

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

"Who is our neighbour?" Now, I don't think it is hard to find out. I want to know if we here in this church to-day do not know something about the man who fell among thieves. I think you'll find that the road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho has no ending, and takes in all our railway routes and turnpikes. Jerusalem was the city of peace; Jericho, as a city, was accursed, and the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was all down hill. How many there are travelling it to-day, and falling among thieves who strip them of their raiment, and wound them, and leave them for dead!

The snare of the fowler, the dens of the robbers, are in every corner of your own great city. Look about you and beware! Think how little your churches are doing for those who have fallen by the wayside! We read of the priest who came by and went over on the other side. I can imagine that he was on his way down to Jericho to dedicate a synagogue. That was on his mind, and nothing in the world seemed so important to him as that. He heard the groans of a fellow-creature suffering by the wayside, but he did not mind. Perhaps he pitied the man. Pity is cheap, you know. It doesn't cost much effort to pity.

May be he went further, and gave the man a lecture, telling him he had no business to be travelling alone, and wanted to know what business he had down there, anyhow. He had no doubt begun at once to censure and condemn. Perhaps he went farther, and reported the affair to the police to investigate. Instead of taking hold of the man and lifting him up, the priest very likely resolved to use his influence to have more stringent laws passed. Perhaps he was so impressed that he went to work and organized a society for the prevention of crime. He had no doubt seen that man with his wife and children in the synagogue on a previous Sabbath, but he could do nothing more than reflect upon the reason why God sent sin into the world, anyhow, and decide to use the incident to illustrate a future sermon. If you see a man in the water about to drown, do you begin to argue with him about the importance of a sure footing on shore?

I fear we have too many of the priests and Levites about us. They have no fellow-feeling; they haven't any human sympathy, and if there is anything that is wanted in the present day more than another, it is humanity. These are times when a little kind act can do more than a hundred sermons. The very essence of Christianity is to get outside of yourselves; to do good to others. In that more than anything else it differs from other so-called religious schemes.

But, really, in these times when people are so selfish and close-fisted with their money, it seems the greatest sort of farce to say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Yet this is the truth, and Christians will never be what they claim to be, or worth the name, until they enter that life which is in the welfare of others. You know the Jews hated the Samaritans. To a religious Jew there was nothing in the world so obnoxious as the presence of a Samaritan. Any man could enter the communion of the Jews but a Samaritan, and when he was buried he was placed so low that it was hoped the angel Gabriel's trumpet should not awake him on the last day. The hope of pardon was eternally cut off from the Samaritan, and the Jew hated him worse than a pestilence. I'll venture to say that when the priest and Levite met him down the road they did not pretend to see him. They just went right along with their heads ahigh, but, thank God, the Samaritan had a heart, and when Christ was down here He sought hearts, not heads.

When the Samaritan saw the wounded and naked Jew, he got from off his beast and lifted him up. He didn't haul out a lot of manuscript and read the Jew a sermon. The drunkards, and the harlots, and the gamblers don't want you to condemn them. They condemn themselves. They want sympathy and something done to better them, or to touch their hearts. They want us to lift them up. And this Samaritan poured oil into the man's wounds. That's what Christ does. He always has oil to heal the wounded heart and spirit. He gives the poor Jew some wine to strengthen him; he tears strips from his own garments to bind the poor fellow's wounds, and then he tries to lift him on the beast.

This Jew was nearly dead. If he had been a little stronger, he would never have allowed the Samaritan to have saved him. So there are thousands who resist Christ while they have strength, and wait until they are weak, and helpless, and naked, and wounded, before they let Him aid them. Then the Samaritan, after giving money to the inn-keeper, told him if it were not enough, he was com- back and would re-pay him. You know Christ is coming back, and He's going to reward all these inn-keepers.—*Mr. Moody in a late address at Baltimore.*

NATURALNESS IN PREACHING.

Religion is, and must be organized into an institution. Preaching and worship occur at regular intervals, at definite times, and in places set apart for the purpose. It would be strange if in the case of both ministers and hearers, the services of religion did not become, in a greater or less degree, perfunctory. Men may preach and even pray, as they wind up their watches in the morning, merely because the customary time has come. The services of religion, simply because they are repeated week after week, may sink into a lifeless routine. An evangelist, who comes for a short time and then goes, who holds his meetings in a building specially erected for his use, at unusual times also, and under circumstances altogether peculiar, is comparatively free from this exposure. But the sight of his work may serve to remind us of it, and stimulate us to guard against so insidious a foe. One part of the lesson is, to aim at and expect results. The end of the sermon is to produce an effect. Something is to be done and accomplished. The auditors are to be made to see a certain truth, to feel in a certain way, to resolve upon a certain line of conduct. One who is not striving for such a result, to be achieved on the spot, might as well beat the air.

A preacher who is thus in earnest, and practical in the true sense of the term, will be very much aided in casting aside all cant, and all conventionalities of speech of whatever nature, and will be more likely to give to the truth a fresh and living expression. When a great religious ferment exists in any age—for example, the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century—religious thoughts and emotions create for themselves a language of their own. This language is handed down and becomes a traditional vehicle, which is kept in use after it ceases to suit the consciousness of a later generation. Religious truth becomes incrustated in words and phrases which hide it, instead of revealing it. In that case, religious teaching fails to come home to the bosoms and business of men, and, consequently they stay away from church; or, if this does not happen, "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed." It is an immense gain when a minister can break through these fetters, and speak in the natural language of the living generation. The old truth is made new when it is uttered in the words of to-day. I have in mind an eminent preacher, widely diverse from Mr. Moody in education and in habits of mind, the Rev. Phillips Brooks. Yet one prime source of the interest with which the sermons of Mr. Brooks are heard, lies in the freshness and naturalness of the expression in which he inculcates the truth of the New Testament. Who that is thirsty does not prefer a mountain stream to a rain cistern? It might be profitable for many a minister to examine his own prayers and sermons for a single Sabbath, and see what amount of phraseology there is in them, which though it might have been telling in Solomon's temple, or Calvin's Institutes, or in the mouth of one of Cromwell's chaplains, falls dead on the ear of living men to-day. Artificial elegance, let me add, weakens the influence of truth, not less than cant. No kind of food cloyes so soon as confectionery. Although it is not well for preachers generally to stuff their sermons with anecdotes, no one should disdain to introduce an illustration, however homely in its incidents, which really elucidates or recommends his doctrine.—*Rev. Geo. P. Fisher in an address before a Congregational Association.*

FORWARD.

First, when God commands, it is the duty of Christians to move forward. The children of Israel standing with the hosts of Pharaoh in rear of them, and the billowy sea in front of them, were commanded by God to go on; they went, and with what success every Bible reader knows. Abraham, "when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards re-

ceive as an inheritance, obeyed; not knowing whither he went." David had no sooner ascended the throne, than the Philistines came up threatening him and his kingdom with destruction. The king consulted his God and received the answer, "Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand. And David came to Baal-Perazim, and smote them there, and said, the Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies as the breach of many waters." And it was to a few poor fishermen that the mandate of the Master first came, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." There were many difficulties in the way, yet they started—started on the strength of that little Divine "go."

Has God given you, my reader, a command to move on? He has if you are His child. Hear Him speak, "go on unto perfection." Hear Him again, "go work in my vineyard." Happy, thrice happy, is the soul that conditions all its movements on the Divine command.

Again, Christians should move onward, where God, by His providence, opens the way. The rod of Moses lifted over the waters caused a separation, and a highway for his people was opened through the sea. Here was a providential event, pointing out that their course lay before them. The indication was so clear that no Israelite could for a moment doubt that the Lord wanted them to go to the other side of the sea. And thus God is now providentially pointing out to His people the way He would have them walk. Perhaps the best illustration of this, in modern times, is to be found in connection with the establishment of missions in the kingdom of China. A century ago, and Christianity was not tolerated within the boundaries of that "Celestial" land; nor would its missionaries be protected by the laws of the country. The people had such a high estimate of themselves, their country, and their religion, that it was regarded as a piece of impertinence on the part of one from the Western World to attempt their enlightenment. This national pride presented an effectual barrier to missionary enterprise. It must, therefore, be crushed before God's servants could carry successfully the news of salvation among them. And it was crushed, partly in the war of 1842, and still more in that of 1860, and eighteen ports were opened to trade, the empire made free to foreign travel and teaching, a definite pledge of toleration to Christianity was given, and due protection to its missionaries granted.

And that which is seen on a large scale may be seen on a small one. Then watch the movements of Providence about you for 1879, and when the way opens go forward.

In all advances, however, there should be complete trust in God. In this world where there is so much to oppose the Christian in his putting off the old man, and putting on the new man which after Christ Jesus is created in holiness, and his attempts to further the kingdom of God in the world outside, no real progress can be made in the absence of abiding confidence in God. We must lean on God at the start, and keep leaning on Him all the way.—*Canadian Independent.*

DOCTRINES OF THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

In a lengthy review of the recently published pamphlet on this subject, the St. Louis "Presbyterian" has the following:

"We are very glad to see this 'Catechism' from the pen of a gentleman whose learning, piety and careful and protracted study of the vagaries of the 'Brethren' qualify him to expose their doctrinal unsoundness and consequent unscriptural and corrupt practices. Such a publication has become very much needed. The Plymouth Brethren—religious nomads—have been carried by their zeal against the Church and its order and ordinances, beyond Britain and Ireland to the continent, to Syria, India and other mission fields, and to our own land: and everywhere they make trouble—they are disorganizers—they pull down and destroy, and do not rebuild, but seek to leave the people of God without the shelter and rules of His house and to transform them into an ecclesiastical mob. Even in these ends of the earth, these destructives are zealously at work, have created disturbance in some of the churches, have led astray some badly balanced young men and some foolish older persons, have decried and set themselves against the Church, and, persuaded that the Gospel is not preached in any existing 'meeting house,' have acted