

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### IS THE PULPIT A FAILURE?

In his last lecture on Preaching at Yale College, Bishop Simpson said, upon the assertion that the pulpit of the present is a failure:

"All the causes to which I have alluded contribute to the inefficiency of the pulpit, and give some colour of reason to those who proclaim the pulpit to be a failure. Yet all these instances, though to be deeply regretted, form but a small percentage when compared with the great body of efficient and devoted ministers who are toiling in the Master's vineyard. But why should the pulpit be singled out as a failure? When we speak of other professions, we do not say the bar is a failure because some attorney is incompetent or grossly immoral, or that education is a failure because some professor teachers are ignorant and vicious, or that medicine is a failure because some physicians are unworthy and wicked. Are bankers to be reproached because in almost every city some one has been guilty of embezzlement? Are officers of government to be assailed because some have been guilty of fraud? If we look at the vast corporations where men have been selected for their skill and integrity, what a record do we find!

"Not only does the pulpit bear a high and favourable comparison with other professions, but the modern pulpit is no less pure than in former ages. One in twelve of those whom Christ selected proved a traitor, another denied his Master, and all forsook Him and fled. In the times of the apostles, Demas loved the present world, and others made shipwreck of faith. The address to the angels of the churches in Asia Minor shows lukewarmness and error existing then. So, too, all along the current of the ages, men have had this treasure in earthen vessels, and have been liable to infirmity and mistake. The preachers in the Middle Ages were scarcely worthy of the name, and the survival of the Church in the hands of such agents was a miracle of grace. How dark was the condition of the Church when the trumpet voices of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and Zwingle rang out in the ears of Europe in the sixteenth century! How terrible the satires of Erasmus upon the monks of his day! Read the pages of Bishop Burnet and of Macaulay, and how sad the picture of the English clergy! Listen to the Archdeacon of Carlisle, when, as late as 1785, he exhorted his clergy not to frequent ale-houses, or to mingle with men of the lowest classes on terms of equality. Making every allowance for cases of error and failure, the ministry of to-day is, I believe, as a whole in mental culture, in purity of life, in self-devotion, and in deep piety, superior to the ministry of any period since the apostolic age. In all these respects the modern pulpit is not a failure as compared with the past.

"It may sometimes be alleged that we have no such displays of power under the ministry of the Word as were realized one hundred years ago under the ministry of Dr. Edwards of New England, of Asbury and Davis in Maryland and Virginia, and of Wesley and Whitefield in England. But it should be remembered that these cases were almost solitary. Now the spirit of revival is abroad; scarcely a year passes without remarkable divine power being manifested in some of our city churches, or in some of the rural districts. Many of the pastors are exceedingly successful. Many sermons are preached with divine unction, and multiplied thousands are annually brought to the knowledge of the truth. Great impressions, also, are sometimes made. I have been present more than once when whole congregations have risen to their feet, and have not unfrequently been freely bathed in tears. I have been present when in a single church hundreds have in a few weeks professed to experience the renewing power of divine grace. While there are no circumstances so singularly remarkable as may have been in the past, or which attract such extensive notice, I believe there are more conversions in recent years than in any previous period in the history of Christianity.

"But what shall supplant the pulpit if it be a failure? Some of the writers to which I have alluded extol the press, while they depreciate the pulpit, fancying that the pen is not only mightier than the sword, but is more potent than the tongue of fire. Such writers, however, might well consider that the press is an outgrowth of Christianity, and should as-

ist, and not impair, its pulpit power. It is true that block printing was known in China before it was practised in Europe. But it was the invention of movable types that gave to printing its great impulse and its almost unlimited power. This invention was made in Christian lands, and was applied almost immediately to the printing and spread of the Bible. To-day, what is the power of the press beyond the limit of Christian countries? Such papers as the leading journals of England and America are unknown in lands outside of Christendom. The men who control the press and give it its power are the children of Christian mothers, the students of Christian schools, and are girt round and sustained by a Christian public opinion. While the press may assist the pulpit, it is the pulpit which indirectly gives life and power to the press. It forms the public mind, incites to reading and study, and prepares a host of readers to receive and enjoy its daily issues. Will any of these men who boast the power of the press establish a printing office among the pagan Indians? Did any of them carry the daily press to the Fiji Islands or to the New Hebrides or New Guinea? Christian missionaries went there; Christ crucified was preached; the people were evangelized; a religious press was established, and a secular press has slowly followed. These gentlemen of the press, with all their excellences and with all their enlightening powers, never undertook to civilize a savage nation by means of the press. They have no aspiration for martyrdom, or to be eaten by cannibals. Even a Stanley, who has been the boldest of the explorers connected with the press, started to find a Livingstone, who had gone with a message from his divine Master, and the discoveries of Stanley have not led to the establishment of a daily paper in Central Africa; but they have led to the founding of missions, and they will soon witness the establishment of a religious press. To-day, everywhere, grand as is the press, it is the religious press that throws its first rays of light across the gloom of heathen darkness, and that religious press is chiefly in the hands of men of the pulpit."

#### NOT FEAR.

Not far, not far from the Kingdom,  
Yet in the shadow of sin,  
How many are coming and going,  
How few are entering in!

Not far from the golden gateway,  
Where voices whisper and wait;  
Fearing to enter it boldly,  
So lingering still at the gate;

Catching the strain of music  
Floating so swiftly along,  
Knowing the song they are singing,  
Yet joining not in the song.

Seeing the warmth and the beauty,  
The infinite love and the light;  
Yet weary, and lonely, and waiting,  
Out in the desolate night!

Out in the dark and the danger,  
Out in the night and the cold,  
Though He is longing to lead them  
Tenderly into the fold.

Not far, not far from the Kingdom,  
'Tis only a little space;  
But it may be at last, and forever,  
Out of the resting place.

A ship came sailing, and sailing  
Over a murmuring sea,  
And just in sight of the haven  
Down in the waves went she;

And the spars and the broken timbers  
Were cast on a storm-beat strand;  
And a cry went up in the darkness,  
Not far, not far from the land!

#### MAN NEEDS THE SABBATH.

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath!" said the Divine Redeemer. Man needs it. He needs it to recuperate the waste which six days' labour has brought to his physical system. He needs it to rest his mind, which the worry and care of business has more or less depressed. He needs its sacred time to meditate on his relations to God, his fellow-men, and eternity; and to enable him to join with his fellows in acts of devotion to his Creator and Preserver. He needs it that he may have time to cultivate that self-respect and those social endearments which the busy toil of six days forbids.

The Church also needs it that she may observe the ordinances committed to her by her Divine Head, and to afford her opportunity to teach those truths which are essential to her existence, and the welfare of men both in time and eternity.

The State also needs it that her citizens may learn their duties to one another, their obligations to society, and their duty for conscience' sake to obey the laws of the land. And it may be that even the iron on our railroads and in our workshops needs it, to regain that solidity and strength which constant use tends to destroy. The voice of Nature may, therefore, well mingle with the voices of men, and both in unison with our Divine Creator, proclaim, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy!" Yes, we need its hallowing influences to prepare us for the labours and duties of time and for the enjoyment of eternity. And that we may incite you to use your influence to maintain it in our own community, to our country, and the world, we ask you to meditate on some of the results which would inevitably follow its abrogation as a day of rest, as a sacred day, and a non-legal day in our land.

1. Ignorance, crime, and barbarism would be promoted by its abrogation.
2. Demoralization, as respects morals, would ensue.
3. Political demoralization would result from it.
4. Civil and religious liberty would be destroyed.
5. Infidelity and communism would be promoted.
6. The wages of the labourer would be lessened.
7. Disease would be increased.
8. The judgments of God would be brought down upon the nation.

#### SAVING THE CATECHISM.

Gradually during the past fifty years there has been a departure from many of the Puritanical habits and customs, which our fathers and mothers regarded as so essential. One of these customs, which we hope to see revived, is the careful training of children in the Shorter Catechism. Fifty or even twenty-five years ago, it was a rare thing to find a child of Presbyterian or Congregational parents who could not repeat any question and every answer in the Shorter Catechism, from memory, while to-day, it is equally rare to find one who can. Then parents drilled their children, *volens volens*, day after day, patiently, firmly and conscientiously; to-day many families never so much as think of it, and many children never saw a Catechism. This may be regarded as too strong a statement; but if any doubter will take the pains to investigate the subject by canvassing the families of his church he will readily yield the point.

There are many persons who will be reminded by us of the times when it was the custom of ministers, while making pastoral visits, to question the children in the Shorter Catechism, and sometimes have them repeat the Apostles' Creed. And are there not mothers in Israel yet living who remember these pastoral visits, and who, at such times, have leaned forward with great anxiety and solemn interest to hear how their children answered?

The study of the Catechism should not be neglected. Children do not take it up of their own accord. Its doctrinal teachings are not at first attractive to them, and they cannot see the wisdom of its instruction until they reach maturer years. It is, therefore, of the highest importance that catechetical instruction should be systematically taught to all the children of the Church.—*Herald and Presbyterian*.

Divine grace educates the intellect as well as the feelings; the reasoning faculties of the mind, as well as the best affections of the heart; consecrating both alike in the service of the Saviour.

It is a high, solemn, almost awful thought for every individual, that his earthly influence, which has had a commencement here, will never, through all ages, were he the very meanest of us all, have an end.

UNSELFISH and noble acts are the most radiant epochs in the biography of souls. When wrought in the earliest youth they lie in the memory of age like coral islands, green and sunny amidst the melancholy waste of ocean.

WHAT God calls a man to do he will carry him through. I would undertake to govern half a dozen worlds if God called me to do it; but if he did not call me to do it, I would not undertake to govern half a dozen sheep.—*Payson*.