

WHAT SHALL THEY PREACH?

BY REV. R. F. BREWINGTON.

One of the greatest failures of modern preaching is the lack of a plain and candid presentation of the doctrine of future retribution. Upon this theme the great Teacher himself has left no uncertain utterance. Addressing the Scribes and Pharisees, he said: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Again, to a great multitude gathered about him, we hear him saying, "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." And yet once more, speaking of those who were esteemed "sinners above all," he tells them plainly and forcibly, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." This was the manner of teaching employed by Him, who declared the truths of his own Gospel. Better were it for us to look to him for a model, though all the Bechers and Farrars in the world unite in presenting some other doctrine.

Paul, in writing to the church at Galatia, in regard to the importance of steadfastness, says: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached, let him be accursed; and that Gospel he declares unto them was the Gospel of Christ. He also writes in his Epistle to the Romans (and doubtless his writings are but an epitome of his preaching), "And think this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds."

Paul would certainly be considered in some circles at the present day a very unpopular preacher. And in many congregations there would be found those ready to advise a softening of speech and a milder utterance of the Gospel, lest some fashionable sinners be offended and driven from the congregation.

"Toning down" the truth of God's Word to suit the fancy and please the ear of ungodly men may render the minister popular with those who prefer ease of conscience to obedience to the requirements of God's law. But it were well, perchance, for the minister, tempted thus to preach, to ponder the words of the prophet: "When I bring the sword upon the land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman, if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the trumpet and taketh not warning; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. But if the watchman see the sword come and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."

Let us have a care, my brother, lest the blood of souls be required at our hand. Let us deal plainly and honestly, remembering the words of souls. Another doctrine, of the many that should be preached, is that of the resurrection. And I refer specially to this for two reasons: First, it is assailed not only by infidelity, but is seemingly discarded by a portion of the church. Because of seeming difficulties connected with this subject, some Christians are ready to say it were better not to preach it. But is there not much in the teaching of the Word of God, and in the mysteries of redemption, that the man of mere worldly wisdom fails fully to comprehend? The subjects of the Trinity, the manifestation of the Spirit, or the new birth—and unaided human wisdom fails to comprehend either of them.

And this leads me to the declaration that there should be a great deal of dogmatical teaching from the pulpit. When God, by the voice of inspiration, speaks in positive affirmations, let man listen to them and accept them. And no minister ought to hesitate to declare any plain, "thus saith the Lord," remembering the Scriptural injunction, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracle of God."

A second reason for preaching the doctrine of the resurrection is that much emphasis is given to it in the New Testament. In that intensely interesting portion of Holy Scripture found in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, we read this language, "Now, if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen? And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain?" And so may we say, that any preaching of to-day that does not recognize this great central truth is vain and fruitless.

What has been asserted in regard to these two great doctrines may with equal emphasis be said of other cardinal doctrines of the Bible. Faith in Christ, the regeneration, justification, and sanctification of the soul, the graces of Christian character, and the duties of the Christian life, are not only to be presented, but persistently enforced.

The thought that I wish most of all to impress is this: The Gospel is to be preached as an entirety. In speaking upon this point, Dr. John Hall has very pertinently said, "We ought to teach the truths in the proportions in which we find the truths in the Book. If we do that we cannot fail to be evangelical preachers. That is to say, we can not fail to make Jesus Christ the sum and substance of our ministry, for he is the sum and substance of this blessed book. And if we preach the truths in the proportions in which they are put in the Word of God, we shall be most likely to edify the people."

Preach the Word, then, fearlessly, yet with a spirit of loving tenderness. Preach with the spirit of him who, while denouncing a Pharisaical religion, plead with sinners to be reconciled to the Father through the offering and atonement he himself made for sin; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; who, dying on the cross, prayed, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Preaching the plain truths of the Gospel with this spirit, you will not fail to edify and build up the church; and sinners will be converted. And while it will doubtless be true of all that preach, that there will be wayside hearers, and some seed will fall on stony places, yet some will fall on good ground, and grow into a rich harvest of golden sheaves.

Let the beautiful words of the blessed promise ever cheer us as we sow beside all waters; "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bring his sheaves with him." The grandest work that can engage human mind and thought, is the work of those who can say with Paul, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

TILT AT THE M. D'S.

The past two weeks have afforded certain men of more or less prominence in the medical profession fresh opportunities of assisting noted criminals in their efforts to escape the claims of justice under the plea of insanity. The time seems not distant when any hot-tempered man who works himself into a passion over a real or assumed injury with the aid of whiskey, may shoot the victim of his ill-will with impunity. And lately a new phrase has been given to the insanity dodge, for it is nothing else. It is held that when an angry man kills another without sufficient reason for his murderous act, he too is insane. It is high time that the medical profession unite to protect themselves against this charlatanism.

BOOKS.

God be thanked for books. They are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are true levelers. They give to all, who will faithfully use them, the society, the spiritual presence, of the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I am; no matter though the professors of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling, if the sacred writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof; if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of paradise, and Shakespeare to open to me the world of imagination and the workings of the human heart, and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom, I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man, though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live.—Channing.

FALSE DOCTRINE.

The papal sophistry runs as follows: Christ is the King, but being absent, He therefore rules by his vicegerent—the Pope. The sophistry of a writer in the Evangelist is the same, with third term substituted. Christ is King, but, being absent, he rules by his officers. The evangelical logic is directly antagonistic to both: Christ is King, and, being present, he therefore rules in person. Those who desire blessings from Him must not go to presbyter, priest, or pope, but directly to the throne of grace, whence Christ will hear and answer. His promise, "Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world," is not a promise to a dynasty of popes, a hierarchy of priests, or a succession of Presbyters, but to the people of God.

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A NEW LEAF REQUIRED TO BE TURNED.

Every person familiar with the present working of our Connexion must have been struck with several things awkward and anomalous. These are the heavy weight of preparatory studies which probationers laboring on circuits have to carry on, which must be slighted, or their circuit work, especially the pastoral part of it, imperfectly performed. Sometimes defectiveness in both is the consequence. Another anomaly is that, ever and anon, these probationers are arrested in their labors and spirited away to College Theological School! To fill their places, raw, not half educated young men are called out with whom the people are asked to put up as an experiment or an emergency. Then when the first mentioned have passed through their collegiate or Theological course, places must be found for them, and often places as men of family, for by this time, most of them have arranged to be married. And there is no way for giving these young divines a married man's circuit with a parsonage, but by crowding out men of mature talents and experience, who must either be thrust into places where it is as cruel to the people as it is to the preacher, to expect them to support a man with a family, or these efficient laborers must be prematurely superannuated. Thus the retirement fund is taxed to support "able-bodied" men, who are in no sense worn out; and many of our supporters are tempted to withhold what they otherwise would contribute because the money goes largely to support ministers who ought to be in the active work. The result is, the fund is insufficient, and the really enfeebled, as well as the others, are in a state of comparative destitution.

It is asked, What is the remedy? I say explicitly, after mature deliberation, it is this:—Fix your standard of educational qualification for our ministry. If a candidate is a graduate, let that suffice. If he is not, let him be required to possess a fair knowledge of all the branches which may be acquired by an English scholar; and as to language, an ability to read and translate the Greek of the New Testament and the Hebrew of the Psalter, or book of Psalms. Let this standard be attained before a preacher is taken on trial for the ministry at all. Education is so cheap in the country at the present, that there can be no difficulty in any young man of enterprise obtaining the amount of learning indicated. If a young man is poor, but of such exceptional talents as to justify his receiving it, let private, district, or Connexion aid be rendered, but let a circuit have the whole of an appointee's time without any part of it being consumed by his "getting" what may be called "an education." If a candidate has spent any time at a theological school before his entering on circuit labors, let that weigh all the more in his favor; but let all the years of his probation be devoted to a theological curriculum, such as Bible exegesis and criticism, systematic divinity, ecclesiastical history, homiletics, pastoral teaching and administration, with whatever else relates to the strictly ministerial part of his education, and let a certain part of this course be assigned to each year of his probation, and let him be examined therein at the end of it. Such branches of study will be rather helpful to him than otherwise in sermon-making.

The plan I propose will obviate the necessity of placing raw preachers on circuits, even temporarily; it will put an end to the inconvenience and anomaly of vibrating from circuit to college and vice versa; it will give the Connexion four full years of single labor for each preacher, and save it from paying men for work they never did; and it will save the Stationing Committee from the sudden influx of men to be provided for, who have been out of the work, while it will save the elderly, but still strong, men of the Connexion from the dread of being suddenly "turned out of house and home."

If it should be said that many young men could not attain the needed qualifications for the ministry without the assistance they now receive, especially, in view of the slender salaries they are afterwards to receive, I have to say in answer that connexional aid is extended from year to year to many, who, in view of the means at the disposal of them and their friends, ought not to have accepted of assistance. Do our doctors and lawyers ask assistance of us to get their education? And yet on an average, the ministers of the country are as well off as the other professional men. And if the salary is not enough to indemnify them for their outlay, then ask the legislature of the connexion to allow them more.

My plan would simplify matters that are now very complicated—would save at least as much in one direction as it would cause the expenditure of in another—would prevent preachers yet in a crude state of mind being sent to perform ministerial duties—and preserve our matured laborers to the work until they are really superannuated.

It may be thought strange that a self-taught preacher of the old school, who began with a little more than a common-school education, and who learned to keep a family on little more, if so much in some cases, as single ministers are now allowed, should make the exactions about qualifications, and the concessions I do make about salaries; but I hope that over fifty years' experience and observation has not been so lost upon me as to make me unobservant of the necessities and yet facilities of the times on the subject of ministerial education. Nor am I so wedded in an excess of conservatism to old usages as to prevent me from "knowing the times and to understand what Israel ought to do."

My maxim is, make every man thoroughly labor all the years for which he receives credit—let him be liberally paid for it while an active worker—and let him receive a sufficiency, without curtailment, when he is so old and infirm as to be able to labor no more; but do not crowd him out of the work until he is unfit for it.

Whatever objections my scheme may seem open to, I believe they can be easily answered.—REV. JOHN CARROLL, D. D., in *Chris; Guardian*.

PARIS LETTER.

(Regular Correspondence.)

PARIS, August 22, 1879.

The Palais de l'Industrie, in the Champs Elysees, enjoys very little peace. No sooner has one class of objects filled its walls to the satisfaction of visitors than these are hurriedly removed to make way for another show. At the present moment an exhibition of what is styled science applied to works of industry occupies the greater portion of the space. If theoretically the title of the exhibition means something practically it means nothing at all, for specimens of every imaginable manufactured article are duly arranged side by side. The universal nature of the exhibition has been to distribute whatever interests it may possess over a great number of various objects. Success under these circumstances can only be attained where the show is gigantic—such, as it is, the Palais de l'Industrie is merely an omnium gatherum—a bazaar with a band playing in the middle of it, and containing many refreshment bars, where drinks and eatables are sold at higher prices than those which obtain outside.

There are many visitors, nevertheless, and some of the exhibits attract the usual crowd of loungers. The praxinoscope, amongst others, is never deserted. This scientific toy has added to the already numerous objects it represent. A little girl, dressed *cap à la Niniche*, is seen swimming in a lake. Every movement is gone through accurately and evenly as she is far more graceful than the swimming dolls which attracted such attention at the Exhibition. The effect is produced by a reflecting glass and is very pretty. Then there is no lack of electric pens for writing and drawing, whilst spectacle and watch makers abound. One man sells watches that do not keep time; indeed, he has taken out all the works, and convinced that time is money, he has so arranged his case that Napoleon's ten-cent pieces, and sovereigns find their own proper places in three little heaps, the topmost piece ready for instant withdrawal. I must warn your readers, however, that the gold pieces are not supplied by the ingenious inventor. In the tropical weather which is raging it is pleasant to watch the process by which bottles of water are "frappé"—that is to say, their contents turned into ice. The proceeding is simple, consequently iced water is common in Paris. The next stall contains bottles also, but filled with a popular liquor styled "Le Club." It is difficult to imagine how science was applied to industry here unless it was in corking the bottles. Carriages, pottery, bedsteads, mirrors and ladies' dresses fill, however, the greater part of the building; but a small space is reserved for life-saving apparatus exhibited by a French company, and two stalls are occupied by Chinamen setting tea—on scientific principles no doubt. Just at the exit a clever industrial school shows how science has been successfully invoked for producing soap bubbles. This exhibition can, however, hardly be considered as forwarding to any great extent the interests of industry.

—Or General Washington's dislike for profanity a picturesque story is related. In the summer of 1781 a man who was ploughing in a field near a Fishkill road became very impatient with some difficulty in his work, and began to pour forth violent oaths. Just then three horsemen in military dress, who were riding by, paused, and one of them asking for information concerning the road, thanked the ploughman for his answer, and added: "My friend, I am older than you, have many times been placed in positions of difficulty and danger, and have had many things to perplex and annoy me, but I have always found that it did no good to get angry; and that neither broken ploughs nor anything else can be mended or made better by the use of profane language," and with a bow he rode on. It was General Washington.

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