its sources is perfectly legitimate, but it is not everything, and it is not the primary thing. Let us suppose that we were sure of the sources or strata of Genesis, or the Synoptic Gospels. It

would still be true that the sources were fragments and not the full form. But it is the present form of these books that has given, and still gives them their unique power. Besides, no analysis of sources is likely to be final, but at most only inferential, and meanwhile, our work calls for the definite constant use of these books for spiritual, pastoral purposes. 2.

He must then consider how to apply the Bible to his own life. The Bible is not only to be mastered, it is to be assimilated. Meditation has been defined as "attention with intention," and the Word of God is to be a mirror in which we view ourselves (James 1:23-25); the water which cleanses (Eph. 5:26); and the food which strengthens our spiritual life (1 Peter 2:2, Heb. 5:12-14, Psa. 19:10). The message of the Bible must come home first of all to our own hearts if it is to be of use to others.

"What saith my Lord to His servant?" (Josh. 5:14), "What wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) must be our constant, personal, definite inquiries. 3. He must then use the Bible, thus mastered and assimilated, in his ministerial work. For preaching, teaching and pastoral needs the Word of God is all important. All Scripture "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). And it is just at this point that we see the force of studying and using the Book with a belief and confidence in the great truth of its contents.

To be able to prove that three sources exist in Genesis, or two in St. Mark, is one thing, but to argue that these sources when analyzed are contradictory is quite another. We ought to be able to assume in our ministerial use of the Bible that the history as a whole is correct, and that the Scripture account is a trustworthy record of Divine revelation. It is difficult to imagine ordinary men believing the truth of the Bible if it is proved inaccurate on matters of fact. The question at once arises whether inspiration is compatible with frequent inaccuracy or frequent incompetency.

In all this we must be genuine, open-eyed students, determined to discover and possess the truth, not followers of any fashion in scholarship, whether ancient or modern. We must call no man Master, but determine to go our way and settle these things for ourselves. We may depend upon one thing, that any view of the Bible which cannot be proved and taught, is pretty certain to be wrong, or at any rate so doubtful as to be practically useless for pastoral work. Sir William Robertson Nicoll once remarked of Old Testament questions that ordinary hearers cannot be expected to follow the intricate process of historical criticism, and that therefore in our preaching we must take the Old Testament as it is, or leave it alone. [Index to Expositor's Bible, Introductory Essay.]

Some of us have not hesitated to draw the conclusion from these words that if new views of the Old or New Testament cannot be taught they cannot be right, and that if they are right they can be and ought to be taught. In the work of the ministry the Bible ought to be the light (Psa. 119:105), the hammer (Jer. 23:29), the fire (Jer. 23:29), and the sword (Eph. 6:17). Like David in regard to Goliath's sword, we ought to say concerning the Bible, "There is none like it, give it to me." 4.

This threefold attitude of Scripture - intellectual knowledge, devotional experience, and ministerial use - will be at once the cause and the effect of a convinced and ever-deepening belief in the Scriptures as the Word of God. We shall believe in its power over men as we experience its power over ourselves, and we shall be convinced of its sufficiency for all ministerial needs without resorting to any methods of service in which the Bible finds little or no place. And so the minister will be "mighty in the Scriptures," and will find in them the supreme secret of ministerial joy and power.

The answer to this fourth inquiry on the Scriptures needs special attention. The first three answers were the expressions of our inmost convictions. "I trust so," "I think so," "I do." But this is a deliberate promise, "I will," and, as such, it must be carried out. Promises are intended to be fulfilled. Each day we must do something in regard to the intellectual knowledge, the devotional application, and the pastoral use of Scripture. Each day we must unite with these three methods the exercise of prayer for light, guidance, and blessing.

"We will give ourselves to the ministry of the word and prayer" (Acts 6:5), for it is only in this firm and constant waiting on God in His Word and prayer that we shall wax riper in our service and be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works".

Section 5. The Work.

After the consideration of the Minister's relation to God, to the Church, to the Holy Scriptures, the thought of his work naturally follows.

"It appertaineth in the Office of a Deacon, in the Church where he shall be appointed to serve, to assist the Priest in Divine Service, and especially when he ministereth the Holy Communion, and to help him in the distribution thereof, and to read Holy Scriptures and Homilies in the Church; and to instruct the youth in the Catechism; in the absence of the Priest to baptize infants, and to preach, if he be admitted thereto by the Bishop. And furthermore, it is his office, where provision is so made, to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the Parish, to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell, unto the Curate, that by his exhortation they may be relieved with the alms of the Parishioners or others. Will you do this gladly and willingly?"

"I will so do, by the help of God."

As we ponder these various statements, we shall see something of what the Church considers to be the work of a Deacon.

I. Strenuous Service. The fullness and variety of the description show the character of his work. The very word "deacon" teaches the same idea. It comes from δέωκω, to pursue, and suggests the eager pursuit, the faithful following up of our work. [Trench, *New Testament Synonyms*, p. 3; Drury, *The Prison Ministry of St. Paul*, p. 112, note.] 1. It will not be a light and easy service. There will be plenty of work, and work, too, which will put a heavy strain on mind and body. If a man imagines that he will have "an easy time" by entering the ministry, he will find himself very much mistaken.

The calls upon his time, the pressure upon his strength, the demand upon his intellect, and not least of all, the drain upon his sympathies, will soon show him what is meant by the Church of England diaconate. 2. And yet the service of the ministry is one of the most searching tests of character, because our time is our own in the sense that unlike men in professional or business life we are not subject to particular hours of duty which must be observed. A clergyman can easily fritter away his time between breakfast and lunch, and find by one o'clock very little done. [Since the above lines were written, Sir W.

Robertson Nicoll's fine lecture, entitled *Mr. Fritterday*, has appeared in the *British Weekly* for June 29 and July 6, 1911.] It is essential for a man to make some definite rules for the use of his time, and keep to them. Thus, the avoidance of the newspapers and the easy chair until after lunch would often prove a help to genuine work between nine and one. But whether morning, afternoon, or evening, it still remains true

that the very fact of the clergyman having the control of so much of his own time offers a real temptation to waste it, and thereby to do himself and his ministry great and lasting harm.

From the earliest days of our ministry, and indeed, before we enter it, we shall do well to form the habit of regularity and method in the employment of our time, or else our freedom may prove a spiritual snare to us. 3. Another difficulty and temptation will be found in the multifariousness of ministerial duties. So many things will arise that seem to clamour to be done that a man may utilize all his time and find nothing at the end to show for his efforts. A man can easily be busy and yet not industrious.

The minister must soon learn to say "no" to requests for his services and to demands on his time. He will have to limit his work and determine to do only those things that are nearest to and most directly in line with his sphere. Our Churches today are suffering from over-organization, and if they would do less they would accomplish more, less of the indirect and more of the direct, less of the secular and more of the spiritual. In view of all the varied organizations of a parish nowadays, one is tempted to say to a man when he is seeking a curacy, "Beware of any advertisement which speaks of a 'well-organized parish'."

There is no problem today more pressing on the ministry, senior and junior, than the best disposal of our time in order to accomplish the greatest possible work of the right kind, that which will be spiritually productive.

II. Subordinate Service. The words "assist the Priest," "help," and "in the absence of the Priest," show that the Deacon's work is primarily that of an assistant to the clergyman in charge of the parish. This at once raises the problem of the relation between the two men, and the present question naturally looks at it from the side of the Deacon as the subordinate worker. 1. He should render a loyal service. The Deacon will probably find that some of the people will show their preference for him in unwise ways, and may even go so far as to constitute themselves into something like a Curate's party.

If he detects this he must show his disapproval in every possible way, and meanwhile maintain a loyalty to his senior officer which will enable them to work together heartily and happily. If a Curate is in close touch with his Vicar he need not trouble about what others may say and do. 2. He should take care that his is a cooperating service. By this is meant that he should so arrange his work that it is not independent of the other work of the parish. Of course circumstances vary, and sometimes a Vicar hands over a work to the Curate and gives him a perfectly free hand to do as he feels best.

At other times a Curate is at work in direct and immediate association with the Vicar. But there are few parishes in which a Curate does not find himself responsible for a certain department or district, and in such cases he will be well advised if he does not initiate any new work without first consulting the Vicar. The parish is really an unit, and the work in each section should bear some relation to that of the whole. For this reason it is also useful, and, indeed essential, to consult the Vicar with the view of considering the bearing of the proposed new departure on the work of the parish in general.

My own strong preference in parish work was to give a colleague a free hand to do the work of his particular district in his own way, only asking him to take counsel with me when he felt impelled to adopt some new method, or initiate some fresh department of work. With this spirit of cooperation between seniors and juniors the work will go on happily and successfully day by day. 3. And all through his term of service the Deacon should render a sympathetic service. The younger minister cannot at once realize the strain of responsibility on the older man, and for this reason the fellowship of the junior worker should be as readily offered to as it should be warmly appreciated by the senior clergyman.

The Curate should beware of any severance of heart between him and his Vicar. It may be that the scholarship of the older man has become rusty, and it may also be that his parochial methods are not as modern as they might be, and the younger man may feel tempted to think slightly of such lack of adaptation to modern needs. But he should endeavour to resist such a temptation, and to remember that "not even the youngest of us is infallible," and that allowance must be made for age, circumstances, and associations.

Of course, if from any reason the Curate should find himself unable to respect the character of the Vicar, he should endeavour to make a change as soon as possible, but while he is in the parish he should resolutely refuse to allow anything to sever heart from heart in two workers so inevitably and closely associated in the work of God.

III. Spiritual Service.

A careful study of the statement of the Ordinal indicates quite clearly the character of the work. It is primarily and fundamentally spiritual. The Deacon is to assist in Divine Service, to help at Holy Communion, to read the Holy Scriptures and Homilies in Church, to instruct the youth in the Catechism, to baptize, and to preach. His paramount duties are therefore spiritual, and this element must ever predominate. The salvation of the sinner and the edification of the believer must be always in view. He is ordained to minister to a Church, not a Concert Room or a Club. First things are put first, and this is ever the great characteristic of the Ordinal. Secondary things do not appear, and since this is so, no pressure of modern life ought to crowd out these primary spiritual realities for which the clergyman is ordained. The ministry of the Prayer Book, following closely that of the New Testament, is a spiritual ministry, and nothing must ever be allowed to set this aside.

IV. Social Service.

It is not to be supposed that what has been said about spiritual work excludes the true idea of social service. On the contrary, the spiritual may, and must, be expressed in the social. And so it is said to be of the office of the Deacon (doubtless following the example of Acts 6) "to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell, unto the Curate, that by his exhortation they may be relieved with the alms of the parishioners, or others." Christianity appeals to the whole man, and from the very first the care of the poor, the sick, and the aged has been part of Christian work. In the Incarnation the human body has been raised to its proper position, and we are now enabled to understand what it means to "glorify God in our body" (1 Cor. 6:20). And yet even this work is not merely social, but in strict subordination to the spiritual. The clergyman is not a relieving officer, and the Church is not a dispensary or a club. Salvation by club is no salvation at all. Whatever social efforts are attached to a Church must be the outcome of the spiritual efforts. All clergymen of the largest experience tell us that "Through the Club to the Church" is an utter failure, while "From the Church to the Club" is a true, legitimate, and necessary way of expressing and cultivating the social aspect of Christianity. As my friend Mr. Watts-Ditchfield once said, "the converted men in the Church create and maintain the true atmosphere for the club." A thoughtful writer has penetrated to the heart of this problem when he says that the weakness of the Church often lies in the fact that it does not and cannot deepen the shallow lives of men: - "It is not deepening a man to keep him out of bad company. To keep him out of the public house is something, but it is only an arrest, the avoidance of a further shallowing. It is good so far as it goes. Still, the idea is not to keep a man on a level of life in which you happen to find him, but to get him on to another level altogether, and so to influence him that, of himself,

he shall mount higher and yet higher. The end is not attained if the man is not quickened." [Rev. Arthur Hoyle in the Methodist Recorder, November, 1910.]

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