

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE TRUE SCOPE OF PREACHING.

FROM A SERMON ON "THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS," PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF HAMILTON AND LONDON, 10TH APRIL, 1882, BY REV. JOHN THOMPSON, M.A., OF BARNIA.

The great and only remedy is to hold up the Cross of Christ clear and full in view of perishing men, that they may look on that Lamb of God and have their sins taken away. And in that grand theme of salvation through the blood of Christ all teaching and preaching is to have its full scope, while in the proclamation of the riches of His grace the most brilliant genius, the richest culture, the ripest scholarship may be employed, for even angels desire to look into these things.

It is admitted by all that the doctrines of the Cross are the pulp' great theme, the grand subject which the Christian ministry must handle. But what is meant by *preaching Christ*? What do the doctrines of the Cross embrace? What did Paul regard as the scope of his preaching when he said, "I am determined not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified?" "*Christ and Him crucified*" has become a cant phrase with many who would narrow its blessed significance to their own conceptions of what are the only legitimate themes for the Christian pulpit. Many small men, through their professed zeal for the Gospel, would curb the ministry in its legitimate work, and put bonds upon the liberty of the sons of God, squeezing everything into their own little mould. Did Paul mean that he would utter the same truth day by day like a parrot cry, or use the Gospel as a wonder worker uses his charm-book or mystic symbol? No; the Cross was to be the centre and vital principle throughout his whole ministry, and that from it all moral duty must draw its sanctions. It was to be the *focus* from which all lines of instruction were to proceed. But Paul claimed and exercised the liberty of discussing and enforcing every duty between man and man. There is not one of the minor morals that does not receive notice from the Apostle, as may be learned from any of his epistles. He says, "*We preach Christ crucified*," but in that very letter in which this statement occurs he discusses the question of marriage in times of danger; the inexpediency of eating meat sacrificed to idols; going to law before heathen judges; contributions to the saints; divisions in the Church; how to conduct public worship. In short, he brings the principles of the Gospel to bear on all life and conduct. Paul regarded nothing foreign to the pulpit which affects man in his life here or hereafter. He preached *Christ Jesus the Lord*, but he included in this telling husbands how to love their wives, and wives to care for and obey their husbands. He enjoined on children obedience to their parents, and parents how to train their children. He brings masters and servants face to face, and makes each feel his own responsibility. He did not regard it as outside of his ministry to tell young women how to dress and wear their hair. He warns against pride and foolish display, and gives counsels to Timothy concerning his health. He descends on particulars, and specifies sins one by one, and on duties till the long catalogue is drawn out. (Eph. iv. 31, 32.) When ministers become thus specific on moral duties now, a class of hearers of the weaker sort charge them with preaching *works* instead of Gospel, and speak by way of reproach of a *mere moral discourse*. But ministers, like the Apostle James, must preach *works* as well as *faith*—works as the fruits and evidences of faith, the outcome of a loving heart. "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

Preaching Christ must not be understood in a narrow sense. It gives the whole range of the Bible as the source of our teaching, which bears on Christ as its substance. What a richness Paul found in the Old Testament, as may be seen in his Epistle to the Hebrews; and could not Christ Himself begin at Moses and all the Prophets, and expound unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself? To preach Christ is to open up the whole revelation of God, for He is the reality of all its types. To Him gave all the prophets witness, and Moses wrote of Him. See what treasures Spurgeon has found in the Psalms, which cover the varied experiences of the heart under every spiritual condition; or Pusey, in Daniel; or Alexander, in Isaiah; or Robinson, in

Genesis; or Arnot, in the Proverbs; or Guthrie, in Ezekiel! Christ is the grand centre of the circle of Christian truth, but that circle is wide, and touches at many seemingly opposite points. He is the Sun around which all revolve, while the moralities of life spring from the union of Christ with His people; therefore doctrine and duty, morality and religion, are married, and must never be divorced. If the Apostle James were to preach from some of our pulpits his matchless epistle, some people would call it cold morality, and not the Gospel. And the late James Hamilton was wont to say that some would charge our Lord's sermon on the mount as lacking in evangelical truth if they were to hear it preached! All this arises from a mistaken view of what preaching Christ means. Surely Christ's authority requires us not only to *believe*, but also to be truthful, honest, diligent, temperate, good husbands, wives, dutiful children, and worthy citizens. We have no more right to conceal the will of God concerning *duty* than the same will concerning *doctrine*. Because of false sentiments on this whole subject there are many who would make poor pagans who pass for very good Christians. Don't imagine that the work of the Christian ministry is circumscribed because it consists in preaching Christ; no work is circumscribed that has all the fullness of God to draw from. There is no atmosphere so free as that which overhangs the Christian pulpit; no range of subjects so wide, so rich, so varied as that which the minister handles.

Many regard the preaching of the Cross as a mere discussion of abstract principles, the elucidation of theological dogma, the unburying of old fossils of a past age—mere speculative opinions of religious thought, with no direct bearing on any human interest, real or supposed. But it is to bring the Gospel to bear on man in all the trying circumstances and experiences of everyday life; guiding the erring, directing the anxious, comforting the sorrowing, speaking rich, warm words to thaw out the winter from many a frozen heart, and preparing the soil for seed-sowing, preaching glad tidings, and bringing summer and sunshine into many a home long darkened. Surely this is employment fit for angels, and yet it is man who is called to be a co-worker with Christ in reclaiming a lost world. The preaching of the Cross is the lifting up of the Son of man as the slain Lamb of God's providing, through whose blood redemption is granted. It proclaims Him a physician for the world's malady, a balm for its wound, a shelter from its storms, a great light in this world's darkness. It is to proclaim Jesus as the only Mediator—the way, the truth, the life. It sets Him forth as a Prince and a Saviour, and points the weary and heavy laden to Him for rest.

We preach Christ crucified; we glory in the Cross! But who is Christ? He is the eternal Son of God, Jehovah-Jesus, the Saviour of the world; the brightness of the Father's glory; the King and Head of the Church. We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, whose rule covers all human interests, and whose authority touches all human duty. When His kingdom comes, His influence must sanctify and ennoble all activities, and cover with the sacredness of His presence wherever men live, and toil, and suffer, and die. Could we but make men feel and acknowledge His authority as Lord of the conscience, and His sacredness as priest, and bow in loving obedience to His righteous law, we would then have gained all for which the ministry exists; for our aim is to have Christ acknowledged as ruler of the life.

We believe in special appliances to meet special forms of sin that are developing. We believe in restrictive legislation and prohibitory enactments when these are expedient. Public profanity ought to be punished as a public crime. Our laws ought to be enforced against Sabbath-breaking. It is right to punish theft, murder, adultery. Each man as a citizen has liberty to exercise his own civil rights, and engage in public and political movements according to his own conscience. But the Church of Christ, as such—ministers of the Gospel—must wield another weapon, and fight with the sword of the Spirit. They must put on the breastplate of righteousness, and the shield of faith. This is our only true armoury with which to quench all the fiery darts of the devil. The apostles and early preachers of the Word looked over as much sin, and had to meet as many vices as we—drunkenness, licentiousness, crimes of all kinds. But we never find them agitating for legal enactments. They never came to knock at Cæsar's door, or depend on legal prohibition measures of any kind, but always on the

baptism of the Spirit; the endowment with power from on High; and with this equipment they went forth as strong men to conquer in the name of the Lord, and were enabled to turn the world upside down, for the Cross which they preached was the power of God for the pulling down of Satan's strongholds. And the Gospel of Jesus is still the only legitimate means for the ministry, with which to meet and subdue the sins and vices of our day.

MISSIONARY NEWS.—INDIA.

LETTER FROM MISS M'GREGOR TO THE SECRETARY OF THE JUVENILE MISSION SCHEME.

MY DEAR MISS MACHAR,—I think ere this time you have had my reply to your former letter, so that I shall confine myself now to the matter mentioned in the one which came to hand last week. I am glad to hear that the Sabbath schools are so much interested, and if, by any extra exertion on my part, I can still further increase that interest, I shall not mind the trouble.

Since last September two new schools, both in the city of Indore, have been in operation, and both very successful. The larger of the two is entirely a girls' school—at least the majority are girls—but several boys belonging to the Foundlings' Home are also taught in the same school; also two girls from that institution. I must tell you now more particularly about this Home, as we shall have occasion often to mention it in future. It was established by the efforts of the former Prime Minister, and at present fifteen children are cared for. Perhaps I have in my reports given the impression that only boys are supported. Such is not the case, as two very promising girls daily attend school; and I know not how many baby girls may be in the nursery. These orphans are cared for by a respectable native family, who are paid so much per head by the Maharajah's Government, and wet nurses are employed for the infants. The boys, I am told, are intended for service in the palace of the Maharajah Holkar. I do not know what will be done with the girls, but I fear that they, too, will be ordered into the court, and if so only evil can befall them, as so many bad men are there.

More than two years ago, Venoo and I were introduced to this family, and several times a week visited for the purpose of instructing the ladies of the family. They are not idolators, neither are they Christians. They belong to a sect called the *Præthia Somaj*. The mother—a very intelligent native woman—serves the court in a public capacity, but has always been friendly to us. A widowed daughter came home about a year ago, and as she is well educated and very active, it occurred to her friend and to me that she might teach a girls' school in her own house, thus relieving her relatives of her support. She began, and soon gathered a large school in the heart of Indore city, notwithstanding that the other girls' school (Government) had been in operation for years. Four young widows have attended school for months, and I wish very much that more of the same class would join, but fear of their caste deters them. Not long ago some malicious persons endeavoured to raise a disturbance on account of these widows, and threatened to publish the matter in the vernacular newspapers, etc., but nothing serious has occurred, and they still attend. The names of seventy-four pupils are enrolled, and they have made excellent progress since the school was organized. The orphans, too, have learned to read well, and three boys are now reading in the Third Reader, published by the Christian Vernacular Education Society. I mention this little fact to show that it is *our books* we give them, not *heathen* books. The boys are from four to ten years of age; the girls are about nine, judging from their appearance. The day scholars in that school are, almost without exception, high caste, and some of them are such bright, clever little women. I was sorry to find when I went down last week that quite a number had been married, and of course removed from school just when they had begun to get on nicely. That is the greatest obstacle to female education in India, and the poor little things are shut up from nine or ten years of age.

Hitherto I have been careful, unless there was a reasonable prospect of success, not to raise hopes in the minds of our Sabbath school scholars as to the work here; but I shall give you a list of these orphans, according to your desire, and you can apportion them to