

ning of her history will not be guilty of propounding some rejected heresy with all the gravity of a new discovery of truth. Nor will he suffer himself to be seriously alarmed by the new theology or the higher criticism. Many similar movements have been met and incorporated into the Church's life. In this age also she will easily absorb all the truth which these investigators have to offer, and blow the chaff into oblivion.

The preacher of to-day must be a student of the signs of the times. I do not mean by this term that method of interpreting the Scriptures which finds a third-rate French politician on a white horse in the Apocalypse, or which gleams from the language of Daniel a knowledge of the last things not attained by the Son of God. But I mean cultivating the power to grasp the tendencies of modern thought, the ability to see whether the main current is flowing that we may be able to influence it, and to use it in the service of the Lord.

It has been well said, "The world moves and we must move with it if we are to be of any use in it as preachers. Truth, no doubt, is one and unchanging, the Gospel knows no variation, but the changes which have come on men, through the countless variety of influences that affect them, may necessitate alterations in our mode of presenting the truth. Human language changes, modes of thought change, human convictions change, and all this must be taken into account by those who would be wise in winning souls."—[Oliver: "What and How to Preach."] For example, we need to be able to understand the rise of a movement like the Salvation Army, to apprehend what elements were wanting in the Christian Church which the labour of this new organization supplies, and what there is in human nature among the lower classes of society to which it can so powerfully appeal.

It might be objected to all this that its acquisition would make every minister an Admirable Crichton, and that there is no time for it amid the pressing and multitudinous duties of modern pastoral life. Then it is the more necessary that all the years of preparation for the ministry should be crowded with diligent and wisely selected reading, and not wasted in other pursuits, however pious or apparently useful.

Again, we in the pastorate ought to consider whether we are not suffering ourselves to be saddled with innumerable social and executive trifles which do not so closely pertain to our work as the investigation of the themes I have mentioned. There is ample scope for reflection whether we might not profitably make room for some of these things by refusing to continue a number of those tributes which the religious Madame Grundy exacts of us under pain of her displeasure, but which yield us no adequate return. And besides we need to study the art of mastering the principles of a subject without burdening ourselves with all its complicated details; we need to be able to tear the vitals out of a book with precision and despatch, and to cultivate the faculty of discovering epoch-making books that we may grasp the meaning and attitude of our age through them.

II. The Christian preacher for to-day must be a man of unswerving loyalty to truth. This means that he must preach from his own experience and according to its interpretation of the word. He must be as far as possible from tampering with his moral or even with his intellectual conclusions. If he speaks it must be because he believes with all the force of a clear conviction and feels with every fibre of a sensitive heart. Amid the many subtle temptations to disregard this obligation with which we are assailed to-day, the preacher needs a high endowment of that moral energy which we call manliness.

In that delightful book, "The Preacher and His Models," which almost every minister and theological student has been reading this last year, Dr. Stalker says: "The polish given by education tells, no doubt, but the size of the primordial mass of manhood tells still more. . . . People do not now respect the cloth unless they find a man inside of it."

The common conception of the ministry, especially among irreligious young men, is that it is not a manly vocation. They seem to have the impression that there is an element of mean, sneaking, effeminate insincerity about it; that it is a calling whose members from a third sex, so that the human race is composed of men, women and clergymen (enumerated in the descending scale). They have imbibed the notion that the preacher must be coddled by a different mode of address, a different kind of diet and a different method of treatment from that which they accord to other men. They imagine that he is a soft putty kind of a man on whom every passer-by can leave the mark of his knuckles if he be so minded, but whose unspeakable weakness it is generous to treat with the very greatest consideration. They fancy him one who lives on public charity, and who rarely gives a *quid pro quo*, who requires a special rate when he travels, and when he buys goods and over whose property the State must suspend its right of taxation, because it is a decent and religious thing to do so. It is only a short step from all this to regard the preacher as subscribing a creed which he no longer believes, and preaching doctrines repugnant to his own reason for a morsel of bread. If there have been individuals whose character evidently belied this conception these critics said, "What a pity such a fine fellow," etc.

Now, although there may have been here and there some grounds for such an opinion, it never was a true picture; and it ought to be, and really is, an anachronism to-day. No man is readier to endure hardness than the good soldier of Jesus Christ. But he must, more than ever, be prepared to stand before all men on the ground of his true manhood, and receive the same treatment as all others. He must have in

him such a keen sense of honour, such a sensitive, chivalrous spirit that he will decline any special advantage accorded to him on the ground of some mediæval conception of his office.

The preacher's loyalty to truth must not only be a manly fairness, the soul of honour, but also a fearless, heroic bravery which dares everything for God and the highest interests of mankind. We need now a higher order of courage than that with which our fathers faced the fire; a courage which is not only the instinct of battle which nerves itself to do and endure when some conflict draws near; but also with calm, enduring patience stands by an unpopular cause in its weakest hour; which resists the domination of narrow prejudices and traditionalism within the Church as well as her common foes without; and which perseveringly saps and mines at public opinion until the unwelcome truth is universally acknowledged and appropriate action follows. The Presbyterian Church will always expect a high order of courage in her ministers. The traditions of her martyrs, confessors and covenanters ought to inspire all her children to stand by their convictions though the heavens fall. Her pulpit is no place for poltroons.

Seldom did the preacher need a more definite faith, a stouter-hearted courage of conviction, or a more unswerving loyalty to truth than at the present time. Most powerful and hostile forces are around us neutralizing our influence, and undoing our work; and in weak moments we will be often tempted to abandon the unequal strife. What mean the echoes of a conflict, almost like a civil war, which have scarcely died away from some of the states of the neighbouring Republic? Are these the first throes of a gigantic social struggle in which the class degradation, and the political and economic abuses of all Europe will be painfully atoned for by every land?

What means the march of our Churches up among the habitations of the wealthy and away from the dwellings of the poor in almost all our large centres of population? Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ to become a perquisite of the cultured and well-to-do and for that reason an offence to him who most needs its consolation and its inspiration to righteousness? Has the honest artisan been soured and made the enemy of God's truth by the careless contempt of an aristocratic Christianity? If so, it will be largely in vain for us to try to reclaim him by the city missionary after he has been alienated in spirit. We had better make heroic efforts to maintain the primitive ideal of the House of God where the rich and the poor met together before the Lord who is the maker of them all.

The worship of material things has, in many quarters, wholly superseded the worship of God. Unscrupulous methods in public life are applauded by a large part of the population as consummate statesmanship. A black, dismal stream of poverty, anguish and crime is flowing all over the land from the organized iniquities of the liquor traffic. Gambling is still the amusement of many, and the serious employment of not a few. Conscience and self-respect are foreign ideas to a vast number of men.

Within the pale of the Protestant Church there is much well fitted to make a timid man uneasy. The great question with many able scholars is—Have we a supernatural revelation at all, or have we simply a sacred literature, which is, so far, the highest expression of the religious faculty in man, but which in its turn will be supplanted by something higher and better in the great evolution of humanity under the influence of the Zeitgeist. Among some believers in a revelation the atonement is repudiated, at least in its old historic sense, and the appeal is once more to the Covenant of works. That sacerdotal system which connects all grace with a figment of apostolic succession grows daily more arrogant and uncompromising. Sacramentalism is once more rearing its head where we should least expect to find it. The methods employed for reviving the Church's life are too often mechanical and their results transitory.

The preacher may shut his eyes to these tendencies and keep on his own way. But it is better for him to look through them and beyond them if he can. Surely in all these things there is a loud call for loyalty to truth on the part of him who hopes to lead men to God in Christ. Sometimes his difficulty will be to maintain that courageous faith in truth and righteousness which is so necessary for grappling successfully with his work.

He may be greatly helped by considering the adaptation of the Gospel to the deepest needs of man, by remembering its past triumphs over the lore of the wise and the might of the strong, by grasping the confident predictions of the Holy Scriptures which outline a certain victory for the truth, but most of all by close communion with the Holy One. He who maintains an unbroken fellowship with the Eternal will find that before the light and majesty of that divine presence the mists of earth will clear away. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." He will catch something of the dignity, stability and imperturbable calm of the Infinite One. Obtaining some glimpses of the future from the divine point of view he will not allow himself to be consumed with impatience, nor petulant anxiety about results. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

III. The Christian preacher for to-day needs to be a man of skill and power in using truth. He ought not to be what is called in Scotland "ane o' God's gowks," an encyclopædia of knowledge or a moving conscience, or both combined. He must be a man of action, a clear-headed, quick-witted, whole-souled reformer! His mental endowments, and especially his wealth of heart and vigour of devotional life, will indeed be useful in a high degree as he lives an earnest, holy life among men, for in so doing he reproduces the life of the great exemplar, the Son of God. Character in the preacher is of vast importance. But in addition to this he is the active champion of truth, an outside conscience to the sinner, the awakener of new and higher life throughout the whole community in which he dwells. He must not only be armed with the sword of truth, but he must know how to wield it in courageous and successful battle for the Lord. To obtain the love and respect of a Christian congregation and to minister to the needs of its members for a lifetime is no very difficult task with ordinary grace. But to conquer the kingdom of evil, to reclaim the devotees of vice, to counteract the spirit of worldliness, to bring the whole community nearer to the spirit of Christ than we found it, is hard, heart-breaking work. To accomplish it more than instruction is needed; instruction is a means to an end, viz., spiritual quickening. While it is wise to make every injunc-

tion to duty or to the enjoyment of privilege rest on a firm, doctrinal basis, the great need of man is not knowledge, but life. The worst man in Montreal knows more than the best man can do. Hence the crying need for power in the preacher to arouse the dormant conscience and awaken the whole higher man. Almost every writer on preaching has tried to analyze that element of ministerial efficiency which we call "power," and has failed. It has been pointed out that every kind of power is in its own nature indescribable. What is gravitation? Or magnetism? Or life? Do these forces not always elude a sensible and exhaustive definition? So does the preacher's power, yet it is a terribly real thing, notwithstanding its mystery. One man says certain words, and they are merely decent common-places; another says them, and they electrify an audience, and awaken unquenchable desires after holiness and God. This spiritual energy may be present in a high degree, along with very imperfect views of truth, and the utter absence of all graces of speech. And it may be conspicuously absent from the most perfect and finished discourse. The Salvationist vehemently repeating his one idea at the street corner often rouses to newness of life some utterly impervious to the appeals of the regular ministry. Have we not known students advised by their professors to turn aside to other callings because of their lack of gifts? But they persisted, and behold some of them proved their divine call by developing wonderful facility for moving men and rousing and organizing vast armies of workers. Again and again among our acquaintances we have seen illustrations of the sovereign grace of God, which clearly indicated that, when the Holy Spirit is a factor in the case, we can never predict what the results may be. Therefore it well becomes us all to seek the divine blessing of power by prayer, by reflection on the truth connected with it, by entire consecration to the service of God in helping men.

This age seems to demand special freshness and variety in pulpit teaching. From the topics of those who advertise them beforehand we learn the effort which is made to comply with this desire. While a very large number of these topics are chaste, appropriate and timely, there seems to be scarcely a crime, or an execution, or a social scandal, or a prize fight, which is not used by some sensation-monger to pander to a vulgar taste and to swell his reputation and his church revenue at the same time. While we have no doubt that the very mention of some of these things in the pulpit is a degradation of its mission, there is a possibility of using the events about which our hearers are thinking in the way of illustration so as to find a readier point of contact with their thoughts and lodge a higher truth in their minds. The temperance movement, the conflict between labour and capital, socialism, gambling, dishonest methods in business and all forms of Sabbath-breaking are allowed by the most conservative to be well within the sphere of occasional pulpit treatment. But these must not form the staple of our preaching by any means, nor is it wise to allow any outside organization to dictate to us how often we shall treat them. And when we do discuss them it must be clear that the moral and spiritual reconstruction of men is the end sought through them.

But the best method of securing both freshness and variety is to follow closely the language and the arrangement of Scripture. There we have the freshness of nature, the exhaustless variety of the divine mind. In the discourses of Alexander MacLaren, of Manchester, we have beautiful examples of the forcible and profitable results of allowing every phrase, mood and tense to deliver its message in the speech of to-day.

As another adaptation of our message to the spirit of our time it seems to me that we need more than ever to present the bright and joyous side of the truth. I venture the suggestion that this is a somewhat sad and pensive age. If you doubt this, consider how our children are pushed from stage to stage of study far beyond their years; how the hours once appointed for play are filled with music, painting or calisthenics; and how early on this continent they are little old men and old women. Even the university student has wonderfully changed since I first knew him. No longer does he tear along the street like a hind let loose, leaving a row of battered doors and a group of breathless policemen far behind him. He now walks quietly along with a comrade, gravely discussing the Unknowable. The business man tries to do in twenty-five years amid special difficulties what it took our fathers fifty years in easier circumstances to accomplish. He risks much in single ventures, and he has to study far-reaching complications. Consequently he is a man of many cares. He needs no lugubrious preacher to tell him that this world is a wilderness of woe and to send him from divine service sadder than he came. We have all listened to preaching which seemed to rattle a mouldering skeleton in men's faces and to make the divine government of earth a reign of terror. But the very purpose of the Gospel is to fling the bright bow of God's consoling promises on the dark cloud of human grief and care. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem." No weak sentimentalism which emasculates the Gospel will really comfort the sin-sick heart. The conscience will instinctively repudiate a forgiveness which is not founded on righteousness. Without in the least minimizing or concealing the sterner truths which need to be told, I have felt more and more the inspiration and the blessing of preaching the glad tidings of great joy which have been given us for all people; the possibility of absolute certainty regarding our standing in Christ; the tender affectionate interest of the living God in every individual man; the infinite wisdom of His procedure with us in the ordinary course of His Providence; and the unquestionable peace, glory and power of service, in which, if we are good and obedient, his training shall ultimately end. We need to carry with us something of the brightness of our Lord's ministry and His absolute freedom from despondency concerning man's condition, dark as He knew it to be—thus to spread before the weary and the careworn a refreshment sadly needed and sometimes deeply desired.

From every review, however brief and fragmentary, of the preacher's duties, difficulties and responsibilities, we turn with the question of Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But when this cry is wrung from the soul it is the sign of being lifted into fellowship with the sufferings of the Son of God, and there is revealed to him the privileges of ministering peace and consolation which an angel might envy, and whose crown no man can take away.