

The Pastor and People.

Wait and See.

When my boy, with eager questions,
Asking how, and where, and when,
Takes all my story of wisdom,

Beecher's Yale Lectures on Preaching.

A GOD IDEA.

In attempting to interpret to your people the knowledge of God, it is necessary first, that in the order of things, the divine nature should be unknowable before it be knowable, and that it be known in order that it be unknown, if you will allow such a seeming paradox.

You are to do in the pulpit for men what history has been doing in the thousand years that are passed. The great problem of evolution must be solved for them. You are to be a providence to your people, and do for them what history has done for the race.

Teach men that God, great as He is, is their father, and they will be as anxious to know as much as it is possible to know of Him, for they will say, He is mine. If you tell me of a man of whom all the world is talking, whose mighty steps make the nations tremble, I am afraid of him. But if you say "He is your father," then the more I know of him the better I am off, for he is mine.

When one goes through one of the vast palaces of Europe, he wanders from room to room, from hall to hall, and apartment to apartment, until the foot is weary. So the nature of God opens up before one who looks at it through the imagination, and

the mind wanders from room to room and apartment to apartment, not with weariness, but with an ever enlarging conception of the infiniteness and grandeur of the Almighty. This comprehension of the immensity and grandeur of God is the destruction of human pride. The old man who shook the world were men of large self-conceit. Men who fill important parts in the world's progress, who are pivots on which the destiny turns, must be self-reliant; but nothing will bring such down sooner than a sense of God's greatness.

The manifestation of God in the Old Testament is the background for the fullest revelation of Jesus Christ in the New. It is said that in the fullness of time Christ came. It is implied in the Scripture that not until the character of God had been sufficiently developed could the distinguishing qualities which Christ brought to light be fully appreciated. There is no parallel in the New Testament to the interpretations of the divine nature in the Old. Where in the New can we find such dramatic and soul-shaking revelations as those made to Moses, to the prophets, or to Job, the book of whose life is the grandest drama ever written?

Young gentlemen, though the presentation of God be the central theme of your ministry, do not fritter a ray of power by a tripping use of the Divine name. I am not reverential, except through one or two faculties. But even I can't endure some theological familiarities with God's name. Ministers say, "God thought he would create a world, and God he created a world. Thou God saw the world was wicked, and so God he thought he would send a flood, and so God he sent a flood." Arnold says some men talk of God as if he were a neighbour around the corner. This is shocking to me, even to me. The Hebrews had a Name they never spoke. When they drew near that unpronounceable Name, it threw a shadow over them. This was not with them an ancestral superstition. The root of that feeling is in human nature. The most precious things are those you don't like to speak of. Deepest love is silent. Some angelic natures would sooner die than speak of that which it should be their glory to possess. Not from shame, but from this feeling we should hesitate to speak so freely the name of God. Many a man says "damn," and don't swear, while many a minister says "God," and does.

Seldom, and never except in your private study, stand at the God-contrivance, and work out in your reaching after and knowledge of the Divine. You are called to construct the divine conception only for its uses. While it may make you wiser and stronger in your study to stand, like the angel of the Apocalypse, in the sun, yet in your instruction you are to come down to the people, and that you can do only on the human side. Don't think you are called to preach a system of divinity. Don't try to do it. You don't know enough, nor does any one else. You can't tell all there is in the divine nature. Ministers often think they must balance one sermon on one side of a question by another on the other side—a sermon on God's mercy by one on his justice; thus they build up sermon after sermon around the ribs of an imaginary system to keep it from growing lopsided. Others seem to be careful about the system and proportion of truth for fear they will hurt God's feelings; as if they thought he cared more about your system than he does about souls. I think he cares more for that end of the church than he does for this though there is a difference of opinion on that subject. The end of preaching is not symmetry of truth, but the salvation of men. You are to serve out the elements divine so that even babes may be nourished into a true Christian manhood.

The Organ.

"As organs form in our days such an important element in the musical part of Christian worship, a few words on the probable date of their dedication to this sacred function may not be unwelcome. It is generally said that they were introduced into church services by Pope Vitalianus in the seventh century. But, on the other hand, mention is found of an organ which belonged to a church of nuns at Grado before the year 580. This instrument has even been minutely described as having been two feet long by six inches deep, and possessing thirty pipes, acted upon by fifteen keys or slides. It is very doubtful if they were familiar to the Romans, although an epigram of Julian the Apostle alludes to them. It seems, however, to be tolerably authenticated that one was sent by Constantine in 766 as a present to Pepin, a king of France. Improvements in their construction are attributed to Pope Sylvester, who died 1003."

Revivals.

"It is fashionable among some respectable, steady-going Christians to look coldly at evangelistic services—to sneer at revivals. We fear if the progress of the Gospel of Christ was left to depend upon their help the chariot-wheels would move slowly indeed. To strengthen the hands of those who are labouring in season and out of season, by ordinary as well as by extraordinary means, to stir up and quicken, to revive God's work in and out of the Church, we give an epitome of Dr. Fish's views (an American divine) in his recently published "Handbook of Revivals."—

OBJECTIONS TO REVIVALS ANSWERED.

"It is sometimes said that to expect revivals prevent uniform effort. We answer that it is only so with those who are not well instructed. It the minister will keep prominent the duty of uniform effort most of his people will respond to his views. And there is no question but that, as a rule, those ready to labour in revivals are just the persons engaged in steady work; while those who cry out 'Excitement' find it convenient, somehow, to be idlers in God's vineyard.

"But the excitement soon subsides, and then there is a reaction! True, the special excitement is only temporary. In the nature of the case it could not be otherwise. And, further, there may be reaction. Is there not in all special work of every kind? But does the pastor, the politician, or the farmer decline special effort at special times from fear there will be reaction in the over-worked brain or body? What folly to plead the law of rest against the law of special work!

"But, is it not better to have conversions all the while? Certainly. Labour for them, and be not satisfied without them. And we admit that in an important sense that is a wrong state of things which needs a revival. Possibly the time will come when revivals will not be needed—when, as we might say, there will be a perpetual revival. But we are not to prescribe modes of operation to the Almighty; and if He chooses to water His Church by occasional showers rather than with the perpetual dew of His grace, and this more at one period and on one continent than at other times and places, we should rejoice and be grateful for the rich effusions of His Spirit in any form and manner, and should endeavour to avail ourselves of these precious seasons for the conversion of sinners. We know that many good men have supposed, and still suppose, that the best way to promote religion is to go along uniformly, and gather in the ungodly gradually and without excitement; but however sound such reasoning may appear in the abstract, facts demonstrate its futility. If the Church were far enough advanced in knowledge, and had stability of principle enough to keep awake, such a course would do; but the Church is so little enlightened, and there are so many counteracting causes, that she will not go steadily to work without a special interest being awakened.

"But, is not a periodical and special Divine influence on men for their conversion derogatory to God? Is He not always present and ready to bless? Yes; but our sins may separate between Him and us. And again, He may be as truly blessing the world in the edification of His people as by the direct conversion of sinners. But not to insist on this here, let it be observed that this objection is easily seen to be superficial. On this principle there ought to be no intervals of drought or rain—no revolving cycles of change—but either continuing drenching rains or ever-scorching suns. Instead of this, we see that while God is unchangeable in His purpose He is various in His methods. Revivals are in accordance with the analogy of nature, which has its seasons of revivification and rapid growth, followed by seasons of ripening fruit and maturing strength. They are in harmony with the nature of man, who requires alternate seasons of activity and repose—of stirring labour and excitement on the one hand, and on the other of tranquil enjoyment and sober reflection—each in turn preparing the body and the mind for the other, and both in their due season imparting health and vigour to the system and conspiring to produce the largest possible results.

"But why not be content with a moderate growth, instead of great and rapid gatherings? Because it is not primitive—not after God's plan. In the early Churches conversions were by the hundred and the thousand. The Word spread, not with that moderation insisted on by those who are always afraid of being charged with extravagance, but with the sweep and power of a Divine movement. And the agents were borne onward as on the wings of the wind, willing to be a laughing-stock to men—willing to hear an outcry from the world which they were turning upside down. But one sufficient answer is that this 'going on steadily' (i. e., slowly) leaves the great mass of men in their sins, and coolly consigns whole generations to hell! For death does not wait for our slow processes!

"Excesses are pleaded as sufficient ground for being cautious as to revivals. We are sorry to admit that these have existed, and probably they will exist to a greater or less extent, as long as men are what they are. But is not a storm preferable to a parching drought? The economy of nature admits of the possibility of fearful torrents if it rain, brawling down the mountain sides, tearing up the meadows, and leaving sand instead of fertility on the plain. Why not, therefore object to revivals? Doubtless, on the whole, the atmospheric arrangement is a good one. Let us not, then, oppose revivals because occasionally the religious impulse rises above the usual level, and flows over the ordinary channels, and does some incidental mischief. Better have noisy animal excitement than that the sterile wastes of worldliness should not be transformed into fruitful gardens of the Lord. The greatest possible evil is a deadly insensibility! When the house is on fire and the family asleep, better that they be awakened by violence than consumed—better rouse them even at the expense of insanity than let them perish in the flames.

"We have thus alluded to some of the common objections to revivals. No doubt

it is generally rather to some of their incidental features that objection is made than to revivals themselves. It is unfair and unreasonable, however, to hold revivals accountable for the evils that sometimes attach to them. When Whitfield was seen preaching in Boston a meeting-house was so packed that the gallery was supposed to be giving way, and there was a panic in which several persons were trampled to death. Did the blame attach to the revival? Persons sometimes take cold in a revival. Is that the fault of the revival?"

Mr. Beecher—Orthodox or Heterodox?

In his third series of Yale lectures Mr. Beecher addresses himself to a more serious task than he has previously undertaken. Before this, he has been occupied with the methods of preaching; now he deals with its substance. The representation of God is the pivot on which all preaching turns. What is God to us? is the question for which the human race perpetually seeks to answer. Mr. Beecher takes great pleasure in describing himself as a semi-heretic; but we think that he exaggerates his theological vagaries. His summary of his belief, with which he opened his lectures, contains the truths which all evangelical Christians regard as essential: the lost condition of man, the aim of the Gospel to build them up to perfect manhood, the atoning work of Christ, and the regenerating peace of the Spirit as the means, were all accorded their place.

Mr. Beecher conceives of the Christian religion as above all else in life, and this conception lies at the root of his power as a preacher. He has learned the value of heart-theology, the only theology which appears to interest him. Other men work out their theology with more precise details than he does, or perhaps can. His present lectures show, however, a far greater depth and thoroughness of thinking than many anticipated from him.—N. Y. Methodist.

Bible Revision.

A correspondent of a contemporary writes:—"The scholars and theologians who are revising the authorised version of the Scriptures do not expect to get through their work in less than six years. They are adopting as nearly as possible the arrangements which were in force when the last translation was made—that of the time of James I., which we now use. No public funds have been voted to them, but they expect to receive ample pecuniary compensation for their labours by selling the copyright of the new version. Already they have received one offer for a large amount. One of the most indefatigable of the translators is Dr. Ginsburg, who was formerly a Liverpool clergyman, but of late years has not done clerical duty. He is of German extraction, and is a very accomplished scholar. He has a most valuable library, containing some very rare and priceless Bibles. He lives not far from Ascot, and lately refused an offer which Mr. Walter, proprietor of the Times, made him, to build him a house near Bearwood. Dr. Ginsburg's is, however, within driving distance of Bearwood, and also of the charming residence which Mr. Dalane, editor of the Times, has at Ascot, and the literary gatherings which meet at Dr. Ginsburg's are exceedingly pleasant. The preliminary work of revising the Old Testament is done by this gentleman, and his work is then submitted to the other members of the 'company.' The harmony which has prevailed among them has been most admirable. There have, I believe, been few differences of opinion on points of criticism, and such as have arisen have in no way impaired the good feeling which has been maintained from the beginning of this enterprise, and which there is every reason to hope will continue to the end."

Protestant Mission in Formosa.

The only Protestant Mission at work in Formosa is the English Presbyterian. It commenced operations about eighty years ago, and has had great success. Its central and residential stations are at Takow, Taiwanfoo, and Tamouy. The Tamsuy Branch was established only last year, and I will make no further remark about it, as I do not include Tamsuy business in this report. As regards the Takow and Taiwanfoo branches, with their various out-stations taken together, I give the following statistics from a paper kindly furnished me:—Membership at beginning of 1872, 558; adults baptised during the 1872, 253; children, 27. Membership at the beginning of 1873, 784. Average regular attendance at Lord's-day service, 198. Much attention has been given to the aborigines—that is, the tame aborigines, who are under the Chinese Government. Considerably more than half of the converts are from their villages. There is also a considerable Roman Catholic Mission, conducted by Spanish Dominican clergymen. When at Takow I often see the chief of the mission, but I have not asked the number of people under their care. In the Southern or Takow part of the district, where the work has been more among the Chinese than it has been further north, there were some troubles between the converts and others, and cases of real or supposed persecution, but I must not here attempt to detail or discuss them. For some time past things have been quite in this respect, so far as I know. In August last the then Fungshan Magistrate issued a vigorous notification, in which he professed equal benevolence and justice towards Christians and non-Christians, and enjoined both parties to live in harmony. Much medical work is done by and in connection with the Presbyterian Mission at the ports in the country.—(From the Report of Acting-Counsel Gregory at Tauan.)

A holy life is a voice; it speaks when the tongue is silent, and is either a constant attraction or a perpetual reproof.

Selfish men may possess the earth; it is the meek alone who inherit it from the Heavenly Father free from all defilements and perplexities of unrighteousness.—Woolman

Prayer.

Remember that God is no curious or critical observer of the plain expressions that fall from his poor children when they are shut in their closets. It is not a flow of words, or studied notions, or graphic expressions, or elegant phrases in prayer, which take the ear or delight the heart of God, or open the gate of glory, or bring down the best of blessings upon the soul; but faith, uprightness, holiness, heavenliness, spirituality, and brokenness of heart—these are the things of the saved man's experience that makes a conquest upon God and turn most to the soul's account.

In Season.

Some years ago an interesting but godless young man was riding in the cars southward, an invalid in the rain search for health. A Christian man seated near by became interested in him, and on leaving the cars ventured to place in his hand either a tract or a blank leaf on which were the words, "Are you a Christian?" How casual, how trifling, the coincidence of two travellers thus coming near together without speaking, and no attempt at a religious impulse possible except those four words written on a leaf! And yet that little agency won that soul to Christ, as was discovered, through a published inquiry some months after from the grateful friends of the dead invalid, for the faithful man who "shot a blow at a venture."

A Great Truth.

In vain do we seek to awaken in our churches zeal for missions as a separate thing. To be genuine, it must flow from love to Christ. It is when a sense of personal communion with the Son of God is highest that we should be most fit for missionary work, either to go ourselves or to stir up others. If we allow it to become a business of dollars and cents, we shall see no results. "Find preachers of D. Brainerd's spirit," said John Wesley, "and nothing can stand before them; but without this, what can gold or silver do?" Let gushing affection to the Lord Jesus Christ become the ruling passion, and it communicates the thrill of evangelical zeal to every member of the electric chain.—Dr. Alexander.

The Religious Situation in France.

"In a word, the French Ultramontans do not yet perceive the position which they occupy. For this position they have to thank the ignorance and dread of change which govern the masses; they have also to thank the protection accorded to them by the State to the exclusion of the Old Catholics, with the possession of all the churches and the revenues. In all these reasons there is not one which relates to conscience, and what is properly religion, so that anyone would be justified in saying the Roman religion is not a religion which has any religious cause of existence. Is not a religion reduced to that stage of decay a religion condemned? It has done well to organise for long years a system of mass ignorance and imbecile stupidity among its adherents. It has done well to maintain this even to this day by protesting against primacy and compulsory instruction. It has done well to move heaven and earth to raise again the fallen thrones on which depended for political, religious, and pecuniary help. It has done well to preach the place of Christ the Saviour the necessity of political deliverers and warriors. It has done well to draw upon the purses of the faithful by a system of religious tariff, of paid dispensations and masses for the eternal repose of souls. But notwithstanding all these things, civilisation will be too cunning too strong for it. The light will penetrate through the clefts of these walls and will end by making visible to our eyes the mysterious nothingness in which it has concealed."—Contemporary Review.

Dr. Guthrie's Method of Pulpit Preparation.

I used the simplest, plainest, most unassuming anything vulgar, but always, when possible, employing the Saxon tongue—the mother-tongue of my hearers. I studied the style of the addresses which the ancient and inspired prophets delivered to the people of Israel, and saw how, differing from dry disquisitions or a naked statement of truths, they abounded in metaphors, figures, and illustrations. I turned to the copies and found that He who knew what was in man what could best illuminate a subject win the attention, and move the heart, used parables or illustrations, stories, comparisons, drawn from the scene of nature and familiar life, to a large extent in His teachings, in regard to which a womanly type of the masses—said, "The parables of the Bible I like best are the 'threes.'"

Taught by such models, and encouraged in my resolutions by such authorities, I resolved to follow, though it should be a vast distance, these ancient masters of the art of preaching; being all the more ready to do so as it would be in harmony with the natural time and bias of my own mind. I was careful to observe by the face of my hearers, and also by the account of more intelligent of my Sunday class of my discourses, the style and character of those parts which have made the deepest impression that I might cultivate it.

After my discourse was written, I spent hours in correcting it; hitherly always to that purpose keeping a blank page on my manuscript opposite a written one, cutting out dry bits, giving paint to dull ones, making clear any obscurity, and narrative passages more graphic, throwing more pathetic appeals, and copying God in his works, adding the ornamental to the useful. I had longer I have lived and composed, I had acted more and more according to the teaching of Sir Joshua Reynolds in his lectures "Paintings," that God does not give excellence to men but as the reward of labor. From his Autobiography.