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→ SERMONS ←

HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY.

BY WILLIAM M. TAYLOR, D.D., LL.D., BROADWAY TABERNACLE (CONGREGATIONAL),
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Help from the sanctuary.—Ps. xx., 2.

THE name sanctuary means the holy place, and under the old covenant it was given sometimes to the tabernacle as a whole, sometimes to the court which was reserved for the priests, and sometimes to the innermost apartment, in which was the ark of the covenant with the Shekinah hovering over it, and into which only the high priest might enter, and even he only once a year, on the great day of atonement. It was the structure specially consecrated by the residence of God within it. He was there not merely, as He is everywhere, by His divine omnipresence. But He was there specially by the manifestation of His grace, through mediation and over sacrifice. When, therefore, the assembled people as in this psalm, pray for their king, setting forth to battle on their behalf, that God may send him help from the sanctuary, they virtually desire that Jehovah, who had covenanted to be their God and had condescended to dwell among them, would give him such strength as could come alone from the fulfilment of His promises to them, whereof His continued symbolic presence with them in the tabernacle was the pledge and prophecy. To the sanctuary the pious Israelite turned when he was in trouble, for there alone he found the gracious God; and when he specially besought his protection in any emergency he clung fast to the horns of its altar.

years, paused in the furrow, and as he paused there came to him the echo of the voice of that preacher to whom he had listened in early youth. Dropping the plow-handles he bowed his head in prayer. What the preacher of his youth had written he had written indelibly, and after long years of waiting the writing came to life. And so let the patient, gentle mother, whose love seems lost upon her wayward boy, take heart and hope. She may go to the grave without seeing his conversion, but what she has written she has written, and in old age and on his death-bed that son shall remember it. And so we are writing on the tables of eternity as well. Every man is an author, and the book he is writing is his autobiography—not written like a pious diary, in which he may record a feeling that he does not feel, but that shall truthfully reveal all the secrets of his life and all the depths of his heart. Authors commonly have a chance to revise what they write, and the dainty poem or the magnificent oration has been recast a hundred times. But of this life record there shall be no revision. What we have written we have written, and this record goes before us to the judgment. And this is the book that shall be opened, and out of this the dead shall be judged. We come to-day to the close of another chapter of this book. We cannot revise it, but we may review it. In the review it would possibly appear that it resembles many a copy-book whose open-

ing lines give evidence of painstaking, but whose later writing is sadly blurred. Let us humbly hope that some deeds of love have been recorded and some words of cheer for struggling souls set opposite our names. Yet how little the record shows, we fear, of holy endeavor and heroic sacrifice. How much of ambition and envy, and how plainly discernible the trail of sin. Could we but blot them out with our tears, how freely the tears would flow. But not a sentence or a syllable can we efface, for what we have written we have written. And yet there is a ray of hope and a voice of comfort for those who mourn over their miserable record. A poor wretch, burdened with a sense of sin, dreamed that the demon of darkness held up before him all the long, black catalogue of his crimes. The devil thought to drive him to despair, but while he looked and trembled, lo! One appeared who was like unto the Son of Man, and he looked and saw that His hands were pierced, and from those precious hands some drops of blood were trickling. The hands were laid upon the dreadful page, and with His blood He wiped it out. This is our consolation and our hope. And, again, there is another hope. It is the book of life, and in it are recorded all the names of God's saints. Let us humbly rejoice that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and that our record is on high.

SIDE LINES OF MINISTERIAL LABOR.

BY JOHN HALL, D.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), NEW YORK.

No. II.

III. It is pre-eminently an age of literature. Books in every variety of form go everywhere. The serial literature of the time is itself a marvel, and the "body," "society," "community," town-class, or "view," that has not its "organ" is of small account, indeed. Are we to be afraid of all this? Are we to show jealousy of it? Are we to stand aloof from it? Are we to be indifferent to it? Are we to talk as if our souls pined for the

good old times when people read only their Bibles and the "Whole Duty of Man?"

Not if we have even a little wisdom. Do not we ministers read the newspapers and magazines? Did we not, when we had time, read Sir Walter Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Byron even, Ben Johnson, and perhaps other and more varied works? Why should we ignore the desire of others to read corresponding literature, adapted

to their level and their means? "I want you to speak to my son," said a good Christian mother, in great anxiety, to her pastor. The pastor had a very good opinion of the boy, the intelligent son of a carpenter. "Why? what makes you anxious about him?" "Well, he's took to a kind of books I don't know anything about, and I don't like." "What sort?" "Well, he's constantly at the works of one Mr. William Shakespeare. I think he giv' himself to makin' plays for the stage." Grammar happily is not essential to goodness. This good mother had little education. What should the pastor say to her or to him? Interdict Shakespeare? Then quote him, perhaps, the next Sunday! No, surely. A friendly talk was had with the mother and boy, making the impression that Shakespeare was read by nearly all educated people, and that neither his nor any other works must supersede God's word. It did its work, and fifteen years later that mother and son were intelligent tourists over the Eastern States. The family had gained a competence in the West. And such an attitude a minister must take toward all literature that is not positively vicious. He must teach others to discriminate, commend and introduce the good, and, if he has the gifts and the opportunity, speak through it by his own pen. The devil would fain insinuate that we ministers are "priests," that we are not a standard, therefore, for man. To show one's self human; to be a citizen among one's fellows; to be a man among men; to make it clear that it is neither want of interest nor want of capacity, but occupation with higher things that determines one's attitude; this is to defeat evil and repel the insinuation. The present writer once incidentally secured a permanent "hearer" by a lecture to a philosophical society on "The Imagination, its Use and Abuse." "Why," said a young man of fair intelligence, "I did not know that ministers understood those things at all."

IV. But, not to extend this paper to forbidding proportions, schools constitute another of the incidental calls for ministerial activity. From the fact that we have "public schools," that they are

under civil control, that we have boards of management duly appointed, and, perhaps, from the circumstance that denominations or churches are not invited, as such, into contact with the schools, ministers in many places take no more interest in the schools than in the dry-goods stores of the town. It is different in many places in the country, whose pastors are often effective managers. Nor are the public schools the only institutions of the kind demanding notice. With growing wealth an increasing demand arises for other than "public schools," more or less "select," with education in branches which the State could not be expected to provide for. To these—their character, influence, tone and methods—ministers will have to look. You may teach good things to a boy in Sunday-school; you may preach the "distinctive doctrines" to him forcibly and fittingly; you may visit his parents regularly; but if on five days of the week the impression is being made on his mind by teachers and fellow-pupils that you, and your religion, and your ways are "old-fogy," obsolete, narrow, adherence to which is the incidental result of not being brought up well—as he is being brought up—before he is from "under tutors and governors," he is away from your influence altogether. His secret thought will be that he ought, of course, to treat you civilly on his parents' account. They revere you, because they have made their own way, and did not have his advantages; but as for *his* sitting at your feet, "Why, he has been brought up a gentleman."

On the future of the school system; on the suggestive demands of Romanism; on the need of more moral and religious teaching in common schools; on such topics as the home, marriage, divorce, integrity, Sabbath observance, bad customs, like boy-smoking and drinking, we do not enter. All we argue for here is that ministers look into the schools, male and female, within their districts, avail themselves of opportunities, which few managers or teachers will refuse, for speaking to the pupils, and showing interest in them. This thing done wisely will make the impression which a boy carried away:

"Why, I had no idea! I thought ministers knew nothing but theology, but he knows everything we are at as well as our teachers; and he made us laugh at the absurdity of lots of things; he's a regular trump, and I'd like to hear him preach." Boys are not conventional in their phraseology, but, to use a poor contraction of our hurried life, they "voice" the general sentiment.

Into minute details of method we do not enter, because this paper is meant for educated and intelligent men who will see how to manage details according to circumstances and conditions. Only this general consideration is earnestly added: all effective work done on these side lines contributes not only to greater acceptance on the main line, but to preparation for working more easily on that main line.

It gives knowledge of many sides of human nature and life. It develops sympathy with one's fellowmen, and makes one intelligent as to the drift and characteristics of our time. It thus cultivates the adaptation to the work of teaching our cotemporaries abiding truth "in their own tongue wherein they were born." This is not necessarily the language of councils, synods, or assemblies, though it is not inconsistent with their decrees. Many an earnest young laborer is declaring the need of a "new theology," perhaps persuading himself that he has found it, when he has only a clear perception of the need of adapting the presentation of the fixed, quickening truth of God to the ever-changing conditions of a fickle and a putrefying world.

PRACTICAL HINTS TO BIBLE READERS.

BY PROF. S. H. KELLOGG, D.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), ALLEGHANY SEMINARY, PENN'A.

How shall I read my Bible with profit? The question is often asked, and it is well that it should be. For it is by the truth of God that we are sanctified. It is only by the right assimilation of that life-giving Word can we hope to grow in grace. And yet it is plain that many Christians read the Bible with but little conscious satisfaction and profit. For the benefit of such and others as well a few practical suggestions may be helpful.

In the first place, it should hardly need to be said that no one will get much good from the reading of the Bible in a hasty and perfunctory manner. The hurried reading when we are too tired and exhausted with the toil and worries of the day to be capable of any intellectual activity—reading merely because we feel that we *ought* to read a chapter before retiring to rest—this, common as it is, cannot be of much profit to the reader. Then there is a style of reading which, if more suitable in outward appearance to the character of the Bible as the Word of God, is yet scarcely more likely to be fruitful in good. There are those who make a business of reading the Bible, and that in course from beginning to end,

through and through again, but in a fashion purely mechanical. Just so devout Mohammedans in the East will make a point of conscience of reading through and through the Koran—and that even in the original Arabic, when they understand not a word of it—in the belief that in the very act of reading there is some magic virtue which shall, in some way unexplained, conduce to their present and future well-being. In some such fashion if we mistake not, do not a few Christians read the Bible over and over from beginning to end, perhaps even committing large portions of it to memory, while yet all the while all their reading is as utterly mechanical as that of the Mussulman devotee. They do not pause to ask themselves the relation of one verse or one part to another, or the bearing of that which at any time they read upon their practical daily life. But there is nothing magical about the reading of God's Word. A phonograph which, driven by water, like the Thibetan prayer-wheels, should thus articulate chapter after chapter of the Bible, would be of about as much profit as reading such as this.

As opposed to all reading of this sort,