

THE MODERN PULPIT AND SCEPTICAL CULTURE.

It becomes, no doubt, a perplexing question in many cases, How ought the gospel preacher to deal with such a state of facts? He cannot but be aware that a large number of those to whom he preaches are more or less brought under the influence of this sceptical culture. And besides, he is aware that he and all who stand fast to "the faith once delivered to the saints" are continually held up before the people as ignorant, dogmatic bigots, whose religious creed of necessity puts them into a position of antagonism towards scientific knowledge and the progress of the age. What, then, is the duty of the preacher in reference to this noisy, rampant, and aggressive scepticism? Can he afford utterly to ignore it? Evidently not. Shall he, then, arm himself with sling and stone, and go forth to meet these Lilliputian Goliaths who defy the armies of the living God? Must he shame the smatterers by going back to the foundation of their infidel systems, and instructing the people in the categories of Kant and the philosophy of Hegel, with their out-flouring in the destructive criticism of the Tübingen school? Must he expound and expose the Positive Philosophy, and point out the mistake of Sir William Hamilton in regard to the unconditioned and the unthinkable? Must he discuss with Mr. Herbert Spencer his system of the universe developed from the unknowable, and his new theory of creation under Darwin's law of development? Must he mark out for the people the mistakes of the philosophers concerning that mysterious line which separates between the knowable and thinkable and the unconditioned and unknowable? Must he follow Tyndall and Huxley and Darwin into the *penetralia* of nature, and expose the missing links in their theories of the origin of man and of the universe? Must he trudge with Sir John Lubbock over his immeasurable mud-bank of facts, often falsely so called, or grope his way with Baron Gould through his immeasurable fog-banks of speculation touching the genesis of man and his religions?

Manifestly not. This would be a practical laying aside the duties of his office. And moreover, such is not the true method of meeting error in the popular mind, even philosophically considered. Every minister of intelligence and experience has discovered that the most effective method of destroying the influence of error over the minds of men is not to give chase after it into the wilderness of controversy, but to instil into the minds of the people clear and distinct ideas of the contrary truth. The surest antidote to falsehood is a clear-cut, simple statement of the positive truth which falsehood assails. There is a profound philosophy underlying the instruction given by an inspired apostle to a young friend in the ministry, and one specially appropriate to the young ministry of this day:—"Keep thou that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." And elsewhere the same apostle declares his own method of dealing with the sceptical culture of his day:—"The Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, to the Greeks foolishness."—*Dr. Stuart Robinson in Princeton Review.*

VERY SHORT AND VERY LONG.

There are some things very short, and some things very long. God in His word tells us of both of these, and bids us look at them.

1. Life is very short. God speaks of it as a shadow, 1 Chron. xxix. 15; a weaver's shuttle, Job vii. 6; a flower, Psalm ciii. 15; a leaf, Isa. lxiv. 6; a hand-breath, Psalm xxxix. 5; a vapour, James iv. 14; a sleep, Psalm xc. 5; a flood, Psalm xc. 5. Is not life, then short? If it be like these it must be short indeed.
2. Time is very short. It is made up of many lives, yet it is short. The time is short, says Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29; the world passeth away, says John, 1 John ii. 17. A few years will end all.
3. The sinner's joy is short. It is but for a moment, says Job, chap. xx. 5. The fashion of this world passeth away, 1 Cor. vii. 31. He may laugh and dance and be gay, and take his ease and be merry; but his

joy soon comes to an end. It fades away, and leaves nothing behind it but grief.

4. The saint's sorrow is short. It is but for a moment, 2 Cor. iv. 17. It may be heavy, and hard to bear, but it is soon over, and it leaves no shadow behind. When it is done all is joy forever.

These are some of the things that are very short. They are spoken of by God, that you may think upon them. Will you not? Look back at the past years of your life, and look onward, and let these things that are so short—so very short—be looked at in view of the past and of the coming time.

But there are other things that are long—very long—so long that men cannot count them. They are forever and ever. Let me ask you to think of them also. God bids you think of them.

1. God Himself. He is from everlasting to everlasting, Psalm xc. 2. His life is throughout all eternity, for He is the King eternal and immortal, 1 Tim. i. 17. How well for us to have this God for our God—to have Him for our portion in such a changing world!

2. God's love. The mercy of the Lord, says David, is from everlasting to everlasting, Psalm ciii. 17. The love of God changes not. His mercy never dies. His grace never grows old.

3. The life to come. It is everlasting life, John iii. 16; there is no death in this life, and no end. He who gets it gets it forever and ever. What must it be to have *eternal* life!

4. The saint's joy. At God's right hand are pleasures forevermore, Psalm xvi. 11; the joy which the ransomed of the Lord obtain is everlasting joy, Isaiah xxxv. 10. How blessed to have joy like this—joy that shall never end!

5. The sinner's sorrow. It is endless—*endless*. The fire is everlasting, Isaiah xxxiii. 14; the torment is day and night forever and ever, Rev. xx. 10. The darkness is the blackness of darkness forever, Jude 13. How sad to lie down in such sorrow—to have these everlasting burnings for our home.

God asks you to consider your ways. Will you prefer this world to the world to come? Is sin better than Christ? Are the weeds of the earth sweeter than the flowers of Paradise? Time stays not; do not you, then, stay. Let not sin keep you back from God, and shut you out of heaven. Come and wash in the open fountain. Come and get the white robe. Then, whether your days on earth are few or many, it matters not. When the Lord comes you shall have the joy, and the glory, and the crown.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

PAUL'S SLEEPY HEARER.

One of the comfortable incidents mentioned in the New Testament history is that of the young man who slept while Paul preached, and who slept so soundly as to fall from the window into the crowd below.

It is to be remembered that Paul was preaching. Paul the learned, the mighty, who had seen Jesus in a vision at Damascus; who had been caught up into the third heavens; who had heard words it is not lawful to utter with human lips; who had conferred upon him the dignity and responsibility of opening the Gospel to the Gentile world; who was to influence the generations after him more than all other thinkers and philosophers of his time. This Paul was preaching; he was preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ; he was preaching the glorious Gospel of the Son of God; he was making known the mystery which had been hidden from the ages.

It was Paul, and—he was preaching. In his audience was a person who was a man, not a woman; who was a young man, not an old man; and while Paul was preaching this young man fell asleep. His name has been preserved. It was Eutychus.

If now and then a modern preacher sees a lid-covered eye, a drowsy face, or a nodding head, he goes back with comfort to the incident recorded in holy Scripture, that while Paul preached a man slept.

The comfort to the hearer seems to come in this wise; he says to himself, "There never was an age in which somebody did not sleep in church; there never was a preacher under whose ministrations some one did not slumber. Is it not, therefore, with

me a singular infirmity; it is common to hearers; and that I am sleeping is no reflection upon the minister in the pulpit, because he will console himself with recollecting the young man, Eutychus, who slept while Paul preached."

But why should either party be concerned about this sleeping? Is it a shame or a sin to sleep in church? Certainly in the abstract this cannot be answered in the affirmative. The moral quality will depend upon the cause of the sleeping.

If a man has been drinking too much or eating too much, the sin is not in sleeping, it is in the intemperance or the gluttony of the sleeper. If the man has been at some place of amusement Saturday night, so that he did not get sufficient sleep for Sabbath, the sin is not in the sleeping; it is in the failure to have slept in the right time and in the right place.

It is always good to sleep. It is God's provision in nature for the restoration of our wastes. But we ourselves may push it into wrong seasons. If a man has been out on duty the night before; if a woman has been watching by her sick child, and neither feels willing to miss the church service, but goes for what can be enjoyed, and sleep comes, there is no ground for trouble of conscience. It was the duty of the hearer to be awake the night before. It is his duty to be in church in the morning if there be nothing to prevent. If he fall asleep during the sermon, it is his infirmity. If he bumps his head against the pew in front, or tumbles from the window, it is his misfortune. But there is no sin in sleeping.

Speaking of sleeping reminds us of an incident in our ministry in this city. The service was held in what was then the large chapel of the University. It was mid-summer, and the day was extraordinarily hot and close. The people looked very drowsy. So, when the time for the delivery of the discourse arrived, we made substantially the following address to our audience:

"Many of you have been hard at work during the week, and the day is exceedingly warm, and you may not feel wakeful through the entire discourse. Sometimes hearers have distress of mind because they sleep in church. They seem to think that sleeping shows a want of either reverence for God, or respect for the clergyman, or both. Now, I desire to ease your minds by telling you that if you put yourselves in comfortable positions, and there be anything in the matter of the sermon or the manner of its delivery to soothe you, I shall feel that my calling to-day is to soothe you; and if I put you to sleep it will be a great success. If I see you sleep I shall know that you are doing well. I shall go through the discourse to the best of my ability all the same as if you were awake."

Now, what do you think was the effect of this speech? The whole congregation faced the pulpit, and gazed at the preacher with the most intense attention. Every man, woman and child of them kept distinctly awake, with eyes looking as if they were hungry; and as for "ourselves" we never felt more called upon to feed a hungry flock than we did that day. The exertion was exhausting, and at the close we discovered that an audience may be obstinate, and go by the rule of contraries, being then most wide awake when you are most willing that they should slumber and sleep.—*Rev. Dr. Deems in Sunday Magazine.*

THE HEBREWS.

No race of men upon the earth are a more interesting study than the Jews. With an ancestry dating back to the very dawn of history, their life, biography and religion have been woven into and become a part of the past. Along the banks of the Euphrates, the Nile and the Jordan, from Ur of the Chaldees and Palestine, two thousand years before the coming of Christ, we gather the connected and well-authenticated history of the Jews, and the world in which they moved, and which but for them would have been a blank, or the records left at least in great doubt. They were known as Hebrews for over a thousand years after the emigration of Abraham. The name of Jew was applied after the dispersion of the ten tribes, and the house of Judah became the loyal representa-