

**A CHARGE DELIVERED TO THE
CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF
LONDON AT THE VISITATION
IN OCTOBER, MDCCCXLII**

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A charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of London at the visitation in
October, MDCCCXLII by Charles James

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CHARLES JAMES

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CHARGE

DELIVERED TO

THE CLERGY

BY

THE DIOCESE OF LONDON

AT THE VISITATION

IN OCTOBER, MDCCCLIII.

BY

CHARLES JAMES

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

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CHARGE.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

I HAVE looked forward to meeting you on the occasion of my fourth Visitation, with mingled feelings of pleasure and anxiety; of pleasure, as being permitted by the goodness of God to congratulate you upon the Church's increased and increasing energy, and usefulness, and power; of anxiety, as being sensible that I should be expected to speak, with the authority belonging to my office, upon the most important of the questions, respecting which the Clergy are at this time divided in opinion. These questions are, in fact, so much more urgent than any others which present themselves as suitable topics of an address upon this occasion, that I make no apology for entering upon them at once, without pausing to notice matters of inferior moment.

The questions, to which I allude, relate partly to the doctrines of our Church, and partly to its ritual. It will not be possible for me, in the compass of a Charge, to do more than touch, in a summary manner, upon the principal features of the controversy now carrying on amongst us; and I must therefore abstain, as far as the nature of the subjects will permit, from lengthened argument and discussion: but you have a right to know my opinions on these matters; and I shall proceed to state them as plainly and as briefly as I can. This is the first opportunity which I have had of doing so, in an official address to the Clergy, since the controversy assumed a definite and prominent shape; and I acknowledge that I was not unwilling to pause, and to be silent for a time, in the hope that those, who have been engaged in that controversy, would see the

evils which must ensue to the Church from its continuance, and be led to modify, or at least to keep within their own bosoms, what I considered to be extreme opinions. That hope has unhappily passed away ; and it now remains for me to perform the duty of pronouncing that deliberate judgment which the Clergy of my own diocese are entitled to look for. In so doing, it will be my endeavour, in humble reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, not to enter into a polemical discussion on the truth of the doctrines, or the propriety of the rites and ceremonies, which will come under consideration ; but to act as an interpreter of the Church's sense as to the one, and of her will as to the other. If these can be clearly ascertained, we can have no difficulty, looking to the relation in which we stand to her, as to *what* we are to teach, or *how* we are to minister : for we have all solemnly promised, at our ordination, to "give our faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine, and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and realm hath received the same."

But before I enter upon these subjects, and as introductory to them, I think it right to offer a few remarks upon the most important of the questions concerning Church government and discipline, that which relates to the source and validity of our mission, and to the extent of our authority, as ambassadors of Christ, the interpreters of his Word, and the dispensers of his Sacraments. I have so recently made a public declaration of my opinions on the divine institution and authority of the Church, that I need not repeat them on the present occasion. If the view which I have taken of the subject be correct, it follows, as a necessary inference, that in this country the clergy of the national Church, and they alone, are entitled to the respect and obedience of the people, as their lawful guides and governors in spiritual things : that they alone are duly commissioned to preach the Word of God, and to minister his holy Sacraments. But the extent and boundaries of their ministerial authority are points, which admit of a considerable diversity of opinion, even amongst those who do not question its origin or legitimacy. If it be an error, leading to, and partaking of the nature of schism, to deny, or undervalue that authority, it is, on the

other hand, injurious to the cause of truth and unity to exaggerate it, and to stretch its prerogatives beyond that which has the sure warrant of God's Word. Those persons, who are driven, by the overstrained pretensions of the clergy, to question their authority, are almost sure to withhold from them the respect to which they are justly entitled, and to consider priesthood and priestcraft as convertible terms.

There is so obvious an analogy, in the general features of ecclesiastical polity, between the appointment and offices of the hierarchy under the Levitical law, and those of the Christian ministry, that it is no wonder if some persons have imagined, not merely an analogy, but a typical relation between them; the Jewish priesthood being the type, and the Christian ministry the antitype; the high-priest, the priests, and Levites of the one, answering to the bishops, priests, and deacons of the other; the latter inheriting the dignity, privileges, and duties of the former. The Church of Rome, on the other hand, teaches that our Saviour instituted a new and proper priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek. Neither of these suppositions is consistent with the language of Holy Scripture. The priesthood of Melchizedek, and that of Aaron, were typical of that which was borne by Jesus Christ Himself, the great high priest of the world, who fulfilled, once for all, in his own person, every type and shadow of the older economy of God's Church, which bore any relation to propitiatory sacrifice, and to mediation between God and man.

It is apparent from the whole train of argument pursued in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that under the new dispensation Jesus Christ was to be the only sacrificing priest; his death the only proper sacrifice; Himself the only victim. All the offices, authority, and efficacy of the Jewish priesthood, as they pointed to Jesus Christ, and drew all their efficacy from *his* mediation, were finally centered and absorbed in *Him*, beside whom, and after whom, there is no victim, no sacrifice, no proper mediator between God and man. Whatsoever spiritual power, duties, or privileges, belong to the Christian ministry, are derived to it solely from Jesus Christ, as the Head of his Church, the founder of a new spiritual economy, wherein man, being

placed in a new relation to God, requires a different provision of outward means, for the purpose of approaching Him, and obtaining his favour. Our blessed Lord retains, in his own person, the everlasting sacerdotal order of Melchizedek; and he has given to his Church, not a new order of sacrificing priests; but *some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*¹

We hold, in opposition to the Church of Rome, that the offering of a propitiatory sacrifice to God is not one of the functions and privileges of the Christian ministry. Jesus Christ, *by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;*² and we derogate from the absolute worthiness and sufficiency of that offering, if we suppose that any supplementary sacrifices are required for the purpose of propitiation. *If God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,*³ we need no other reconciler. We have indeed *our sacrifice, and our altar, and our priesthood, to offer the one, and to minister at the other.* But the sacrifice is a spiritual sacrifice, and the altar is figuratively an altar. We slay no victim, we offer no victim slain: but we commemorate the one great and final sacrifice, properly so called, in the manner appointed by our Lord; and we continually present unto God that memorial, with prayer, and thanksgiving, and an offering of our substance, and of ourselves, both soul and body; and so we apply to ourselves, through faith, the results of the one propitiatory sacrifice; and the whole is rightly, but figuratively termed a eucharistic sacrifice, a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

As to our priesthood, let us beware of arrogating to ourselves the character of mediators between God and men, in any sense which implies that we can stand between them and their Judge, except with reference to that mysterious efficacy which belongs to Christian intercession, by whomsoever offered, if offered in faith, and which it is our special duty to offer in behalf of the people committed to our care. At the same time let us be careful to impress both ourselves and them with just notions of the real

(1) Eph. iv. 11.

(2) Heb. x. 14.

(3) 2 Cor. v. 19.

objects and inherent worthiness of our office. It is ours to realize, instrumentally, to those for whom Christ died, the blessings of which the Levitical priesthood administered only the shadows. It is ours to graft them into the body of Christ's Church; to initiate them into the saving truths of the Gospel; to turn their hearts to the wisdom of the just, guiding them to Him who alone can deliver them from the bondage of sin; declaring, as his ambassadors, the conditions and assurance of pardon; and dispensing to his household the spiritual food of his body and blood; to do all this, and on that account to have the chief stations in that household, and to be entitled to the attention and respect of all who belong to it.

Our blessed Saviour's charge to St. Peter, and through him to all his ministers, was, *Feed my sheep*. Whatsoever acts of kindness, or authority, are requisite for the due execution of that charge, with respect to those to whom we stand in the relation of pastors, it is ours to exercise, and theirs to acknowledge and submit to: but in our ministerial acts both of kindness and authority, especially the latter, we are to have respect to the Church's laws and ordinances; and beyond what *they* require, we may not claim obedience. And it is well that it is so: for a spiritual authority, not so limited, in the hands of fallible and imperfect men, would be perverted, as in the example of Rome, to the ends of an intolerable tyranny over the secret thoughts and consciences, as well as the outward acts and observances of those who should be subject to it.

This limitation of our ministerial *authority*, by the laws of the Church to which we belong, extends also to every part of our ministerial *duty*. As the clergy of an integral and independent national Church, we are bound and restricted in the exercise of our functions not only by the general and fundamental laws of the Church Catholic, but by those of the particular branch of it in which we hold office. We are to teach, as our own Church teaches, in her Articles of Religion, and to minister discipline according to the laws by which she has prescribed and defined it.

First as to our teaching; "The Church of England," says Bishop Hall, "in whose motherhood we have all just

“ cause to pride ourselves, hath in much wisdom and piety delivered her judgment concerning all necessary points of religion, in so complete a body of divinity as all hearts may rest in. Those we read, those we write under, as professing not their truth only, but their sufficiency also. The voice of God our Father in his Scriptures, and (out of them) the voice of the Church our Mother in her Articles, is that which must both guide and settle our resolutions. Whatsoever is besides these, is but private, or unnecessary and uncertain.”

If it be asked, In what sense are the Articles themselves to be understood, for they are not all so precisely worded as to shut out all possible diversity of interpretation? we answer, Where the meaning of an Article may seem to be uncertain, we have the Church for her own interpreter in her Liturgy and Homilies, especially the former: and if in some few instances it should happen, that even with that help we are unable to determine, with perfect certainty, the truth which an Article was intended to assert, or, (which is more likely to be the case) the error which it is intended to deny, we are surely to be guided, in our interpretation of it, by the known, or probable, intention of those who framed it; inasmuch as that will determine the sense in which the Article was received at the first, and that in which it ought still to be received, where it has not been contradicted, or qualified, by any later authoritative declaration of the Church's opinion.⁵ It is possible, and I think barely possible, that the words of the 21st, 22d, and 31st of our Articles may be so construed, as to bear the sense which some have lately attempted to put upon them; but it is not the sense which their authors intended; it is not that in which they have been understood by the English Church; and therefore it is not that in which they are to be subscribed or explained.

It has indeed been said, and not lately for the first time, that the Articles of our Reformed Church were drawn up in general terms, that men of different judgments might accommodate them to their own opinions; and that all who, though differing in the branches, meet together in

(4) Epist. Dedicatory to "The Old Religion."

(5) See Appendix, Note [A.]