

THE STUDY:

Helps for Preachers

FROM

*ENGLISH, AMERICAN, AND CONTINENTAL
SOURCES.*

Second Series:

LONDON:

R. D. DICKINSON, FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.

1874.



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JANUARY, 1874.

THE MODERN ENGLISH PULPIT.

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IN order to prepare the reader to appreciate our estimate of the Modern English Pulpit, we shall first give some illustrations of the natural correspondence between the physical and intellectual character of a people and their religious faith and teaching. Each national mood of mind or tribal idiosyncrasy brings its own special mode of want and supply. John Knox would have been impossible in Athens, and Jeremy Taylor could not have lived in Paris. The ultimate seat of human faith lies deep below all national or tribal propensities, but the modes in which religious faith manifests and interprets itself are widely various. Ere faith comes to the surface and crystallizes itself in concrete shape, its type and colour will

be affected by the strata of thought and feeling through which it emerges into light. The ideas and forms of national life will therefore more or less affect the interpretation and disclosure of the same faith. The national character determines the character of its preachers. It is very rare, and then only in some grand exceptions, like Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles, that a preacher, celebrated in one nation, is equally celebrated in another. An exotic preacher, unless he is very tough and hardy, rarely flourishes out of his native soil. Lebanon is the place for cedars and Elim for palm trees, while the sombre olive thrives best along the slopes of the Mediterranean hills.

And to a great extent the order and

from her. Our highest conception of the bliss of love is the bridegroom and the bride. Offer injury or insult to her, and all the manhood in him will flame out against you!

The soul that hungers and thirsts for righteousness—the heart that, having fed on the husks of sin, has tasted the Father's forgiveness—the man who has within him

a vision of Christ, an ideal of glorious manhood, in which self is lost and love is all, unto which he may attain—that man should have in himself the spirit that was in Christ, to consume, as with a flame, the things that are base. That is the “wrath of the Lamb.” To have that temper is to be “baptized with the Holy Ghost *and with fire.*”

PERSONATING CHRIST.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM M. BAKER.

THE Apostle Paul never saw actual war during his entire life, and it is a mistake to suppose that he refers to campaigns and pitched battles when he urges us to “put on the whole armour of God,” “to fight the good fight,” to “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” and the like. We have the explanation of all this when he speaks of “fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus”—that is, with the raging mob infuriated by Alexander the coppersmith against him in the theatre of that city. For Ephesus, like every city of any size in the Roman world, had an edifice in imitation of the Coliseum at Rome. What that building was we all know; what it is, rather, for all the world crowds to it now as never before during even the days of its Cæsars. Around a vast arena rise seats upon seats, capable of accommodating near one hundred thousand spectators. Sometimes the arena would be flooded with water, war galleys launched thereupon, and battles fought, dyeing all the artificial sea with glory. To please the people, the emperors would gather wild animals from over the world, and pour them by the forest-ful into the arena, to tear each other beneath the eyes of the assembled multitudes. It was the course, too, for chariot

and foot-races. But the grandest spectacle therein was in the acting of the rude but terrible dramas of the time. Slaves or prisoners, taken in distant wars, dressed and armed to represent illustrious characters, would fight to the death. It is *not* to war in the field, but to the spectacle of the theatre in every town, with which, and not at that time with war, all men were familiar as with the one and sole scene which brought them together and thrilled them with the highest excitement known to them—it is to this Paul, who from his character must at one time have taken keenest delight in the same, refers when he so often speaks of our running “the race before us,” “resisting” our great adversary, “wrestling,” “fighting,” gaining “a crown.” When he urges you to be a soldier, he means definitely these two things: a gladiator, and a gladiator who personates some great hero to the death before the eyes of assembled thousands!

When Paul says, “God hath created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be shown by the Church the manifold wisdom of God,” he simply declares that our world is the arena in which the members of that

church are acting out, under the eyes of the myriads of God's intelligent creation, the wonderful drama of redemption. "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses?" What profound meaning in the prophecy as to ourselves, when we shall quit the arena as actors, to climb the benches as spectators, "then shall we know," with eyes intently fixed upon the strugglers of the arena, "even as we also," now contending in the same, "are known!" The atmosphere about us sparkles as with the eyes, palpitates with the eagerness of the hearts of those watching us. Spectators (not like the rabble of Rome—the emperor, bending from his seat among the patricians, the chief and crowned ruffian of them all), veterans from the same arena, angels and arch-angels, peoples of all the worlds for aught we know, and God himself gazing unceasingly upon us. "God hath set forth us the Apostles last." Paul here repeats the sublime imagery, being—as it is a familiar and undoubted fact—"as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle" (in the original it is "a theatre") "unto the world, and to angels, and to men!" Nor does the poet do otherwise than assume all this as what no one denies:

"Man, vain man,
Dressed in a little brief authority
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven
As make the angels weep!"

But the solemnity of the spectacle lies not so much in the magnificence of arena, amphitheatre, spectators, nor even in the amazing drama of Redemption acted out by Christ and his disciples thereon. The whole matter attains its utmost practical importance to us, as well as most thrilling significance to all, when you remember that, upon this stage, before such an audience, it is none other than Christ whom you personate.

Since Paul dare use the illustration, itself

ordered for this end, we may call up before you, then, the dramas of those days. You see Jason upon the stage compelling miserable Medea to the murder of the babes. Or it is Orestes pursued across the same by the avenging Furies. More touching than any other character, see aged Edipus tottering before your eyes, under the doom of unrelenting Fate, abandoned of all the world save his faithful daughter, disappearing at last from the world by a mode too terrible for mortal eyes. Or place before yourself the Othello of our own day, raging with jealousy; Hamlet, staggering under a task which dethrones his intellect as well as heart. Rather let it be when the actor loses himself altogether in King Lear. Surely the man becomes Lear himself as, driven out into the midnight storm by his ungrateful daughters, his white hair streaming upon the blast, he endures to the end his fate, to the very end—"A king; aye! every inch a king." As the one personating Lear ceases to be himself, loses himself in, actually *is* Lear for the time, do not the spectators quiver with indignation or melt with pity, as if the rejected monarch was actually before them himself?

Now this is exactly what Paul means when he commands us to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Not enough to say that we are to be united to and identified with Christ, as the branch is with the vine, resting our whole weight upon Him, as the "living stones" do upon "the foundation, elect, precious;" drawing all existence from Jesus, as the members incorporated into and with "the head." Nor enough to represent you as houseless, and sheltering yourself in Him; exposed to all the arrows of man and God, and taking refuge in Jesus as in a strong tower. Not sufficient to say you are naked, and clothed not merely in the robe of his righteousness, but in Christ himself "our righteousness." It does not satisfy inspiration to say that we must "put off Adam the old

man," and "put on the new man, Christ." Nor is the Holy Spirit content to declare that we must feed upon the flesh and blood of Christ until, by a process culminating at the resurrection, we are clothed with bodies even made like Christ." In addition to all this, the Apostle is compelled of God to say: "As many as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ." And he repeats it. Yes, upon this arena, before the universe as the encompassing amphitheatre, even as the actor—who, ceasing to be his own insignificant self, puts on Orestes, Hamlet, Edipus, Lear—is, for the effect of the same upon the beholders, for the time the very person assumed; so here, for the effect upon yourself, for the influence of the same upon all looking upon you, are you to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." It is because Christ has departed, so far as His valuable presence is concerned, from the stage, that He leaves us thus to represent Him. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so also have I sent them into the world." It was not the Apostle—he would never have dared say—it was Jesus himself who says to you: "As I am, so are you in the world. You as much, in your place, as any apostle of them all, an ambassador in Christ's stead from the King to every man, also a king, to negotiate an eternal truce and perpetual peace with that sinning sovereign of his own destiny and God. A thousand times over Scripture makes our Christianity to consist, for its effect on others and upon ourself, in "putting on," personating the Son of Man, until you can say: "It is not I, but Christ that liveth in me!"

In the chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle mentions our thus personating Christ as the reason why it is impossible for us to indulge in various outer sins which he specifies; but your compelling your Lord so to sin in your own person before men is too monstrous a thing to be dwelt upon. Yet, remem-

ber, Jesus stood before you in temple, synagogue, market, street, household, judgment-hall, as well as abroad over all the land, along sea-shore, in fishing boat, upon Tabor and Calvary—no possible place into which you can go, but Jesus has stood in like place before you, that you may know exactly how to personate, in just such place, your Saviour to-day. Nor can you imagine a variety of human beings with whom Jesus was not, for the same example's sake, associated before you—Pharisee, Sadducee, Herodian, harlot, publican, lawyer, scribe, Romans, Judas, Peter, John, Pilate, Herod, Mary, centurion; even the Greeks succeeded who "would see Jesus."

And is it not strange we should shudder at and shrink from enduring that in which we are most like Christ? In heaven we shall be like Him in the matter of throne, and sceptre, and crown. It is our *cross* in which we are most like Christ here. Surely, "it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord!" When an actor assumes the helmet of Alexander, he glows with the martial fire peculiar to that distinctive character. If he robe himself as Richelieu, he becomes a statesman to his very marrow. Surely, the distinctive character of Jesus is a Saviour. We are personating Christ never so true to His part as when glowing with love and labour in the act of saving men, body, and soul.

How gladly would I have presented this doctrine in half these words. Let me add but this. I know not what changes of sorrow or of joy sweep over the faces watching you in the invisible world as you personate Christ; but we all know how closely you are watched by men in this world, *the supreme influence of your Christianity lying not in your profession, but in your likeness to the Son of God.*

Napoleon III. wrote in his will to this effect: "I always made my great uncle

my model; his spirit always accompanying me, and enabling me to succeed in the same!" And our Divine Model sends His Spirit to conform us indeed to Himself. For "we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," before we enter heaven, for its most practical and powerful

effect upon men here and now. That we may complete the work of Christ, devolved wholly upon us by Him, by personating Jesus before all beholders, He makes and fulfils to each one of us the promise: "Lo! I am with *you* always, even unto the end of the world."

Enquiries Answered.

BY REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

104. *Suppose a man has some strong secret temptation that at times he cannot resist. Suppose that he is in the church, and working with all his might to help others, going down into the depths of hell with remorse when he yields. Suppose that, in spite of his trying, every now and then he does yield, what shall he do?*

We cannot fully answer such a question while we are in darkness as to the real nature of the temptation. Some sins are sins of insanity. Some strong secret temptations grow out of associations that ought to be broken. It is better to pluck out the right eye than to keep falling into hell in this way. Examine yourself, and see whether your own hand does not spare to exterminate the sin when it is in your power. You have allowed yourself to become demoralized and discouraged by repeated failures. Do not admit to yourself that you are to go on being defeated in this way. It is possible that open confession might work your deliverance. Remember that deliverance from your sin is the chief thing, and that it will be cheaply purchased at any amount of suffering. If your sin is a sin of sensuality, you probably encourage it by high living, or indolence, or the character of your company, reading, or meditations. By all means continue to help others; that will bring

help to you. But one who is thus conscious of sin should take the very lowest place among his brethren, and should humble himself before others, remembering also what dishonour his sin may bring upon the cause of Christ, and what a rock of offence he may become if he permit himself to be lifted into places of dignity and honour in the Church. Let him never palliate his offence to his own conscience, but hate it and execrate it as the devil that works him so much woe. Finally, let him find comfort and peace in the sympathy and long-suffering love of Christ.

105. *John represents our Saviour as saying, "It is finished," when He died; and Luke represents Him as saying, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Which are we to accept as His last words?*

No doubt He uttered both in His last moments. John states what he remembers, and Luke the words which struck his own mind, or that of his informant, most forcibly. Why shall we interpret Scripture more narrowly and literally than we do any other writings?

106. *Why do most religious denominations keep the first day of the week instead of the seventh?*

The beautiful custom of keeping the day of our Lord's resurrection instead of the seventh day came into the Church