

GREAT PRINCIPLES.

(FROM A CHARGE BY THE BISHOP OF OSSORY, DR. PAKENHAM WALSH.)

IF our commission be from Christ, let us take good heed that our message be "of Him" and concerning Him: not a message to be framed and fashioned after our own vain conceits, or to be changed and varied to meet the whims and fancies of erring men. Let it be Christ Himself in all His fulness, and all His sufficiency as the only Saviour. Let it be Christ Himself in all His offices and all His sympathies as Prophet, Priest, and King. Let it be a personal Christ in all His adaptation to the needs and aspirations of poor human souls. This, and nothing short of this, will either save or satisfy; and blessed be God, there is an attractive power in such preaching that, with God's blessing, wins and moves the hearts of men.

Archbishop Tait was wont to say to his candidates for ordination: "You will never want for hearers when you have something worth hearing to preach about; and you will never want that something, if you preach about the Lord Jesus." Such preaching does not exclude any theme in the whole compass of revelation; it may sweep the whole circumference of doctrine and of duty, of thought and of experience, but it should evermore revolve around one un-failing centre, and lead men up to Him who is the Way and the Truth and the Life. In the forum of ancient Rome there stood the golden milestones, from which all the roads throughout the vast empire were measured to its remotest provinces, and up to that golden milestone every roadway let that brought the distant traveller to the metropolis of the world. So let all your teaching and all your preaching lead up to Him who is at once the sum and the centre of salvation and of happiness. Pascal has reminded us that as there is one, and but one, indivisible point from which every picture can be rightly viewed; every other point being either too high or too low, too distant or too near; so in theology there is one, and but one, right point of observation, and that point is "the cross of Christ."

Speaking of the early triumphs of Christianity, Macaulay has called our attention to the fact that—"It was before Deity, taking human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the faces of the lictor, and the swords of thirty legions were humbled in the dust." This testimony is true, and it is also true that the same Gospel still retains its wondrous force. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, and the nearer we keep to its grand and primitive simplicities, both in our teaching and in our lives, the more fruit and blessing we may reasonably expect.

And here let me speak of a difficulty which has been growing up and increasing in our times. I refer to a certain dislike of dogma which (whatever may be the case elsewhere), I do not think arises so much, at least among our people, from disbelief, as from the fact that, in preaching, dogma has been too often divorced from its practical bearing upon life and conduct.

One has heard, for example, discourses upon the doctrines of the Trinity, or upon the personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, which were able and useful as the defences of important truths, but which were sadly lacking in any appeal to the conscience or the heart; and which did not show the inseparable links between the truth thus vindicated and the influence which it was meant to have upon men's salvation and happiness. Hence the reaction against which we have now to contend, and which can best be met by a return to a better mode of dealing with such subjects. Do not give up the dogma, whatever it may be, or the fearless statement of it. Indeed you cannot give up dogma without giving up truth, and degenerating into a nerveless and blank indifference or invertebrate theology; but avoid the dogmatic tone, and cultivate the loving spirit which is always as anxious for the salvation of the hearers as it is jealous for the honour of Bible truth.

Another hint on this subject—in preaching upon those subjects which are most distinctly connected with Christian dogma, choose those occasions which happily present themselves in the sacred Seasons and Services of our Church. A sermon on the Trinity for instance can never be considered out of place upon a Trinity Sunday: nor can a discourse on the Godhead of the Holy Spirit be reasonably thought unbecoming on Whit Sunday. We must apply to such topics, as indeed to all our preaching, the wise remark that, we ought to "feather our arrows as well as point them." It was because the preacher "was wise he sought to find out acceptable words," but the words that were spoken or written "were upright, even words of truth." Need I say before leaving this part of my subject that you should aim at divine simplicity of style, and pllicity of style, and that not merely because most of your hearers belong to the less educated class, but because a divine simplicity is most suitable to the loftiest of all subjects, and will be most appreciated by your most cultivated hearers. Do not think, however, that in order to be simple you must be weak; or that in order to be profound you must be perplexing, or that in order to be honest you must be coarse.

I would say to my young brethren—Beware of too much rhetoric; for though flowers are beautiful and fragrant, they are not food; and though they may adorn and grace a banquet, they cannot satisfy hungry guests. It was the most eloquent and learned of the Apostles who said, "We use great plainness of speech"; and it has been said of the late gifted Archbishop of York, who received his early education in this city, that while any of his sermons might have been preached before a University, there was not a poor old woman in the congregation who could not profit by them.

I cannot help thinking that if these simple rules were borne in mind there would be less of an outcry against the length of sermons, and fewer demands for the shortening of them. A short sermon may be rendered a very tedious one, either from a lack of matter or from monotony of delivery: while a longer one may be made welcome by its brightness and thoughtfulness. As to the exact length of sermons, we should be guided rather by the *wants* than by the *wishes* of our hearers. We must not defraud the poor,

who have few other means of spiritual instruction of their full allowance, in order to gratify the restlessness of the rich, who can turn to other sources of religious information; at the same time we ought not to weary the educated by needless repetitions, the place of which can be better supplied for the less instructed by homely and forcible statements made for the most part in Scriptural and familiar language.

Announcing the Subjects of Sermons.

We notice that this practice, which once had little favor, is attaining favour in the Church. That there are occasions on which it may be well to name the subject of discourse, even in the secular papers, we do not deny—as when a matter of great interest to the parish or the public is to be presented.

But the practice as an ordinary one militates against the teaching of the Church. We claim that the Church is preeminently the house of Prayer, that the worship of God should draw his children to His House.

Then, the publication of the subject of discourse seems to imply, that people may govern their church attendance by what the pulpit may offer. We have noticed that his practice soon degenerates into naming extraordinary and even irreverent topics, as though to draw the people to find out what the preacher can mean.

If the pulpit is strong, people will find it out aside from the newspapers; and if it is weak, no publication of sermon topics will make it popular.—*Bishop Gillespie.*

THE EPISCOOPATE NECESSARY.

THE Bishops present at the Pan Anglican Council coincided with the views expressed in the following declaration:

"The Christian unity now so earnestly desired.....can be restored only by the return of all Christian communions to the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence; which principles we believe to be the substantial deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and His Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world, and therefore incapable of compromise or surrender by those who have been ordained to be its stewards and trustees for the common and equal benefit of all men.

"As inherent parts of this sacred deposit and therefore as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following, to wit:

"1. The Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.

"2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

"3. The two Sacraments, Baptism and Supper of the Lord, ministered with un-failing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.

"4. The *Historic Episcopate*, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church." [The House of Bishops on Christian Unity, Convention of 1886.]

Of this the Living Church says:

"The famous document from which we have quoted above, distinguishing by italics, certain expressions which we deem worthy of special