

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE.

The ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY gave the address to men only at the Polytechnic Institute, Regent street, on Sunday afternoon. His Grace was supported on the platform by the Bishop of Salisbury, Lord Kinnaird, Sir J. Kennaway, Mr. J. E. K. Studd, and the Rev Dr. Lunn (the Methodist chaplain to the Institution). The hall was packed with about 1,500 men, and hundreds were turned away unable to secure admission. The Archbishop chose as his text the words, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," and made his subject "How to read the Bible." It was a much more difficult matter than they might think to read the Bible properly. The busy men present wished to spend their minutes wisely, and when they had read half a chapter which did not seem to have much to do with them they found it rather dry, and soon the habit was given up. He believed that this resulted because they did not know how to read the Bible. He felt that if they knew really how, they would find it increasingly interesting. He would therefore say on what principles and in what spirit the Bible should be read. The first hindrance to reading the Bible well was to regard it as a book. It was really a library. It was a collection of books written from dates extending from 1500 B.C. to nearly the close of the first century. It stopped being written when the need was completed, and not before. He wished to ask them if any of them would go to a shelf in a library, on which were books written by all sorts and conditions of men, and pull down volume after volume in it, and read a few words in each, with the idea that each few words must do him good, even though he knew nothing of the conditions under which each book was written. But that was the way in which people read the Bible. They took a few words from a poet, and a few from a statesman, and a few from an historian, and a few from a philosopher, and expected this indiscriminate study to be beneficial to them. If they were to study this library properly, they must get maps, pictures, histories, and everything else that would throw a ray of light upon the studies they were pursuing. In such a way they would get a thorough knowledge of the outside of the book and that would help him to understand the inside. The Archbishop then proceeded to give the original Greek of his text, and certain various readings in ancient MSS., which showed that the emphatic word in this passage was "men." St. Peter laid stress on the humanity of these books. They were spoken by men. This gave them the strongest ground for criticism. The more they knew about the outward human skill of the library, the more would they realise that these books were written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul himself challenged criticism. He said, "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say." They must learn to regard Scriptural characters as equally human with themselves. He urged them to clothe again with flesh and blood the men who wrote these pages, and then let them say, "Now such and such things were said to so and so in such circumstances, what is the meaning to me under my circumstances?" It was a double rule of three sum which would well

repay the trouble. Let them not pick out a single passage and say, "Now that single passage is spoken to me just as it stands." Let them see first what was the original intent of the passage, and then seek out its bearing on their own lives. Any other study would be mere superstition. When they had carefully read the Bible for some time in this fashion, they would arrive at what the world called the point of view of the Bible. And here they were met by the remarkable feature of the Bible. Though it was written by so many men, its point of view was always the same. The Holy Spirit breathed through all its pages. The same Spirit which moved Isaiah to his utterances would help everyone of them in their life's work. This was the only library of which they could say this. Homer's point of view differed entirely from that of these pages. The idea of sin was entirely absent from all early writings outside of the Scriptures. Moreover, the view of morality got higher and higher as the pages were read forward from the Old to the New Testament. They would note moreover, the great advance from precepts to principles. When that stage had been reached then the library was finished. It was now their duty to form in the world a society which would live and be sustained by that Spirit speaking through all the writers of that wonderful library of books they called the Bible.

THE CHURCH IN THE BARN.

How to reach the masses has become one of the religious problems of the day. It is stated that during the last quarter of a century there has been a very manifest and marked withdrawal of the great masses of the people from places of worship. In England, Lord Shaftesbury said that not more than two workmen in a hundred attended either Church or Chapel, and Dean Gott, when Vicar of Leeds, came to the conclusion that even this estimate must be cut down one-half. The same will apply to our own country. It would astonish many church-goers to know how large the number in our own city who never enter a place of worship. Among the reasons given for this sad state of affairs is, that the Churches, with their costly pews and rich furnishings are not intended for poor people. Whatever is the real reason, everyone admits that the gulf between the Church and the masses is becoming wider every year, and Christians are beginning to enquire what is the philosophy which underlies these facts, and what is the remedy for this sad condition of affairs. One solution is that if the Church would reach the masses she must go to them. Go as Christ and the Apostles did, endued with "power from on high." They taught from mountain-side and fishermen's boat. Tenderly, earnestly, and fearlessly, they rebuked, reproved and exhorted "with all long suffering." "Let the Church purge itself of all complicity with the sinful world," says one, and return to primitive Christianity, doctrines and methods, and it will reach the masses in no other way." It is the affirmative preaching, not the negative teaching, that is needed to draw the people. Emerson says, "The world needs affirmations, not negations." Evangelical preaching founded upon ex-