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DISCUSSION OF PRACTICAL ISSUES.

CONTENTS:

REVIEW SECTION.

- I. THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE. By Professor Llewelyn J. Evans, D.D., Cincinnati, Ohio. 99
- II. THE PREACHER'S USE OF ILLUSTRATION. By A. J. Gordon, D.D., Boston, Mass. 108
- III. ELEMENTS OF PULPIT POWER. By Robert F. Sample, D.D., New York City, N. Y. 114
- IV. PREACHING POLITICS. By D. W. C. Huntington, D.D., New York City, N. Y. 120
- V. THE HIDING OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER. By A. T. Pierson, D.D., Philadelphia, Pa. 123

SERMONIC SECTION.

- REFUSING GOD'S VOICE. By Alexander MacLaren, D.D., Manchester, Eng. 127
- HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY. By Rev. Owen Jones, Escanaba, Mich. 131
- REJOICING IN HOPE. By Professor J. W. McGarvey, D.D., Lexington, Ky. 137
- THE MODEL HEARER. By C. V. Anthony, D.D., San José, Cal. 139
- JESUS THE EXEMPLAR OF COURAGE. By Rev. Frederick Perry Noble, Chicago, Ill. 140
- LOSING ONE'S SELF. By Professor William J. Tucker, D.D., Andover, Mass. 143
- HOW TO REACH TRUE CHRISTIAN MANHOOD. By A. J. Rowland, D.D., Baltimore, Md. 144
- HUMAN ANIMALNESS. By Rev. W. G. Thrall, Williamsport, Pa. 146
- "A CONFESSION OF FAITH." By W. Hansom, B.D., LL.D., Granite Falls, Minn. 147
- THE GREAT CIRCULATION. By Rev. Mead A. Kelsey, Hart, Mich. 149
- STRIKING THOUGHTS FROM RECENT SERMONS. 149

THEMES AND TEXTS OF RECENT SERMONS

- SUGGESTIVE THEMES. 151
- HELPS AND HINTS, TEXTUAL AND TOPICAL. By Arthur T. Pierson, D.D. 151
- THE PRAYER-MEETING SERVICE. By Wayland Hoyt, D.D. 155

EXEGETICAL AND EXPOSITORY SECTION.

- STUDIES IN THE PSALTER. No. XXII. THE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH PSALM. By Talbot W. Chambers, D.D. 160
- JOHN THE BAPTIST. By Prof. William Arnold Stevens, D.D., Rochester, N. Y. 163
- EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT. By J. H. W. Stuckenberg, D.D. 166

MISCELLANEOUS SECTION.

- HOW I MANAGE CHURCH OFFERINGS. By Wayland Hoyt, D.D. 175
- THE CHURCH FOR THE PEOPLE. By Rev. John L. Scudder. 177
- "OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE." By W. C. Conant. 179
- PREACHERS EXCHANGING VIEWS. 182

EDITORIAL SECTION.

- LIVING ISSUES FOR PULPIT TREATMENT. 185
- EDITORIAL NOTES. 188
- QUERIES AND ANSWERS. 193
- BLUE MONDAY. 193

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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE.

BY PROF. LLEWELYN J. EVANS, D.D., LANE SEMINARY, CINCINNATI, O.

THE title indicates the particular point to the discussion of which, by the kind invitation of the Editor, this paper is limited. Much will have to be assumed, or simply affirmed, respecting collateral issues, some of which are of fundamental importance, for the discussion of which there is here no space.

SCRIPTURE.

The word Scripture is used in this discussion for the written record of the special supernatural Revelation which God has made of Himself for the salvation of a lost world. Anterior to this is the general, natural Revelation of God, mediated through His works, through providence, and through the soul. Had man never fallen, we have no reason to suppose that any other than this primary Revelation would have been needed. At all events, the question whether in that case God would have given a written Revelation, like the question whether in that case there would have been an Incarnation, belongs to the domain of speculation. The Bible as we have it, like the Incarnation as we know it, is for a fallen world.

THE SCOPE OF SCRIPTURE.

The essential significance and scope of Scripture lies in its relations to the Revelation of which it is the embodiment, not in its relations to the truths of Natural Theology, much less in its relations to the general truths of Natural Science, apart from their relations to God. The Revelation of which Scripture is the Record is special as contrasted with the general Revelation of God, supernatural as contrasted with the natural, and a Revelation of God for spiritual ends, or more specifically for salvation, given to man as a sinner, as contrasted with Revelation for the satisfaction of man's original mental and moral needs as God's creature. The scope of Scripture is thus to be determined by the scope of its constituent Revelation

preaching—preaching in order to the saving and sanctifying of souls. New York has a lay preacher who is well worth hearing. He is successful in the market, and pre-eminently so in the desk. When complained of for his vehemence and rapidity of utterance in preaching, he replied, in the phrase of his business: “*Yes, but remember I am handling perishable goods.*” It was but another way of saying: “I preach as a dying man to dying men.” Let every minister of Christ realize this, so that while some trust in rhetoric and some in parables, he may trust supremely in the spirit whom God has appointed to clothe His heralds with power.

III.—ELEMENTS OF PULPIT POWER.

BY ROBERT F. SAMPLE, D.D., NEW YORK CITY.

THIS paper has in view the greatest efficiency in preaching. Every minister should make the most of his vocation. Very much will depend on his conception of the work to be done and on his qualifications for it. His standard of excellence should be high, and his endeavor to reach it earnest and persistent. It is not my primary design to set forth the value of a thoroughly disciplined mind, of a chaste rhetoric, of a cultured oratory, of a wide range of general knowledge, of physical health which supports thought and action in the pulpit, and that most indispensable quality, sanctified common-sense, well described to be an intuitive perception of the fitness of things. All of these have their places. But it is my chief purpose to emphasize, if possible, some suggestions which are equally familiar, and which, because of their paramount importance, should be often repeated. This is a subject which any preacher of the Word, conscious of his own failures and limited knowledge, is constrained to speak with great humility; yet the humblest may help each other to discover the secret of ministerial efficiency, which we all desire to attain.

We are commissioned to preach the Word. The great facts concerning sin and salvation and all their correlatives are to be unfolded, illustrated, and enforced. The proportions of truth are to be studiously regarded. Doctrine is to be preached, yet not to the neglect of its application to the daily life. Essential doctrines take the precedence of the non-essential, but the latter are not to be omitted. Soteriology claims more attention than eschatology, the first coming of Christ than the second, revelation than theories of inspiration, saving truth than questions about the inerrancy of the original autographs, sermons on the new birth than attacks on specific sins.

The chief instruction of the pulpit has reference to Christ, in His person, offices, and work, as associated with the other persons of the Godhead, and as related to a fallen race. Christ is the Incarnation of the Invisible. He vocalizes the Divine thought and interprets the Divine will. In Him the

abstract becomes concrete and the absolute personal. The true preacher continually exalts this Divine-human Christ, not Arianism, not Unitarianism, not an Apotheosis, not a Thaumaturgy, not the evolution of Naturalism, but a scriptural Kenosis, the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star, to whose fulness we may bring our emptiness, and in whose glory we may lose and forget our shame.

The preaching of essential truths is of first importance. What the people need to hear most about is that about which they already know something. It is depth that is to be obtained rather than expansion. It is impossible to exhaust any primal truth. An Alexandrian library might be written on justification by faith, and there would be still other books to write. The preacher who resolves to eschew old truths and bring something original with every sermon will soon come to naught. In his attempt to go beyond the visual line of revelation he will enter moral jungles. The urgent wants of the people will be unmet, their understandings unenlightened, and their souls unsaved. Essential truths, though wrapped up in the first promise, must be presented to human need. Manner may vary, phraseology may be kaleidoscopic, the individuality of the preacher may be stamped on every utterance, but the truth itself is as old as gravitation and as changeless as the tides. Sidney Smith expressed an important truth when he said the duty of the preacher was "constantly to remind mankind of what mankind is constantly forgetting : not to supply the defects of human intelligence, but to fortify the feebleness of human resolutions ; to recall mankind from by-paths where they turn into the path of salvation, which all know, but few tread."

We are now to consider some of the characteristics of an effective sermon, by which is meant not the sermon which simply gathers the multitude, but that which accomplishes the true end of preaching, the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. The elements which will here be noticed are attainable by all. Belief of the truth, prayer and devout meditation on the word of God will secure them. Genius, which is God's great gift, is not essential to pulpit power. It is as uncertain as it is sporadic. Talent without genius, diligently improved and consecrated to God, may lift the world to a higher orbit.

One element of pulpit power is *Simplicity*.

It is the simplicity of culture, begotten of deep thoughtfulness and thorough acquaintance with the subject treated, that is meant, not the perspicuity of platitudes and commonplace. Great thoughts should be expressed in simple language. The great Teacher should be our model. Lord Jeffrey said, "Simplicity is the last attainment of progressive literature ; and many are afraid of being natural from the dread of being taken for ordinary." We should not seek to send our hearers away saying : "How grand the sermon, how classical the composition, how perfect the oratory !" but, "What a wicked thing it is to trample on the Son of God ; we will seek the Lord to-day." It is infinitely better to forego

whatever of admiration we might secure by a brilliant intellectual and oratorical display, in order that we may gain a far nobler end, even the salvation of souls.

Another is *Naturalness*. Each minister should be himself, not some other man. There are diversities of gifts. Paul was very unlike Peter, and Luther bore little resemblance to Melancthon. Imitations are always humiliating failures. Some one has said, "Personal taste should be refined, then become personal law. How would Milton's old Gothic architectural style suit the simple-hearted Cowper? How would Charles Lamb look in Coleridge's Germanic idioms? How would Robert Hall appear in Hervey's gaudy robes?"

This suggests that the written style ought, as a rule, to be conversational. The preacher should write as if he were talking. An eminent divine, as quoted by Dr. Hastings, has said: "I am convinced that one of the things which makes my ordinary sermons tell is this very thing, that I write precisely as I talk, and that my sermons are thus as nearly as possible extemporaneous compositions." Charles Spurgeon's habit is different only in this respect, that he never writes his pulpit discourses, but thinks them out as if he were already addressing his people from his study chair. So did John Knox. As preachers we should remember we are not to make contributions to polite literature, but to speak face to face with dying men who shall outlive any future Renaissance and survive the stars.

Self-abnegation is an element of pulpit power.

If the preacher carries self-consciousness into the pulpit and detains it there; if he seems to have more regard for the praise of men than for the salvation of their souls; if his main object is evidently to call attention to himself and to his gifts, to his oratory, rhetoric, originality or wit, even worldly people who may have applauded him at the first will condemn him at the last. Their religious instincts reject him. Their conscious want cries out against him. They need a view of Christ, and know that they will perish without it.

The most effective authors have been those who forgot themselves in the truth they sought to enforce. Their portraits are not the frontispieces of their books, nor do they look out from every page that follows. Homer never stalks across the stage of the Iliad nor sits at the windows of his Odyssey. Shakespeare never interrupts his *dramatis personæ*. This condition of success obtains in the pulpit. The preacher who points to the Lamb of God as did the wilderness prophet, himself withdrawn from view, self-forgotten as was the Star of the East when it had led the Magi to the manger cradle, is sure to win souls to Christ. He is immortal in his influence because he has hidden himself in the folds of Christ's eternity.

Concentration is another element of pulpit power.

The text may be individualized. A brief exegesis may serve as an introduction to the chief and distinctive thought, and that one truth should urge its way to the soul's centre.

The subject may be the necessity of repentance, earnestly and affectionately presented. If the Holy Spirit join Himself to the Word, the hearer goes away with the solemn mandate ringing through every chamber of his being—*Repent! Repent!* Ordinarily, no such result could have been attained by a sermon crowded with diversified thought, which, by reason of its fulness, left no distinct and helpful impression.

Seriousness is an essential characteristic of an effective sermon. This is at a far remove from sanctimoniousness, and is consistent with a cheerful and joyous utterance. It is the natural expression of a sense of the Divine presence, of the solemnity of the ministerial calling, and of personal responsibility to God. There is surely no room for trifling here. The platform and a popular address admit of humor. Post-prandial speeches are fitly enlivened with harmless wit and amusing anecdotes. But in the pulpit, humor, except in rare instances, is to be eschewed. Dr. Charles F. Deems has said, in drastic terms: "A clown who is smart in his profession may achieve quite a reputation, but a minister who is a buffoon loses the high honor of the sanctuary and fails to gain even the poor applause of a circus." The preacher is engaged in an intensely solemn work. Its issues lie off in an eternal state. Let the rainbow of heaven overarch the pulpit and the light of an unsetting sun fall upon it, but let its voice, though of the earth, suggest relations to heaven, and ever avoid whatever savors of the comedy.

Earnestness is a primal necessity. This is eloquence. The bodily presence of the preacher may be weak, the manner ungraceful, the speech unadorned, but if his soul is on fire his words are mighty with the emotion which fills them; prejudice is disarmed and opposition conquered. When Jennie Deans, according to Scottish story, made her appeal in behalf of her unhappy sister, before Queen Caroline, bowing low in that royal presence, fearless of the corruption which environed her, pouring forth her intensest feelings in words simple, tremulous, and direct, her eyes aflame with holy wrath or melting in tears of tenderness, and every feature, gesture, and attitude bespeaking an unwavering conviction of truth and right, the Queen, overcome by responsive emotion, recovering at length her suspended breath, exclaimed: "*This is eloquence.*"

Faith in results is essential to pulpit efficiency. It was this faith that made Exeter Hall the birthplace of souls and the Metropolitan Tabernacle the scene of still greater spiritual triumphs. No great result was ever accomplished without this kind of faith. It was this faith that built the pyramids, discovered the new world, and achieved our independence. Schiller says that if there had been no undiscovered world lying far to the westward, one would have risen from the sea to reward the faith of Columbus, urging his way across the untravelled deep. Why not carry this element of power into the pulpit? Our Master sits on the circle of the earth, and turns the hearts of men as the streams in the South. We should believe all things and hope all things, and on our way to the pulpit raise a

hymn of praise for what is about to be accomplished through us by Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you all days, even unto the end of the world."

To this is to be added *spiritual power* in the preacher. This is found and nourished in secret communion with God and the contemplation of eternal things. It is associated with a holy life. If we who have the care of the souls cherish iniquity in our hearts, if forbidden guests lodge behind the curtained windows, if we carry any known sin and an impenitent memory to the pulpit, we shall be weaker than Sampson shorn of his locks. No spasmodic excitement, or seeming fervor, or miserable cant can atone for our offending or bring fire from heaven. The truth must become concrete in the life. Who would not scorn a Robespierre denouncing the shedding of blood? The *sans-cullottes* of Paris would build for him a guillotine. What would be the effect of an essay on the value of republican government by the Czar of Russia? The Nihilists would find it an argument for personal violence. When Edmund Burke exhibited and condemned the corruption and cruelty of Warren Hastings's administration in India, men heard him with the marrow of their bones, for they believed that Burke was *every inch an honest man*. The world cannot demand less of the preacher. The hands that bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean.

The great want of to-day is a more spiritual ministry. We need more men of God like the preachers of Anwoth, Kidderminster, and Ayr, by the sea, who bring the atmosphere of heaven with them into the pulpit and speak from the borders of another world. The average hearer receives comparatively little intellectual light from the sermon. But there may be an indefinable uplifting power in it, something which makes truth vastly more real, that brings eternity nearer, that kindles intenser longings after personal holiness, and sends the believer heavenward along a higher spiritual plane. It is the spiritual power of the preacher vitalizing the word spoken. Nothing can compensate for its absence.

Another element of Pulpit Power is a *consciousness of eternity*. This will stimulate fidelity, secure impressiveness, and support a holy unction. This consciousness embraces the two states which God has revealed—everlasting life and everlasting death. There is much preaching which fails to bring to view the world to come. It is too much occupied, as in a measure it ought to be, with the life which now is. And when it crosses the boundary line which separates worlds, dwells almost exclusively on the blessedness of heaven. It gathers a halo around the portal of eternity which obscures the night-land of death. We do not undervalue scriptural representations of heaven, or what has been styled "the expulsive power of a new affection," but the proportions of truth must be regarded, and in avoiding the extreme of severity we must not go to the extreme of license. We begin with men as sinners. Having violated law, they are exposed to the penalty which is essential to the nature of law. Escape from endless punishment is possible in this world, for the finally impenitent and disbelieving is impossible in the

next. Theories about a future probation and ultimate restoration for some or all who die in unbelief under the Gospel, or in disobedience under the light of natural religion, have no support in the Word of God. To hold them ourselves, though we never preach them, is to destroy souls. To withhold them is to incur guilt.

All great religious awakenings have been preceded by scriptural representations of sin and its dire results, against which, as a dark background, has been set up in bold relief the cross of Christ. Thus Pentecost was born. To this Divine correlation Whitfield, Wesley, and Edwards owed their spiritual harvests. As the literature of all ages which has had a restraining and uplifting influence with men, such as the Greek Drama, Dante's "Divine Comedy," and Milton's "Paradise Lost," has assumed future eternal retribution, standing in marked contrast with the writings of Voltaire, Shelley and the modern school of fiction, which poisons religious thought at its very sources by a denial of God's most solemn asseverations, so the preaching which has secured power from on high and has had power with men is the preaching which has solemnly, affectionately, and with tears declared the awful, eternal consequences of sin; of neglecting the great salvation, of trampling on the Son of God, of quenching the Holy Ghost, of persisting in unbelief until death opens the gate of a changeless doom; and pleads and cries that every one who will may be saved, saying, as it lifts the cross to the bleeding shoulders, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him."

This implies what deserves distinct mention, the *preacher's dependence on the Holy Ghost*. In a successful ministry, as in the person of Christ, the Divine and the human are conjoined. The conversion of a soul is as distant from the effects of merely natural principles as life is from death. Religious excitement is not regeneration. An electrified corpse may simulate natural physical action, but the exciting agency being removed, it is a more mournful spectacle of death than it was before. The sun may bathe Greenwood with light, but Greenwood is a great charnal house still. There are dead souls in the pews. They are as destitute of every principle of grace as the natives of Central Africa, and under greater condemnation. The preacher, acting alone, cannot give them spiritual life. No amount of knowledge, no depth of concern, no measure of personal holiness, no appeal borne on the floodtide of tearful emotion, can bring a single soul from the dead. There never lived a preacher possessed of such elements of power as Christ, and yet under His ministry, reaching through three years, the number of conversions was only a tithe of the fruitage of Peter's one sermon on the day of Pentecost. The work of the Holy Spirit had been restrained until after Christ had returned to the Father. The preacher needs the power which comes from on high. He must constantly seek it. Then, too, he must be careful that he grieve not the Holy One by any permitted sin. The Word of God gathers an awful solemnity about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Men may profane the

name of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ ; the last thing they will do is to blaspheme the Holy Ghost. It becomes the preacher to walk softly, to watch unto prayer, to keep himself pure and in harmony with Him who is the source of all spiritual power. Then for him the wildernesses of this world shall rejoice, and his ministry shall enrich heaven with the trophies of Divine grace.

IV.—PREACHING POLITICS.

By D. W. C. HUNTINGTON, D.D., NEW YORK CITY.

IN general, it may be said that this term is used to designate the discussion of political subjects by ministers of the Gospel in their pulpit ministrations. The phrase, however, is not one that admits of very precise definition. It stands, in different minds, for that which greatly varies in type and degree. With some, preaching politics means the discussion of the merits of political parties, their platforms and candidates, in sermons on the Sabbath day. With others, it includes the introduction into the public discourses of the minister of any question, whatever its nature or bearings, which has become involved in public politics.

Opinions concerning the usefulness and propriety of including political questions in the range of pulpit themes differ with the differing views of the ministry, the Church, and the relation of civil government to religion. By some, it is regarded as the sacred duty of all public teachers, the ministers of religion emphatically included, to instruct those who hear them upon such questions as have to do with public morality and the national welfare, and that they are in duty bound to do this, without reference to the fact that such questions may have entered the political arena. Others would restrict the public teachings of ministers to a class of subjects conventionally denominated *religious*. They would separate the religious from the political ; the one as sacred, the other as profane. To the former they would assign conscience, prayer, pure motives, the Lord's day, and the ministry of the Gospel. The latter they would denominate the "dirty pool of politics," where good men, in doing their political duties, in distinction from their religious, act very badly, and from which the preacher of Christ's religion should keep himself aloof, lest his garments become soiled, and concerning which he must close his lips lest politicians become offended. We submit the following as facts, suggestive of a right understanding of the subject.

1. When rightly viewed, the political duties of the Christian citizen are as truly religious as any which he is called upon to perform. In their bearing upon the welfare of his fellow-men they are among his most weighty responsibilities, and it is only by a narrow and false idea of religion that he can lower his plane of life in politics and still think himself innocent. The notion that there are two departments to Christian life, in one