

Pastor and People.

THE PUBLIC READING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

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It is the custom in all Protestant Churches to read a portion of Holy Scripture at each public service. In most congregations, however, little seems to be made of it, and it is doubtful if, on the whole, there is any part of the service from which the people generally derive less benefit. A chapter more or less is indeed read, sometimes well, too often poorly. Very commonly a passage is selected which contains the text of the sermon which is to follow, or it least, has some bearing upon it. But, as the congregation do not know what is coming, they do not have much advantage from this. As a general thing, whatever be the reason, the public reading of the Scriptures is a part of the service in which most of the people seem to feel little concern. In too many cases it is impossible to mistake, as one looks over the congregation, the manifest lack of attention and of interest in the Word which is read.

Feeling and deploring this, many have introduced a system of responsive readings. Against this we are by no means concerned to argue, but rather to suggest another remedy for the evil which so many, with reason, lament. Let the minister who is troubled by this inattention of the people to the reading of the Word try to return to the old fashion of exposition in connection with the public reading, and, in many cases at least, we venture to predict, he will be delighted with the result. If rightly done, it will be found to work admirably in keeping the attention and interest of the congregation awake in the reading of Scripture.

Such exposition will naturally be, to a great extent, explanatory. It will have regard now to the force of a particular word; now, to the rendering of a phrase; now, again, it will call attention to the logical relation of a statement to that which precedes or follows. Those who, with the most, still use the version of King James in public worship, have in the revised version of the Old and New Testaments an invaluable aid for this part of the service. All renderings of any importance which, in the judgment of the minister, bring out more clearly the sense of the original should be given to the people in the public reading. More persons than we think will not have noticed such variations, especially in the Old Testament; and, if they have, the comparison will interest them none the less. Reference to other illustrative Scriptures should also be freely made. The more of this the better, so that the references are really pertinent. We not only can thus teach the people the meaning of the passage which we read, but also show them how to search the Scriptures to good purpose themselves. Where, as often, there is no occasion for explanatory exposition, a single pointed word will often be of great use in calling attention to the lesson of the passage, or emphasizing to the hearer the force of a warning, promise or precept.

To succeed in this expository mode of reading, as in everything else, it must, of course, be done aright, and this means study and hard work. Remark must be brief, clear and to the point. Long drawn homily and exhortation are in this connection wholly out of place. They will kill the so-called exposition outright. What is said must also be fresh and pertinent. To deliver trite commonplaces and pious platitudes under the impression that, because these accompany the reading, they therefore constitute an exposition of the Word, will be fatal. Exposition is, indeed, most desirable, but such remarks expound nothing, and no one will thank us for them. Better by far hold to the usual fashion and say nothing.

But in order to secure this brevity, pointedness and freshness, preparation must be made for this part of the service no less than for the sermon. We should never read in the pulpit a passage which we have not thoughtfully and prayerfully read over first in the common version in our study. This is necessary for most of us even in order to proper elocution. To this should be added the careful reading and study of the passage selected for public reading, in the original Greek or Hebrew. This also will often enable a man without any necessary appearance of pedantry, to cast a welcome light on many a word and phrase. To this, again, may with great advantage be added the reading of the chapter selected in other versions than the English, as the Greek, German, French, or whatever else the minister may be so happy as to be able to use. Lastly, as already suggested, the careful comparison of the Scripture chosen with related Scripture will be a most helpful part of preparation for the public reading.

Objections will no doubt be made to these suggestions. It may be said that it will add materially to the minister's work thus to prepare for this part of the service. This is true. But it is work that will repay richly, both to the profit of the people and of the minister himself. Indirectly all this will in time tell powerfully on the preparation of the sermon, if the work only be well done.

It will be suggested, perhaps, that in these days of multiplied commentaries, the people, having all these helps, do not need this exposition with the public reading of the Scriptures as they did in former days. But this is much to be doubted, at least as regards a large part of our congregations. Comparatively few in most of our Churches have our best commentaries; fewer still among our busy men have, or think they have, the leisure to use what helps they do possess, in any thorough way. And then, in any case, thoughts which we have worked out for ourselves in the manner indicated will have a freshness and force to the minds of our hearers which the mere reading of commentaries can never have. We must not forget the power of the living voice over that of the printed page.

It will be said, again, by some, that this plan will make the service too long. The answer is, that this depends upon the man. The service certainly *must not be made too long*. But it need not be. We can well afford, if need be, to shorten some other parts of the service to secure thereby better and more profitable attention to the reading of the Word. Then we must study and prepare for the expository reading till we can be brief. And then, if it still occupies too large a proportion of the time of worship, we have a remedy in reading a shorter passage than is common. It is better so to read ten or fifteen verses that the people shall really listen and take in, than to go in a perfunctory way through a long chapter without a word which shall rouse listless occupants of the pews to think what it is to which they are supposed to be listening.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

CHRISTMAS.

BY T. K. HENDERSON, TORONTO.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates."—Ps. xxiv. 7.

Lift up your heads, ye gates!
The King of Glory waits
Upon the threshold of His world!
He comes, but not with pomp
Of claron and trumpet,
And banners to the winds unfurled.

No ruthless monarch He
In war's proud panoply,
And bleeding nations in His train;
Great Rome's two-headed god
Had laid aside his rod,
When bounteous peace came down to reign!

Far o'er that sceptered land,
Where Caesar stretched his hand,
And voice incense dimmed the skies,
The Pagan on his knee,
Saw superstition flee,
And Faith's fair morning star arise.

So may it ever shine,
Into that soul of thine,
O reader of this simple lay,
And guide thy struggling feet
Into the calm retreat,
Through doubt and sorrow's darkest day.

Up, up beyond the blue
Of heaven's celestial hue,
Beyond the changeful things of time,
Swelled the grand choir of praise
That they alone could raise
Where hys were touched with fire Divine!

And soon the heavenly strain
Fell like the blessed rain
Upon the thirsty soul of man;
And angels on the wing
The gladdest tidings bring
He heard since Adam's race began.

Then fling the portals wide!
He comes, for whom they cried—
"Mercy on us, O David's son!"
To the regenerate earth,
On which Thou had'st Thy birth,
O Son of God! in triumph come!

BISHOP BEVERIDGE'S RESOLUTIONS.

1. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to walk by rule, and therefore think it necessary to resolve upon rules to walk by.
2. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to make the divine word the rule of all the rules I propose to myself.
3. I am resolved, that as I am not able to think or do anything that is good without the influence of the divine grace; so I will not pretend to merit any favour from God, upon account of anything I do for His glory and service.

CONCERNING MY BEHAVIOUR IN GENERAL.

1. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to make Christ the pattern of my life here, that so Christ may be the portion of my soul hereafter.
2. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to walk by faith, and not by sight, on earth, that so I may live by sight, and not by faith, in heaven.

3. I am resolved by the grace of God, always to be looking upon God, as always looking upon me.

CONCERNING MY THOUGHTS.

1. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to watch as much over the inward motions of my heart, as the outward actions of my life.
2. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to stop every thought at its first entering into my heart, and to examine it, hence it comes and whither it tends.
3. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be as fearful to let in vain, as careful to keep out sinful thoughts.
4. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be always exercising my thoughts upon good objects, that the devil may not exercise them upon bad.
5. I am resolved, by the grace of God, so to marshal my thoughts that they may not one jostle out another, nor any of them prejudice the business I am about.

CONCERNING MY AFFECTIONS.

1. I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to make my affections subservient to the dictates of my understanding, that my reason may not follow, but guide my affections.
2. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to love God as the best of goods, and to hate sin as the worst of evils.
3. I am resolved, by the assistance of divine grace, to make God the principal object of my joy, and sin the principal object of my grief and sorrow; so as to grieve for sin more than suffering, and for suffering only for sin's sake.
4. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to desire spiritual mercies more than temporal; and temporal mercies only in reference to spiritual.
5. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to hope for nothing so much as the promises, and to fear nothing so much as the threatenings of God.
6. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to arm myself with that spiritual courage and magnanimity as to press through all duties and difficulties whatsoever, for the advancement of God's glory and my own happiness.
7. I am resolved, by the grace of God, so to be angry, as not to sin, and, therefore, to be angry at nothing but sin.

INTELLECTUAL LOYALTY TO CHRIST.

When a person is converted he enters not only into a new way of living, but into a new way of thinking. His intellect, as well as his conscience and affections, begins to work after a Christian fashion. His mind is "born again," and "born of the Spirit." No new faculties are given him, and the dunce is not made a philosopher. But the new life makes itself felt in all the mental operations, and he who once "thought as a child," now thinks as a son of God.

This is due to the fact that Christ lives in the disciple and possesses his whole nature. The "new creature" is redeemed intellectually as well as ethically and spiritually. This does not ensure his infallibility, but it does ensure his inheritance of the promise, "ye shall know the truth."

The Christian should recognize the obligation which comes with the inheritance—the obligation of intellectual loyalty to Christ. For his co-operation is as necessary in using his mental faculties to the glory of God as in eating or drinking or whatsoever he does. He must work out his own intellectual salvation while God works in him. How shall he place and keep himself intellectually under the leadership of Christ? By thinking in a Christian spirit and by taking Christ as authority.

There is a worldliness of the intellectual, as there is of the practical, life. It is self-confident, self-sufficient, impatient of opposition, disputatious. The Christian mind is docile, receptive, humble, patient, sincere. Truth is not something that we master; it is something that masters us. It is not the coat we put on and off; it is life. Its power to sanctify us depends upon the heartiness with which we surrender ourselves to its sway. The Christian will be hungry for truth. Some persons seem to be exceedingly fearful lest they shall believe too much. Not by reducing truth to its lowest terms shall we be sanctified. We must believe all we can. Dr. Bushnell said he would sign the creeds if they would bring him enough of them.

Take Christ as Lord of the intellect. He speaks "with authority." It is painful in the midst of discussions of great doctrines and great duties to observe how rare is the appeal to Christ as ultimate authority. If a biblical truth does not accord with somebody's "feeling," he dismisses it as unreasonable. That a duty is disagreeable is sufficient ground for refusing it. The true Christian lights his candle at the Sun. "One is your Master." No man guesses at truth as worth little. What saith the Lord? If the faithful disciple is troubled as to duty or doctrine, he will go for instruction to Christ's words. He will test every sermon by the teachings of Him who spake as man never spake. If his conscience or heart becomes restless under the pressure of solemn truths, he will renewedly submit his faculties to the sway of Christ.—*Golden Rule.*