

THE IDEA OF THE SERMON.

The idea which should be uppermost is *the sermon is for teaching*. The congregation assembles to worship God and to be taught the Word of God. The minister comes before it not to entertain or delight, but to teach a lesson. His forethought and question should be 'I'm going to teach the congregation something next Sabbath. What shall it be? What do they need? And the anticipation of the people should be not that they are 'going to hear a sermon,' but to learn a lesson. When the worship is concluded and they settle themselves to listen, it should be with the thought 'Now the minister of God is about to teach us some lesson in Divine truth; it may be in regard to doctrine or conduct; it may be concerning the life that now is, or that which is to come.' And after the exercises are concluded, the question should be, not 'Was the sermon interesting or good to-day?' but 'What lesson did you learn, or what truth do you understand more clearly?'

BACKBONE.

One thing which Christians, as well as others, need at the present day is backbone. Not a backbone like a ramrod, that cannot yield or bend, but a well articulated spinal column, which is strong enough to hold a man upright and keep him from being crushed beneath the burdens that press upon him. These are days of easy-going piety; and men are too often ruled by compromise rather than by conscience.

Says Mr. Spurgeon:—"Oak has given place to willow. Everybody has grown limp. Out of the generality of limpness has come an admiration for it. A man cannot speak a plain word without being accused of bitterness, and if he denounces error he is narrow-minded; for all must join the universal-admiration society, or be placed under ban and be howled down."

Now in such a condition of things as this there is special call, not for stubbornness and crustiness, but for a gentle, patient, unyielding conscientiousness and firmness, which anchors the soul to the everlasting Rock, and causes the heart to rest on Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and who will never leave nor forsake us. Let us pray that God may make us strong in his strength, and enable us to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."—*Christian*.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

The so-called conflict between science and religion depends upon ignorance of one or the other, or on a dishonest and partial representation of the testimony of nature, or that of revelation, or of both. In those branches of natural science in which I myself work it is the growing tendency of discovery to corroborate and elucidate the reference to natural things in the Bible. This I have often had occasion to notice and comment upon in the discussion of scientific subjects.

In so writing, however, I do not refer to the doctrine of spontaneous evolution of living beings, and of man, as held by a prominent school of German and English biologists. This doctrine I regard as equally at variance with science, revelation and common sense, and destitute of any foundation in fact; it belongs, in truth, to the region of those illogical paradoxes and loose speculations which have ever haunted the progress of knowledge, and have been dispelled only by increasing light. For this reason I have always refused to recognize the dreams of materialistic evolution as of any scientific significance, or, indeed, as belonging to science at all. They bear no clearer relation to science than fogs do to sunlight and I anticipate a time not far distant when they will be dispelled, and when men will see much more clearly than they now do the agreement between the Word and the works of God.—*Principal Dawson, Montreal*.

A religious tramp is no more to be desired, and is no more likely to have settled habits of action, than a civil one. The rolling stone on the hillside has its counterpart in the church among those who are here to-day and there to-morrow. The branch must be literally grafted into the vine, and remain there, if there is to be any budding, blossoming and the bearing of fruit. Every Christian, in addition to having a name to live should have also a local habitation, and be found at home when there is a call for his services. Like the psalmist, he should be able to say: "One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seed after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the lord, and to inquire in his temple." *Sol.*

The Presbyterian Church of Ireland numbers nearly half of the Protestant population of that country, and consists of 553 congregations, with 620 ministers