

sufficiently in touch with our daily experience and the political and Church history of our times to move the Christian to a profound trust that when the book of God's secrets, of which Christ is the opener, lies open at last, it will disclose a plan of beauty and of grace adequate to our highest thoughts of God.

"God's in His heaven ; all's right with the world."

The Apocalypse is necessary to the faith. In all times and in all experiences we can remember, as we read its striking allegories and hear again its mighty battle-cries, *nos passi graviora*, "He that *overcometh* shall enter into the joy of his Lord."

These are the things that must quickly come to pass ; the season of them is near.

F. ERNEST SPENCER.

ART. IV.—A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY EPISCOPAL CHARGE.

A SHORT time ago there was reprinted in the *Chester Diocesan Gazette* the "Primary Charge of Nicholas Stratford," delivered in his cathedral on May 5, 1691, which is believed to be the earliest extant charge of any Bishop of Chester. The charge contains many interesting features which throw light upon the Churchmanship and religious conditions of a critical period in the life of the English Church.

But first a few words as to Stratford himself. He was born at Hemel Hempstead in 1633, the year in which Laud became Archbishop. He was admitted scholar of Trinity College, Oxford, in 1650—the year after the death of Charles I.—and he became a Fellow of the same College in 1656. In 1667—the year in which "Paradise Lost" was published—he succeeded Richard Herrick as Warden of the Collegiate Church in Manchester, where he seems to have restored the use of the surplice and the custom of receiving the elements kneeling at the rails. In 1670 Stratford became a Prebendary of Lincoln, in 1674 Dean of St. Asaph, and in 1683 Rector of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, in the city of London. In 1684 he resigned his wardenship in Manchester, and in 1689 he was

Edition), by Canon Huntingford, gives, I think, firm ground for the opinion that we are able to discover in history many sure fulfilments of this prophecy. We can see, at least, the *principles* foreshadowed in the Apocalypse at work continuously in the field of history.

consecrated at Fulham by Compton, Bishop of London, to the See of Chester.

The year 1689, we must remember, was that of the Coronation of William and Mary, and of the secession of the non-jurors. (This will account for Compton instead of Sancroft being Stratford's chief consecrator.) It was also the year of the *Toleration Act*.

Then, as to the Diocese of Chester in those days. In area it was, of course, far greater than at the present time. For, besides containing the county, with which the diocese is now practically coterminous, it contained the whole of Lancashire, a great part of Westmoreland, the whole of the Archdeaconry of Richmond (a large portion of Yorkshire), and parts of Flintshire and Denbighshire. To clergy and churchwardens drawn from this enormous area was this charge addressed.

I.

The subject of the Charge is the various questions of the Ordination Services for deacons and priests, chosen, so the Bishop states, for the purpose of "putting you in remembrance what manner of Men the Pastors of the Church ought to be."

Upon the words of the first question addressed to candidates for the priesthood—*according to the Will of our Lord Jesus Christ and the order of this Church of England*—the Bishop says: "These latter words are not put to denote another Rule, different from the *Will of Christ*; but are rather added, by way of Explication, to shew, Who those are that are called according to his Will—viz., Those who are so qualified as the Church of *England* requires."

The Bishop's way of expressing this connection between the two calls (or two parts of the call) is somewhat strange, as is also his manner of explaining "the Call here meant." "This inward Call," he says, "consists in the due qualification of the Person for this weighty Work (for God never calls a Man to any Employment which He does not in some good measure fit him for). These Qualifications (*sic*) may be reduced to three General Heads: That the *Life*, That the *Learning*, That the *Design* of the Person be such as are agreeable to the Sacredness of the Office."

The Bishop proceeds to deal with each of these. Upon the subject of *Learning* he speaks very plainly. "Whosoever is so ignorant that he is not able to instruct his People in every necessary Point, both of Faith and Practice, and to enforce their Duty by fit Persuasives, he is not called according to the Will of Christ. No man doubtless can imagine, That it

is the Will of Christ that the Blind should lead the Blind ; that they should be set to be Guides to others, who know not the way themselves."

When the Bishop comes to the third qualification (to which alone of the three he prefixes the word "Necessary") we see that he is dealing with conditions very different from those of our own day. This "Necessary Qualification" he defines as a "*due Intention.*" Then he quotes the first question in the Ordering of Deacons, to which he appends the following words: "Not but that a Man's intention may be approved by God, that hath in it a mixture of respect to Secular Advantage; but then it must be so much Inferiour, in such perfect Subordination to the other, as his principal end, that he despise all Worldly Regards in comparison with it."

At the close of this section of the Charge the Bishop states that, though "many" of the clergy are such that against their life, learning, and intention, their "Adversaries" could "make no just Exception," yet he fears "there may be some, who if tryed by this Rule, will be forced to confess, that they are not so qualified as the Laws of Christ and of this (*sic*) Church require." He then adduces (1) those "who endeavour to get into this Holy Employment by such unworthy Means as God abhors, by false Titles and forged Certificates." (Were these last certificates of learning?) (2) Those "who leave the Work wholly to others, and take the Wages only to themselves." (But was not this inevitably the result of pluralities? And the good Bishop seems himself to have held a wardenship, a prebend, a deanery, and a rectory, all in different dioceses, at the same time!) (3) Those "who for their ease and pleasure absent themselves from their Charges, and think that Curate the best qualified who may be hired at the cheapest rate."

Stratford then charges the consciences of the clergy "with two Things relating to this matter." First, they are "never to send a Person to be Ordained with a Lye in his hand; that is that you never signifie to the Bishop that you will take a Person for your Curate (in case he shall think fit to Ordain him) whom you intend never to employ in that Service." Second, they were "never to give a Testimonial of the good Life and Conduct of any Person, whose Life and Conversation you do not certainly know to be such."

These "Things" only too clearly reveal how impossible (in days when travelling was slow and parishes terribly isolated) must have been the adequate supervision of a diocese which stretched from Chester to Appleby, and from Liverpool to Richmond. It would be interesting to know what proportion of the whole of the clergy of the diocese were present at the Visitation, or what would be the cost in money and in time

of a journey to and from Chester to an incumbent, say, from the Yorkshire dales.

II.

The next section of the Charge is based upon the questions about "*the Holy Scriptures containing sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for Eternal Salvation,*" etc., and upon being "*determined out of the said Scriptures to instruct the People committed to Your Charge,*" etc.

Upon the first question the Bishop says very little; he "takes it for granted" that they "all firmly believe it." But upon the second, under which he deals with teaching, preaching, and catechizing, he speaks at considerable length, and some of his advice is extremely good. He commences by noticing that "One of the prime Qualifications St. Paul requires in a Pastor is that he be *Διδάκτικος*," which, he notes, means "not only *able*, but *apt and ready to teach*."

The teaching of the pastor, he says, is either public or private. The consideration of private teaching for a moment he defers; "that which is publick is to be perform'd these two ways especially: by *Preaching* and by *Catechising*."

Stratford lived in an age of great preachers, and was himself—so we learn from the "*Memoirs of Matthew Henry*"—"a man of great learning and true piety, and an excellent preacher." In the two well-known volumes of "*The Classic Preachers of the English Church*" twelve such are cited. Of these twelve, five—*i.e.*, South, Beveridge, Bilson, Bull, and Tillotson—may be regarded as Stratford's contemporaries, while three others—*viz.*, Barrow, Jeremy Taylor, and Sanderson—died after he reached manhood.

Stratford commences his remarks upon preaching by noticing "how assiduous many of the Ancients were in this part of their Office, and how necessary they thought it so to be." He then strongly rebukes those "who live in the Neglect of it, who are so far from observing the Laws of our Church, while they boast of more than ordinary Conformity to it, that they have not perhaps more than one Sermon in a Year for two Benefices."

These last words, if at all generally applicable, give a painful picture of the discharge of the pastoral office at the time.

He then proceeds to deal, first with the *Matter*, and secondly with the *Manner*, of preaching. Under the first head he advises that "our Pulpit Discourses should be chiefly confined to those Truths, which are *necessary*, or *highly profitable* . . . and never let any Truth, which is called in question by none (*sic*) of your Hearers, be made a Matter of Controversie in the Pulpit. . . . Set yourselves especially against those

sins which are most visible in your Auditors; as St. Paul who reason'd of Righteousness and Chastity, when he preached before an unjust and adulterous *Felix*; . . . Preach frequently against profane Swearing, Perjury, Drunkenness, and Profanation of the Lord's Day; and when such a Sermon is to be preached read to your People such Statute-Law or Laws as are provided against that Sin, which is the Subject of the Day."

No one could say of such preaching as the Bishop here recommends that it would not be "plain" and practical. But upon this subject, as upon others in the charge, there seems to us who live in these days a curious intermingling, if not confusion, of the spiritual—or perhaps, rather, the "Christian-moral"—standard with that of the statute law. The Church in Stratford's eyes is very much "by law established," and here at least its function seems to be rather to enforce the contents of the Statute Book than to create such a tone and atmosphere of public opinion as would demand improvement and reform of that eminently valuable *corpus*. If the law represents (as we are generally led to believe) public opinion, we seem driven to the not very exalted conception of the Church as an instrument for enforcing obedience to public opinion, rather than for raising public opinion to a higher level.

On the *manner* of preaching Stratford enjoins that the Word should be preached "*sincerely, plainly, and affectionately.*" He defines "sincerity" as consisting in "teaching all that the Scripture makes necessary; so in teaching nothing for necessary that is foreign to the Scripture; as the Church of Rome does in her new (*sic*) Creed, imposing many doctrines, etc."

The definition of "sincerity" cannot fail to strike us as strange. It approaches the Latin *sincerus* when that requires the translation "whole." And, again, we must notice that an external, almost legal, test of "sincerity" is at least suggested. (If I might digress for a moment: the number of different Greek words which in the Authorized Version of the New Testament are rendered by *sincere, sincerity, sincerely* is remarkable.) Then, one would like to understand exactly Bishop Stratford's allusion to Rome's *new* creed. If he refers to the dogmas propounded at the Council of Trent, the use of the word "new" for doctrines, which, in their new enunciation, were at least a hundred years old, is remarkable.

To the second qualification—*viz.*, "*Plainly*"—is added the further definition "to the capacity of your Hearers"; and the Bishop remarks: "He defeats the design of his Preaching, and betrays his Hypocrisy, who renders that obscure, which he pretends to reveal."

Under "Affectionately" we are told: "It would grieve a

Man to hear matters of the greatest moment, so coldly and drowsily delivered, as if the Preacher did not himself believe what he said, and were afraid lest his Hearers should be brought to believe it."

The next subject of the Charge is "Catechizing, or instructing persons in the Principles of Religion: which is, indeed, but a more familiar way of Preaching." This is a duty laid upon you by the Canon and Statute Law both." The Bishop then quotes the 59th Canon, and adds: "The same is made your Duty by Act of Parliament in the first Rubrick after the Catechism." But we feel that Stratford is on higher ground when he proceeds: "Should we set aside these considerations and consider only how advantageous this Work is to the Welfare of the Souls committed to our care; the great Benefits they would reap by it, the great Mischiefs they fall into by the Neglect of it, one would think we should need no other Motive to put in upon the diligent practice of it."

This section in which the Bishop deals with catechizing, as it is one of the most complete, is also one of the most valuable parts of the charge; and his advice is as much needed to-day as it was when the charge was delivered, more than 200 years ago. The practice may be more common now, but is it yet so generally pursued as it certainly deserves to be?

"What is the reason," he continues, "that our Sermons are generally of so little effect? . . . One main Reason doubtless, is, because they were never prepared to understand our Sermons, and to profit by them, by being first more familiarly instructed in the Principles of Religion. What's (*sic*) the Reason that many are so easily seduced to Error and Vice, but because they were never rooted and grounded in the Faith?"

"As, therefore, my Brethren, you tender the Salvation of your People, set yourselves without delay to this so advantageous and necessary a work, and that you may do it the more effectually, I give you in Charge, to preach constantly in the Afternoon, upon some part of the Church Catechism, and to examine some of the Young People of your Parish quite thorow in it, as oft as you preach upon it."

III.

The next section of the Charge deals with Baptism, Confirmation, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Three paragraphs are devoted to Baptism. In the first, we are told that "Baptism being the solemn Admission of a Person into the publick Society of Christians, it is very unbecoming its Nature and Design to have it administer'd in private." In the second, the Bishop advises that the con-

gregation be exhorted "diligently to attend throughout the whole Administration, to reflect upon their past lives, and to consider how far they have kept, and wherein they have broken their Baptismal Vow." In the third paragraph an early date for baptism is enjoined, "lest by unnecessary delay the Child die, before it be dedicated to the Service of the Lord Jesus."

What light do these final words throw upon Bishop Stratford's own doctrine of Baptism?

When we come to the subject of Confirmation, we cannot help wondering how, with the roads and the means of locomotion available in those days, in such an extended diocese, the rite could be at all generally administered.

When the opportunities for Confirmation must have been comparatively rare, we can understand there being a wider range in the average age of the candidates than at the present time. Suppose an opportunity came once in seven years, then the temptation to present children from ten to twelve years of age may have been great. Bishop Stratford evidently did not believe in very young candidates, for those "are not to be thought to be of a competent age (though they can repeat the Words) till they be capable of knowing the meaning of them, and their own great Concernment therein. For what profit can they receive by Confirmation, unless they understand what the design of it is, and the Obligation they take upon themselves thereby?" (The view of Confirmation suggested by these last words is surely somewhat strange.)

To the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper only one short paragraph is devoted, and in that there is nothing to call for remark.

The next subject is that of "*the driving away all erroneous and strange Doctrines.*" In the following comment upon these words there is much practical common-sense: "Observe that the *Erroneous Doctrines* here meant, are those only, which your People (some of them at least) are already infected with, for no Errors can be banished from them but those which they have given entertainment to. As for other Errors, which they know nothing of, never so much as mention them, lest by acquainting your People therewith, you may endanger their being insnared by them."

From this he proceeds to consider Pastoral Visitation under the heading of "*To use . . . private Monitions and Exhortations as well to the Sick as to the Whole, etc.*" Here again the Bishop's teaching is extremely good and useful. "I beseech you not to be strangers to your People, . . . but to go to their Houses, and acquaint yourselves familiarly with them, that you may the better know what their particular Tempers and Inclinations are, what are the Prejudices they lie under,

what the Temptations they are most obnoxious to. . . . By one hour's familiar Discourse with them in private, you may work more good upon them than by many Sermons in publick." He then strengthens his exhortation by an appeal to St. Paul's example, who "taught not only publicly, but *from house to house*. Night and Day he ceased not (as he had opportunity) to warn *every Man*; not all collectively, but every one apart, as the Words in the original import, That he exhorted and comforted and charged every one."¹

After speaking with great earnestness upon the visitation of the sick the Bishop passes to the question :

"*Will you be diligent in Prayer, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same? . . .*"

The Bishop strongly recommends his clergy, "in all your Parishes where a Congregation (though but a small one) can be got together to have every day, Morning and Evening Prayer in your Churches." Also he enjoins that they "read the Prayers not *partially* but *entirely*; and with such seriousness as becomes them, as may invite all piously-disposed People to them, and quicken their Devotion when they are at them."

Having spoken of the need of private prayer, "both for your People and yourselves," he proceeds to deal with the studies of the Clergy. He cites St. Paul's command to "Timothy to *give attendance to reading*—viz., of the Holy Scriptures," and then remarks "if this was needful for *Timothy*, who had learned the Holy Scriptures from a Child, it will, I fear, be much more needful for many of us." Stratford's advice upon this study is worth quoting at length :

"I therefore earnestly press you to the study of the Holy Scriptures day and night, to get such parts of them by heart, as may be of most frequent and necessary use, that you may have them in readiness upon all occasions. And in your reading of them, to observe those places which are most obscure, to compare them with the Originals, and with the words coherent; to consult some one or more of the best Commentators upon them, that you may attain to the true sense of them. And for those who have leisure and ability for it, to read the Fathers, at least, of the three first Centuries, the History and Antiquities of the Church; the *Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, and Jewish* Antiquities; and such other parts of Learning, without which many places of Scripture cannot be well understood."

Upon the undertakings given by the candidates for ordina-

¹ Acts xx. 31, *νοθεῖν ἕνα ἕκαστον*. Cf. 1 Thess. ii. 11.

tion—(1) “to be diligent to frame and fashion their own selves and their families according to the Doctrine of Christ,” and (2) “to make both themselves and these, as much as in them lyeth, wholesome Examples and Patterns to the flock of Christ”—the Bishop speaks very plainly. The first, he says, is an undertaking “to have your Conversation in all things suitable to the Gospel you preach. He can never be seriously concerned for other men’s souls, who has not first a care for his own. . . . Suppose he could sincerely endeavour to destroy that sin in others which he cherishes in himself, yet what success can he in reason expect? . . . Can they think, that he does in good earnest believe what he preaches, when he unpreaches the same again in his life?”

The following would hardly find a place in an episcopal Charge to-day: “Thou that teachest another Man should not be drunk, if thou art a Drunkard; Thou that preachest another should not be covetous, or proud, or contentious; if thou art so thyself, thy own Sermons will rise up in judgment against thee.” Or, “you cannot go to Heaven at so cheap a rate, as your People can; as your Calling is more holy, and stands in a nearer Relation to God, so also must your Lives be.”

The charge closes with a very lengthy exhortation upon “The strict observation of the Canon against clandestine Marriages.” Considering the space which the Bishop devotes to this subject, and the strength of his language in regard to it—he speaks of “those who drive on this scandalous trade” as “no other than the idle, loose, and vagrant; that is, the Scum and Refuse of the Clergy”—the evil must have been all too common at the time; in fact, he expressly states not only “that many complaints have been made to me about it,” but adds that he is informed that “lately” there have been “Two Incestuous Clandestine Marriages within this diocese.”

He then adduces a long series of decrees of English Councils, dating from 1175, and concluding with the 62nd Canon of 1603. He also reminds the clergy that “if the Circumstances of *Time* and *Place* be not duly observed” the mere possession or production of a License is insufficient.

The effects of these marriages to which he draws attention are (1) “The Sin of Incest, in joyning those Persons in Matrimony who are within the Degrees prohibited”; (2) “the violating the Rights of Parents, and contempt of their Authority”; (3) “The Dishonour they reflect upon our Church and our Holy Profession is intollerable; so much hath the Reputation of the Clergy been thereby lessen’d that it hath been moved more than once, in the Great Council of the Nation, that this Work might be taken out of their hands,

and intrusted to others, who might be more faithful in the Execution of it."

From the extracts I have given I think the reader will see that Bishop Stratford's Primary Charge contains not only valuable advice of permanent usefulness to the clergy, but throws much light upon the conditions of life and difficulties of episcopal supervision in the Church of England during a critical period of her history.

Stratford may not have been an example of the highest type of a Churchman or a Bishop. But it has been well for the Church of England that in almost every age of her history she has had such men among her superior officers. It is easy to affect to despise such men, and they certainly are not the material out of which saints and martyrs, or great leaders of thought, or great reformers are made. But we cannot afford in a great institution to be without that sanctified common-sense—a homely and discreet, if a somewhat legalistic, piety—and we cannot afford to be without the great learning which, considering his opportunities, Stratford certainly possessed. Such men are eminently useful in critical times like the age in which Stratford lived, and we think that the points of view from which they approach matters ecclesiastical appeal to a wide section at least of the laity of the English Church.

It would not be difficult to name Bishops within the last half-century at whom it was the favourite sport of extremists to jeer. But experience has proved that some, at least, of these men were extremely useful directors and very valuable counsellors.

"History," it has been said, "is a splendid cordial for a drooping courage." In the study of original documents—even like this charge—we often get the most valuable insight into the history and the conditions of the past. To-day much is said derogatory to the clerical profession. But we have only to think what the average clergyman must have been at the end of the seventeenth century—to whom this Charge, we presume, was addressed—and compare his apparent standard of life with actual average standard of the clergy at the present day in order to thank God and take courage.

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