

by framing a more explicit creed. This again was attacked, or evaded, and the very definite and explicit declaration of faith named after St. Athanasius was drawn up. Some of it may possibly seem to us now redundant and unnecessary, such as "So there is one Father, and not three Fathers, &c., for no one now says there are three Fathers. But every word was aimed at errors which prevailed at the time the Creed was written, and may prevail again. Some heretics held that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost were three different manifestations of the same Divine Person, and that the Son and the Holy Ghost were really the same as the Father. But we would rather mention errors which are at present in existence. Our Lord claimed to be God the Son, equal with the Father, so plainly that even the Jews understood His claim (St. John v. 18, x. 33). It need hardly be pointed out that this claim was either true, or that Christ was simply a man making a false claim. Many persons are so bent on regarding His humanity that they forget He is also God, and use His name with a familiarity and irreverence which clearly shows that they think but little of His Godhead. This is not a heresy, for such persons would not openly profess their disbelief in His Divinity, but an error, arising from their one-sided view. God the Holy Ghost is clearly a Person—yet by many professing Christians He is spoken of as if He were simply an influence upon the soul. In a recent publication for Sunday-schools the Holy Spirit was mentioned four times on one page, each time simply in that way, "an influence." Yet, unless the personality of the Holy Ghost be held, there is no Christianity at all. "For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost."—*Family Churchman*.

SERMONS.

The sermon controversy which generally breaks out in the dead season of the year has anticipated September, and has developed a voluminous correspondence in the *Standard* and other newspapers. The Bishop of Winchester has also delivered himself on the subject, and has expressed an opinion adverse to the increasingly short sermons of the present day. The aphorism seems to have much in its favour, that if a sermon is a good one it need not be a long one; and if it is a poor discourse the sooner it is ended the better. People forget that in the present day the sermon has lost much of the importance that once attached to it. The multiplication of books and printed sermons has weakened the influence which the pulpit formerly exercised over the multitude. The day is passed when the parish priest was the only clerical person in the parish. At the same time, a really eloquent and original preacher will always secure a hearing; and, as a rule, if a man has anything worth saying he will never want an audience. The *vox in deserto clamantis* is that of the empty mouther, who fills the air with platitudes. Sincerity of purpose, common sense, a knowledge of the Bible, and a command of the Saxon tongue will always go far towards making at least an average preacher. The second mentioned quality will always save him from being a bore.

We venture to submit the following considerations to the attention of the laity, who look for good sermons, and do not always get them:

Many men are ordained every year whom nothing short of a miracle would ever transform into even passable preachers, and as long as the Church expects that all her clergy shall be preaching clergy there will be this primary difficulty. A young man of three and twenty, fresh from college life, with no experience, has the Bishop's hands laid on him, and forthwith he is expected to deliver homilies on the profoundest of topics to congregations who sit under him and look for wisdom. The insistence of the laity that on every possible occasion

when they meet for public worship a sermon must be forthcoming, serves in a measure to perpetuate this evil. We have read of a deacon just ordained who was required to preach no less than three times a week in the church to which he had been just licensed. Instead of the Bishop uniformly using the present formula in the ordination of deacons, it would be well in many instances if he said, "Take thou authority to read the Gospel in the Church of God, but not to preach until thou be thereto licensed by the Bishop himself;" and a year's practice in cottage lectures and private ministrations would do something in the meanwhile towards educating him for the preacher's office.

The Calvinism that prevailed for so many years in a certain section of the Church interfered unduly with largeness of thought and variety of treatment of sacred subjects. A cast-iron theology involved a cast-iron homiletic, and almost every sermon was moulded in the same type. If the laity look for variety in the pulpit, and not the same sermon rehearsed every Sunday, the text alone changed—*semper eandem canens cantilenam*—they must foster a liberal theology among the clergy, a theology true to the great standards of orthodoxy of the English Church, and at the same time in touch with the developments of modern thought.

If the laity could be brought to endure the possibility of their spiritual guides sometimes announcing that they are *not prepared with a sermon*, the result might be favourable to the production of a really good sermon now and then. It is to be remembered that very few great sermons are preached in the course of the year. Canon Liddon, as a rule, only preaches seven or eight times, and the same may be said of Canon Scott Holland. The leading preachers in London are soon exhausted; they take long holidays and travel to the ends of the earth in search of fresh experiences. The sermons of the late Bishop of Manchester show that Dr. Fraser preached the same discourses on several occasions. Mr. Bright has declared that in his judgment it is impossible for any man, however gifted, to preach fifty-two sermons in the year with power and variety of treatment. If the laity in a genial and sympathetic manner discussed more frequently with the clergy the subject of their sermons advantage might come of it. The sensitive reticence kept up between parson and people is good for neither.

The thoughtful laity who read might occasionally bring a new book under the notice of their parish clergyman, or better still, make him a present of it, and ask him to read and give his opinion of it. Reading makes a "full" man, and it is out of the fulness of heart and brain combined that the preacher will speak with power. As Mr. Gladstone said the other day, it is a business of import and export—reading is import, speech is export.

Lastly, we would say, that while preaching is the great ordinance for spreading the truth among the heathen and ignorant, the Church should remember that the highest means of grace are not to be sought in human utterances, but in the reading of Holy Scripture and in the reception of the Holy Communion. The place the sermon holds in the Communion Office proves that it is intended to be introductory to the due partaking of those holy mysteries.—*Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*.

THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER ON CHRISTIAN BURIAL.

At a recent Conference held under the auspices of the Church of England Burial, Funeral, and Mourning Reform Association, in the Mayor's Parlor, Town Hall, Manchester, the Bishop of Manchester, who occupied the chair, said that day they had nothing to do with the burning question of cremation. There was a popular sentiment in favour of burial. That sentiment was his own, and as he had convinced himself that one could so bury a body that it

should not do injury to the living, he had come to the conclusion that he ought to support a reasonable form of interment; but then it must be a reasonable form. So to bury a body that it should become the origin of the seeds of deadly disease was neither reasonable nor charitable, nor, he would fain hope, in the present state of human knowledge, any longer possible. What was it then that made a buried body the seeds of fatal disease to the living? He believed it was enclosing the body in a solid coffin, or in a brick grave, or in a stone vault. What they desired was that the body should be brought into immediate contact with the earth, in order that, through the pores of the earth, the air might obtain access to the body and secure its resolution without promoting the exhalation of noxious gases, or the permanent corruption of the soil. Therefore, it seemed to him that as a Funeral Reform Association the thing they ought to aim at was this—to put an end to all solid coffins, brick graves, and stone vaults. Some people objected to the rapid resolution of the materials of their friend's bodies to another form, but in view of the fact that under any circumstances the softer parts of the body resolved themselves into material of another form in about six weeks this objection was manifestly ridiculous. But these people said: "What about the burial of a body which appears to be dead and is not really so?" and "We want a solid coffin in order that it may prevent that offensive odour which sometimes is experienced in the interment of people." No doubt they did if they kept the body as long as it had been customary to keep it. But he (the Bishop) said again there was no need to keep it so long. Any one of them might be absolutely certain, in the present state of human knowledge, when a body was dead. They knew that the living body had a temperature of its own; as long as it remained living its temperature was different from that of surrounding inanimate matter. All they had to do then was to take a thermometer and lay it upon the body and upon the table which stood beside the body and notice the register; if the register were the same in both cases that body was certainly dead. There was, therefore, no possibility in the present state of human knowledge of getting a body buried which was only apparently dead. He thought that ought to be a satisfactory answer to the fears of the nervous, and, therefore, as the solid coffin was not necessary if they did not keep the body too long a time, he thought they might abolish at once the solid coffin. And what respect did it show to the dead body to keep it indoors for a long period? What possible pleasure could any living friend take in watching those ghastly mortal changes that took place and utterly defaced the marble beauty of a body recently dead? Surely it would be infinitely better, infinitely more in harmony with the feelings of affection, to retain as the last impression of our friend's faces that which it had before those mortal changes set in. But others said, "I like to have a state-ly catafalque and a magnificent coffin; it shows respect for the dead person." Whether was it more respectful to the body of the dead person—for the dead person was not there—to bring it into such contact with the kindly earth that it should speedily mingle with that earth, or screw it down into a permanent coffin, where it was made the victim of prolonged putrefaction? He said at once it was far more respectful to the dead body to have it borne to the grave either in an open bier or in an open coffin. And he said, moreover, that he thought generally the very best form of interment was the simplest and the least expensive form. Let wealthy persons establish the fashion of simple funerals; they could do it if they liked. The burial of a person in a very simple and destructible coffin, surmounted by a few simple flowers, was most in accordance with the bright hope of Christian resurrection.—*Manchester Courier*.