

**THE WORK OF PREACHING CHRIST: A
CHARGE, DELIVERED TO THE CLERGY OF
THE DIOCESE OF OHIO,
AT ITS FORTY-SIXTH ANNUAL
CONVENTION, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH,
AKRON, ON THE 3D OF JUNE, 1863**

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The work of preaching Christ: a charge, delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of Ohio, at its forty-sixth annual convention, in St. Paul's Church, Akron, on the 3d of June, 1863 by Charles Pettit McIlvaine

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CHARLES PETTIT MCILVAINE

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BY CHARLES PETTIT M'CILVAINE, D. D., D. C. L.,
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE.

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CHARGE

TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF OHIO :

BRETHREN,—It is a long time since I addressed you in the form of a Charge. Various have been the causes ; the chief of them, as you well know, having been connected with the state of my health. Addressing you again in that mode, and with exclusive reference to matters peculiar to our office as Ministers of Christ, realizing how near my time is to lay it down, I choose a subject with which a Bishop may well desire to close his ministry ; which indeed all our work should be identified with, and which, I am thankful to say, has been obtaining, ever since mine began, a deeper and stronger possession of my mind, my affections, and my ministry—I mean *the work of preaching Christ*, according to the Scriptures, and the example of the Apostles.

“Go preach the Gospel,” were the words of our

Lord to his Apostles, which conveyed to them and to us the whole weight and substance of the commission of his Ministers and Ambassadors. It was the unquestioning obedience of a simple and unhesitating faith to that one command, animated by an unquenchable love to its divine Author and to the souls he died to save, enlightened by the teaching and made mighty by the power of the Holy Ghost, that constituted all the vigour and efficacy of the ministry of the Apostles. It was thus that their weapons of warfare became "mighty through God," and achieved those stupendous victories of the truth over "the spirit that ruleth in the children of disobedience," which the weaker faith and more timid obedience of the Church in later days have so poorly imitated. And, as in the beginning, so also in all times of the Christian dispensation, it has pleased God that sinners shall be brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ" and made partakers of his salvation, by the obedience of his ministers to that one original charge and command—"preach the Gospel." Faith by hearing; Gospel faith, by hearing Gospel truth; and such hearing, by the preaching of the word of God, is His standing rule accord-

ing to which He bestows His Spirit for the conviction, conversion, and sanctification of men.

But it is manifest from the Scriptures that the Apostles identified the Gospel *with Christ*; so that, in their view and practice, to preach the Gospel was neither more nor less than to preach Christ. The record which, in a few words, describes their ministry is that, "daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." St. Paul to the Romans defines the whole Gospel by saying that it is "concerning Jesus Christ."* The employment of his two years' imprisonment at Rome was all comprehended in "teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus." And his whole ministry was given unto him, he testifies, that he "might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ." As he could say, "For me to live is Christ;" so for him to preach was Christ. To him Christ and the Gospel were one.

But we must here note the chief feature in their preaching of Christ. They omitted nothing pertaining to him; but there was one thing on which, more than anything else, they very particularly and em-

* Rom. i. 3.

phatically dwelled. They took great pains to set forth the Lord Jesus in all that he was and is, in person and office, as once on earth and now in heaven, his preëxistent glory with the Father, his incarnation and humiliation in our nature, his death, resurrection, and intercession ; all his love, all his promises, all his commandments ; so that there was no part of the whole counsel of God "concerning His Son Jesus Christ," which they kept back. But manifestly there was one event in his history, one work amidst all his works, which stood in their view as the great event and work, around which they gathered the force of their testimony, as its central light and power—to which they made all that went before it look forward for consummation, and all that succeeded look back as to its foundation, and on the faithful declaration of which, with its immediate connections, they very especially rested the faithfulness of their work as preachers of the Gospel. No doubt you anticipate me. Such passages of the Apostles arise to your minds, as, "we preach Christ *crucified* ;" "I determined not to know anything among you (while declaring unto you the testimony of God) save Jesus Christ and *him crucified* ;"

"God forbid that I should glory save in the *cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ;" "For the preaching of the *cross* is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." They preached Christ—but as Christ *crucified*. They said continually, like John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," but it was the "Lamb *slain*"—Christ *in his death*—bearing "our sins in his own body on the tree," that they pointed to. They rejoiced in everything pertaining to their Lord, from his birth at Bethlehem to his present glory at the Father's right hand; but the one thing in which they rejoiced so supremely, that everything else was lost in comparison, was his cross. Of the two sacraments ordained of Christ for his Church, that which alone goes with the believer to be renewed and repeated all along the way of his earthly life, has for its great object to "show the Lord's *death* until he come." It was a great lesson which the Lord thus taught us as to how we must preach him. His Apostles therefore became in speech, what that sacrament is in symbol; constantly showing the Lord's death as the sinner's life. Thus, when they spoke of the Chris-