

from one sermon to another. The average standard is high, but the uniformity with which the standard is constantly maintained—that is the thing most noteworthy, as it is the thing most characteristic, and the most nearly unique, in Dr. Maclaren's production, whether considered in the single particular sermon, or in the whole continuous tenor of his preaching. I cannot say that an impression of facility in working is also made, or at least that such an impression is made in any degree commensurate with the impression made of a certain fatal inflexible certitude and exactness. One feels a little—let us even admit, a little too much—the strain of intention on the part of the preacher. There is cost to him involved in the value to us. But what a fault—if a fault! The very rarest of excesses in the very rarest of virtues; the virtue, namely, of good, honest, hard work. Would that what exceeds here in Dr. Maclaren could be judiciously distributed to the rest of us!

What I have pronounced the chief peculiarity (which is, of course, at the same time a distinguishing excellence) in Dr. Maclaren's pulpit oratory as submitted in print—I mean the sustained and uniform high average of quality it shows—is due in great part to his method. His method is therefore pre-eminently worthy of study.

Of course, I cannot now wish to be understood that mere method, apart from that virtue in the man—virtue mental and moral both—which first produced the method, and since has steadily kept the method at work—I cannot mean that this alone constitutes the secret of Dr. Maclaren's remarkable achievement. But Dr. Maclaren's individual original gift is a thing incommunicable, while happily his method of working is not. This latter may be found out, and then so stated in words that whosoever will may learn it and put it in practice. Whosoever will; but will is a great matter here. It is something more than bare willingness. Willingness is negative; will is positive. Willingness is passive; will is active. Willingness raises no obstacles; will overcomes all obstacles. Will, in short, *will*.

What, then, is the master method according to which Dr. Maclaren, in producing his sermons, proceeds?

The first element of it, logically first, and first in importance, is a certain moral, issuing in a corresponding mental, habit—a habit of submission; on the preacher's part, sincere and utter submission, involving the whole man to the absolute and ultimate authority of the Word of God as contained in the Bible, and therefore as contained in the text chosen for any given particular occasion. Dr. Maclaren thus begins by approaching his text in the spirit of a learner. He does not bring with him a thought or a doctrine purveyed from some quarter outside of the Bible, or perchance laboriously evolved from his own inner consciousness, which is now to be somehow ingeniously injected into his text, in order to be ingeniously thence derived again—all with homiletic sleight-