

A CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE CLERGY OF

THE DIOCESE OF ARGYLL AND
THE ISLES,

AT THE SYNOD HELD IN

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, OBAN.

ON WEDNESDAY, 6TH AUGUST, 1884.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

J. R. ALEXANDER CHINNERY-HALDANE,

Bishop of Argyll and the Isles.

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MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

Once more through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Clergy of this Diocese, are assembled in this House of God, that we may speak together of the things pertaining to His Church and Kingdom. May the Holy Spirit, Whose Divine Assistance we have just invoked, be present with us to guide and direct us, so that all we think, and say, and do, may be overruled for good according to His Own gracious Will !

OUR RECENT LOSSES.

When we last met, we were lamenting over the removal from amongst us of him who had been our well beloved Bishop. Now we have to mourn the loss of two other of our brethren in the Priesthood, who have passed from us. Our former Dean of the Diocese has been taken away to his rest, and also one of the resident Canons of our Cathedral Church.

With regard to Dean Macgeorge, I know not how I can sufficiently express my love for his memory. He was indeed a true-hearted servant and disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. While health and strength remained to him, he laboured diligently and lovingly, especially among the poor, and that even beyond the limits of his own flock. His life was also a life of Prayer, and each recurring Friday, to my own knowledge, was, with him, a day of renewed intercession for those whom he desired to remember before the Throne of Grace. And even when his strength failed, and when he could no longer work as an active Pastor of souls, he laboured in prayer, and as a Priest in his own house, continued to celebrate the Holy Mysteries, till very near the day of his death. Thus, strengthened and refreshed by the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Him in Whom he believed, he passed away in peace.

In Canon Richardson we have lost another brother, and he one who by his genial kindness made himself beloved by many. As an old and valued friend, he will long be remembered and mourned both in the Diocese in which his work lay, and also, no doubt, far beyond its limits.

May the souls of these our brethren departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace ! And may they, through the Blood of that

Immaculate Lamb Who was slain to take away the sins of the world, be at last, in the Day of the General Resurrection, presented pure and without spot, before the Presence of His Glory, with exceeding joy !

REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR.

Let us now turn to other matters connected with the past year of our Diocese.

Of these one of the most memorable was the commencement of the Church at Portree, which is now being erected in loving remembrance of our late Bishop. The foundation stone was laid last spring with fitting solemnities, and it is hoped that before long the goodly building will be opened for the performance of Divine Service. This work, which was originated by one of the Bishop's oldest friends in England, has given to many others an opportunity of showing their love to his memory, and that in a way of which he would have most heartily approved. For, as many of us will recollect, the establishment of a Mission at Portree was one of the last wishes of his life.

And before I leave this subject, I must allude to the good work which has, during the past year, grown up in connection with this Mission. Not only has the able and energetic Priest placed there by the late Bishop himself, laid the foundation of a permanent work in Portree, but he has also done much besides, with a view to the revival or extension of the Church in those more distant parts of this Diocese. The result has been, that at present there are two of our clergy working in the Long Island, one at Stornoway, and the other in Harris, and that our old church at Caroy on the western coast of Skye has been restored and made fit for the due performance of Divine Service.

In Appin too, the old stronghold of our Church in the Western Highlands, there have been signs of progress and revival. Nearly the first Episcopal act which I was called upon to perform, was to dedicate a new and comely chancel, which had been just added to St. Mary's, Fasnacloich. This work had been accomplished through the exertions and personal aid of Captain Stewart, upon whose property the Church stands, and who has since done further good service to the Diocese, by the restoration at Portnacrois of what must always be regarded as the old Mother Church of the district.

I may also mention that in the Ballachulish Slate Quarries a new

Church School and Teacher's House are approaching completion, and that in the same locality another small Chapel, with an altar, has been provided for occasional Mission services, and for the use of aged people unable to go to their own more distant Church. In Glencoe too, during the past year, a Parsonage has been built for the Priest in charge, and also a new School House has been opened.

At Dunoon an event has taken place since we last met, which I must not fail to notice. I need not allude to the circumstances of the case to which I refer, as they are probably known to you all. But I would just remark that the happy removal of differences, in which our Synod Clerk and I had the privilege of taking part, during my first official visit to Dunoon, was, I believe, the fruit of negotiations that had been going on during the Episcopate of my revered predecessor.

No appointment has yet been made to the charge of Campbeltown, though the work of the Church there has been earnestly and successfully carried on by several Clergymen who have resided in the place during the vacancy. It is my earnest hope and prayer that for this important, and, to my mind, very promising charge, a faithful and earnest Pastor may soon be sent, who will promote the glory of God, and the edification of His People.

During the past year three Deacons have been ordained in our Cathedral Church of the Holy Spirit at Cumbrae—one by myself for work at Lochbuy in the Isle of Mull, and the other two by the Bishop of Brechin. Of these one is now assisting in the services of the Cathedral and in the College, while the other is employed at Dundee.

With regard to my own share in the work of the Diocese I may mention that I have officially visited nearly all its charges once or oftener, and on each occasion I have, when possible, celebrated the Holy Eucharist, and preached. In fifteen of our churches and chapels I have administered Confirmation, in all to about eighty individuals.

Before passing to other subjects I must say one word about our Western Highlands Mission Fund. To that fund (a memorial in itself of the provident care of our late Bishop for the future welfare of the Diocese), and to those who have supported it, and still continue to do so, I feel greatly indebted. As in past years, so now, that fund has been a substantial aid in carrying out the work of the Church,

and I trust it may long be maintained to promote the objects for which it was originated.

EXAMINATION OF OUR OWN LIVES AND WORK.

Thus far, my Reverend Brethren, I have endeavoured to review the events connected with our Diocese which have taken place during the past year—a year which I trust has been one of steady though quiet progress.

But it is also our duty one and all to look a little below the surface and to ask ourselves questions more heart-searching than those which may be answered by a mere reference to outward facts and statistics. In so doing let us place ourselves in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose servants we are, Whose commission we hold, and to Whom we shall have to give account in that great Day, when He shall come again to be our Judge.

Let us then examine ourselves as to our work and ministry, and let us ask ourselves how we have been fulfilling our solemn duties as Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.

OUR PREACHING.

In the first place, how has it been as to our preaching? Have we preached Christ's Gospel or have we not? This is no needless question. For the Gospel is a very definite thing, at least, if, when we use that word, we attach to it the same meaning as St. Paul did. The Gospel, as I endeavoured to remind you last year, is the proclamation of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, the only Refuge and Hope of our Souls.

The question, then, that we should put to ourselves is not one as to our eloquence or as to our learning, or even as to our piety and earnestness. It is a much simpler question—Have we or have we not made Jesus Christ our Blessed Lord the principal Theme of all our discourses? No doubt we have constantly alluded to Him, and we have ever gone on the supposition that all our faith is built on Him. But I am bold to say that this is not enough. We ought to have done more, and I hope we have. For not only at the great Christian Festivals, but at all times, it has been our duty to preach fully the Divine Person of Christ, and His Redeeming work.

We may and we must, of course, set forth the other truths of Divine Revelation. We must preach about the Eternal Father's great love, about the Spirit's Grace, about the Blessed Virgin and the

Saints, about the Sacraments, about Faith, and Hope, and Love, about Prayer, about the Sacred Scriptures, about Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell. All these things must have a prominent place in our preaching. But they must all be set forth in their connection with Jesus Christ and His Gospel. The Father's Love is revealed and conveyed to us through the Son. By the Ascension of Jesus we have the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Blessed Virgin is the Mother of Jesus. The Saints are His Saints, the Sacraments are the extension of His Incarnation. Faith, Hope, and Love, must have Jesus as their Object. Prayer must be offered unto Him, or through Him. The Sacred Scriptures are the inspired writings which testify of Him. In Him Death and Judgment are robbed of their terrors. Of Heaven He is the central Glory and Joy. From Hell He is the strong Deliverer, mighty to save.

And in thus preaching the Gospel *again and again*, let us remember what we are taught by the Apostle St. Paul, namely, that the riches of Christ are unsearchable. We can never get to the end of them. If we preached continually on some earthly theme, we should soon wear it out. But we can never wear out the blessed Gospel. Congregations may very easily be wearied with sermons about the constitution of the Church, and about the Divine origin of Episcopacy. Still more surely will they be wearied with moral essays on moral duties, such as passed current among the Moderates of the last century, and such as are in a modern dress reproduced by their successors in the present day. Discourses like these *must* weary and grow stale with repetition. But have we ever yet heard of a congregation that was wearied with the Name of Jesus, and tired of the preaching of His Gospel?

OUR EUCHARISTS.

Next let us examine ourselves as to the Holy Eucharist. Have we, as God's Priests, offered up to his Divine Majesty, that Pure Sacrifice as frequently and as devoutly as possible? Have we realised that the Sacrifices of the Old Testament, though they were Divinely appointed and graciously accepted, were in comparison with the Eucharist, poor and weak?

Have we realised that upon our altars we have no mere type or figure of an absent Christ, but the Real Presence of the Lamb of God Who once for all died upon the Cross, but Who now ever *lives*, the abiding Propitiation for our sins?

Remembering all this, have we been eager on every possible occasion to offer up this Holy Sacrifice and to plead continually with the Eternal Father the Merits and Death of His Dear Son, in order that we and all His Whole Church, both the living and the departed, may obtain remission of our sins and all the other benefits of His Passion?

My Reverend Brethren, it seems to me a very sad thing that the Christian Sacrifice should, in some cases, be only offered up when there is a considerable number of the Faithful to be communicated. The Eucharist is doubtless a Feast as well as a Sacrifice, but I am sure we think far too little of it, in its latter aspect; and we are apt to conclude that if we celebrate sufficiently often to meet the needs of the majority of our communicants, we have done enough. But it is not so!

Let us then examine ourselves as to how we have, during the year that has gone by, in this respect, exercised our priestly office.

OUR PRAYERS AND DAILY OFFICES.

Next, my Reverend Brethren, let us examine ourselves as to our prayers. The Man of God must be a man of prayer. The Christian Priest must ever be offering up prayers and supplications both for himself and also for his people.

Let us consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, even Jesus the Pastor and Bishop of our souls. Not only did He command His Disciples to pray—not only did He teach them how, but He has left to us His own example that we should follow in His steps. He Himself prayed continually.

Behold Him in His Baptism. It was while He was praying that Heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in a bodily shape like a Dove. Again, when He had entered upon His Public Ministry, we read in the Holy Gospel how that in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went into a solitary place and there prayed. Then before he chose His Twelve Apostles, He departed into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. Then again, as we to-day commemorate* when with three of them He went up into another mountain, it was *as He prayed* that He was transfigured before them. So also, when, with the same chosen three, He entered the Garden of Gethsemane, He not only said unto them, Watch and pray, but being in an agony, He Himself

* This Charge was delivered on the Feast of the Transfiguration.

prayed the more earnestly, in that awful hour when, on account of our sins, His sweat was as it were great drops of Blood falling down to the ground. And on the Cross we still hear Him praying to the Father—Father forgive them for they know not what they do. Father into Thy Hands I commend My spirit. And having now risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven, He is still our interceding Priest. For at the Right Hand of God, He ever liveth to make intercession for us. In all this He has left to His people, and above all to His priests, an example that they should follow in His steps.

His Church too has taken means, so far as lies in her power, that all her obedient sons in the Sacred Ministry, should imitate their Master in the way of prayer. We see this especially in the well-known rule of our own Communion as to this matter, a rule at once both plain and stringent. It runs thus—“All Priests and Deacons are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer, either privately or openly, not being let by sickness or some other urgent cause.” It may be well to consider these words in detail.

First: they lay an obligation on *all* Priests and Deacons—not—not merely upon those who have to minister in Cathedrals or large Parish Churches—but on all the Clergy.

Next it is laid down that the two offices are to be said *daily*—not on Sundays only—not on Wednesdays and Fridays only—not in Lent only—but daily.

Then we are told that they are to be said “either privately or openly.” Here provision seems to be made for Clergy situated as most of us are, in this Diocese. In very few of our Highland Churches can we have regular week-day congregations. Yet we are not on this account exempted from our daily offices. If the appointed Morning and Evening Services cannot be said publicly, the Church tells us they are to be said privately, in our own homes, in our own studies, or it may be, as we travel by sea or land. In short, wherever we go, our Service Books must go along with us. For if we deliberately leave home, even for a single night, without providing for ourselves the means of saying the daily services, with all their appointed Psalms, Canticles, and Lessons, we are clearly violating a rule we are bound to obey.

And, my Reverend Brethren, observe further, how guarded our Church is with regard to the exception she makes to the appointed

rule. We are all bound to say our Morning and Evening Prayer daily except when we are hindered *by sickness or some other urgent cause*. Now what is an urgent cause? Not one of our own making. This is all the more evident when we compare the present rule with that which existed in former editions of our Prayer-book. Priests and Deacons were enjoined daily to say Matins and Evensong "except they were letted *by preaching, studying of Divinity, or by some other urgent cause*." In short, the Clergy were then left to judge for themselves in this matter, so that if they thought half an hour given to study was more profitably spent than half an hour given to prayer and praise, and the reading of Holy Scripture, they were at liberty to omit their offices. This liberty has not been continued to us. The exception in favour of preaching and the studying of Divinity has been deliberately expunged, and the word "sickness" has been substituted.

We are, then, *bound* to the daily recitation of our daily offices. A happy bondage indeed—a bondage in no way inconsistent with the service of Him Who said, My yoke is easy and my burden light—a bondage in no way contrary to the law of liberty or to the requirements of that service which is perfect freedom.

Shall we complain if our branch of the Church requires of her ministers what is required in every other part of Christendom, and what has been, in some form, required in every age of Christianity? No. We should rather give thanks for this bond of union in prayer and praise, and we should rejoice in this golden chain which unites us not only with our brethren in the Sacred Ministry, who, all over the world, are day by day, saying the same offices—but also with those who have now entered into their rest.

Let us then examine ourselves as to this matter. We have enjoyed the dignity that belongs to our Priestly Office. We have expected, and we have received, from our brethren of the Laity, that deference to which the Ministers of Christ are entitled. But while we have thus enjoyed the privileges of our Order, we ought to ask ourselves, whether we have at the same time fulfilled its obligations, especially this very obvious one.

The saying of Matins and Evensong does not, however, exhaust all that is required of us in the way of prayer. The true Priest must know what it is, in the language of his own heart, to pour out his supplications before his God. He must know what it is to bewail

and lament his sins, (not only when he is making his formal confessions), but much oftener, and in the silence of his own chamber, when no human ear can hear, and when no eye but that of God is looking upon him. He must know also what it is to plead for his flock collectively, or, as occasion offers, individually. He must know what it is to feed upon Jesus in his heart, by faith with thanksgiving, through coming to Him often in prayer. He must know what it is to meditate upon the sacred events of His Life and Death, His Resurrection and Ascension, by a prayerful study of the Holy Gospels.

He must know too what it is, often to invoke the aid of God the Holy Ghost, on himself in his work, and on his brethren in the Ministry, and upon the whole Church of Christ. All this is what I mean, when I say that we must be men of prayer. Let us question ourselves, and see whether in this respect we have lived up to our high calling.

FASTING AND ABSTINENCE.

Let us now turn to another point, on which we should practise self-examination. I mean with regard to self-denial. Our Saviour Christ has said, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself. If the Master thus speaks to *all* who would be His disciples, with how much more solemnity should these words of His come home to us who are His Priests, the Ministers of Him Who, though he was God, yet for our sakes became Man, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and concerning Whom it was written that even He, the Lord Christ, pleased not Himself?

And as with regard to Prayer so also with regard to Self-Denial, the Church of Christ in general, and our own Church in particular, has given us a definite rule. Of course this rule only deals with a certain species of self-denial, one that to some of us is very easy. Yet the rule to which I allude may be taken as a test of our obedience and conformity to the mind of Christ, and as a useful means whereby we may discover whether our own convenience or the authority of His Church has been our ruling motive. Let us then turn to our Prayer-book. There in a very prominent position we are confronted with a Table of Vigils, Fasts, and Days of Abstinence, to be observed in the year. Not only does this include the Forty Days of Lent—more than a dozen Vigils before certain Holy Days—the Ember Days, and the Rogation Days; but it also includes all the Fridays in

the year except Christmas Day. And this one exception, which is not extended even to such an important festival as that of All Saints, shows how much stress our Church, in common with all Catholic Christendom, lays upon the weekly commemoration of her Lord's Sufferings and Death. Surely we cannot be true to His precepts as to self-denial, if needlessly or carelessly we disregard this and the other plainly expressed directions of His Church with regard to fasting or abstinence. What can our brethren of the Laity think, if they see us who, by our profession, are bound to maintain the discipline of the Church—if they see us, I say, feasting with others, or making no difference at our own tables, in Lent and on Fridays, as if no yearly commemoration of the Wilderness, no weekly commemoration of Calvary, had ever been appointed?

If, then, we would be Christ's true Disciples—above all, if we would be Christ's faithful Ministers, let us examine ourselves as to our self-denial, and in so doing I think we may well begin by discovering how far we have obeyed or disobeyed the letter of the Church's law with regard to fasting or abstinence. The letter of the law is, by comparison, a trifle, and the spirit of self-sacrifice is everything; but let us remember what the Master Himself has said, He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. Those who break the Church's law as to prayer and as to fasting, are not the most likely to live in the spirit of self-denial.

PASTORAL CHARITY.

And having thus far examined our priestly lives as to Prayer and Fasting, we are naturally led next to ask ourselves how we have fulfilled our duties with regard to those ministerial acts of charity which must form so large a portion of our work. The Pastor of souls is not principally concerned with giving alms in the ordinary sense of the word. Often he is poor, and to some extent dependent on the offerings of those among whom he is called to minister. Yet we must all remember that our claim to reap from our people worldly things, in the exercise of our calling, is that we have faithfully sown unto them spiritual things. We must be diligent Pastors of souls, and faithful Shepherds of our flocks. Our charity, whether or no it takes the form of almsgiving, must always take the form of real service done by us to those committed to our care. Hear what St. Paul says, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

I have already spoken to you of the duty of which we are reminded in the former clause of this Apostolic declaration: namely, that we should preach Christ to our people. I would also ask you to join with me in self-examination, as to how we have fulfilled the latter clause, namely, with regard to our duty as the Ministers or Servants of our people. Let us remember that this duty is by no means fulfilled when we have preached to them the Gospel on Sundays, or even when we have prayed for them, or have offered up the Eucharist on their behalf. This is much, but it is not nearly the whole. We must be the servants of our people all the week through, if we would be the representatives of Him, Who lived His whole life on earth, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. We have to visit not only the sick but also the whole. We have to instruct the ignorant, and not only ignorant children, but also those who in riper years have not the knowledge of the Faith. We have to go after the lost sheep, and seek to bring them back into the right way. Moreover, we have to sympathise with our people in their sorrows, and to comfort them in their troubles. Above all, when Death draws near, we have to be frequently at their bedsides, in order that we may be able to direct their dying eyes to their Crucified Redeemer, and through Him commend their souls unto God, as to a faithful Creator and most merciful Father.

My Reverend Brethren, we are one and all by our office the servants of the people. Let us realise this and examine ourselves as to how we have served them. *They* cannot punish us even if we neglect them from Monday morning to Saturday night, except, perhaps, by withdrawing from those Sunday services at which we expect to see them; and then in truth they are punishing themselves. But God can punish us, and He will, if we neglect that flock over which He has made us Shepherds, and concerning which we shall have to give a solemn account in that great Day, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear. Terrible will it be then for careless Pastors to hear from Him such awful words as these—I was sick, and ye, the Shepherds of My Flock, visited Me not! Depart from Me! Woe to the Shepherds of Israel that have fed themselves! Should not the Shepherds feed the Flock? Ye have eaten the fat, and ye have clothed you with the wool, but ye have not fed the flock. Let us then examine ourselves, my Reverend Brethren, not only as to our sermons, our Eucharists, and our prayers; not only as to our self-denial and conformity to the rules of the Church, but also as

to our personal ministrations among the souls committed to our care.

And may God be merciful to us one and all, and grant that the malediction threatened to the unfaithful Shepherds may never fall upon the head of any one of us here present !

THE CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST.

And now I must draw to a close, and yet I would not end without saying a few words on the motive that should urge us on, in all our priestly or ministerial work. That motive should be, not fear of a coming Judge, but love towards a Personal and ever present Saviour. Love to Jesus Christ, must be kindled in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, and then in the strength of that love we must go forth to do His Work.

Love is the strongest of all motives, and the most fruitful ; and love to our Lord Jesus Christ, when kindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is the strongest of all affections. Like light, it fills the soul with brightness. Like fire it burns up and consumes the defilements of our corrupt nature. Holy love to Christ takes possession of the soul in which it has place, and drives out more and more everything that is contrary to itself. It leaves less and less room for the sordid love of the world and the flesh. It completely transforms the heart, so that those who were once carnally minded, which is death, become through love to a Crucified, Risen, and Ascended Jesus, spiritually minded, which is life and peace.

And see how this is all founded on the true Gospel. We cannot love an abstraction, a Christ who is only a myth or an idea, the creation or the development of man's own imagination. But we can love the real living Jesus of the Evangelists, Who came forth from the Father and came into the world, eighteen hundred years ago, and Who then left the world and went unto the Father, and for Whose second and glorious appearing we are now waiting with humble hope.

This Jesus Whom we do love, is none other than God made Man, Who dwelt among us, the Child of Blessed Mary, the Royal Babe Who was worshipped by the Kings of the East ; the Divine Son Who must needs be early in His Father's House and about His Father's business ; the Carpenter of Nazareth, by Whom the worlds were made : the Meek and Lowly One Who from the first suffered Himself to be reckoned among the transgressors and condescended to receive Baptism from the Preacher of Repentance : the Tempted One in Whom there was no possibility of sinning : the gracious Healer

of sick bodies and sick souls ; the Friend of Publicans and Sinners ; the gentle Receiver of the little children who were brought to Him ; the Meek Lamb of God Who bore our sins in His Own Body on the Tree ; the Lord of Life and Glory, Who for our sakes endured the dark prison of the grave ; the Mighty Victor, who by His Death destroyed death, and by His Rising again restored to us everlasting life ; the King of Glory Who in our sight ascended up into Heaven, and Who now lives and reigns there in that very Body in which He suffered, and with which He shall return to this world when He shall come again to receive His people unto Himself. This is that Jesus Whom we have known, in Whom we have believed, and on Whom we have grounded all our hopes for time and for eternity.

And so let us pray to God our Father, in the name of that same Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, that we through the Holy Spirit may be filled with an ever-increasing love to Him. Then shall the love of Christ constrain us, Christ's love to us, and our love to Christ, and in spite of all our sins, all our weakness, all our ignorance, and all our mistakes, we shall have our portion at last among holy priests, and diligent pastors, the faithful servants of our Lord and of His people.

