

PASTORS, THEOLOGY, AND THE AGE.

What then should the pulpit do? Should it ignore the controversies of the day, and say nothing about the questions which are on the lips of thinking men? Very seriously some give this advice, and very sincerely do we think that they are mistaken. The pulpit has a magnificent opportunity in these days when all ears are open to hear whatever may be said on fundamental questions of belief, and the duties of the pulpit are commensurable with its opportunities. There is room for questioning whether it is not too often taken for granted that those who habitually hear the Gospel are troubled with no doubts and beset with no fears. But it would be hard to make a greater mistake. The duties of the pulpit cannot be performed, it is true, by preaching dry and lifeless theological formulas; but neither can they be performed by adopting a tone of uncertainty, timidity, and doubt regarding the great verities of our faith. If any one supposes that he can wisely keep aloof from controversy by divorcing faith from practice and preaching purely ethical discourses, let him ponder these words of one of our foremost anti-theistic thinkers: "The great desire of this age is for a Doctrine which may serve to condense our knowledge, guide our researches, and shape our lives, so that Conduct may be the consequence of Belief" (Lewes' "Problems of Life and Mind"). That faith and practice are inseparably connected is one of the common lessons of the evangelical pulpit; it is interesting to notice that it occupies such an honoured place in Mr. Lewes' volumes, and perhaps it will be better appreciated by us all, now that we are able to cite in support of it the grave sanction of a famous Positivist.

Whatever room for difference of opinion there may be in regard to the relations of the pulpit to prevailing error, there can be no reason to doubt that, in a purely didactic way, it should give a large place to doctrine. Of the preacher it should be said, as it was said of Christ, "He opened his mouth and taught them." We are frequently told that systematic theology rests on exegesis; but there are also many illustrations of the fact, that a sound exegesis is promoted by a study of systematic theology. There are instances, says Professor Flint—and perhaps this is one of them—where A is the cause of B, and B is the cause of A, paradoxical as it may appear. The men who ridicule theology, and tell us to preach the Word, are the very men who betray their own lack of theological training, by their crude and arbitrary, though often original interpretations of Scripture. It would be easy to cite examples of this false method where single words are torn from their connections, and quoted to support statements that contradict the analogy of faith; or where texts, strung together without any other bond of connection than their place in the columns of a concordance, are made the basis of unsound and absurd conclusions. Dogmatic theology is the cure for unsound exegesis, just as exegesis is our protection against merely speculative dogmatics.

No; we cannot get rid of theology. Men are perplexed; they want light. If there is a sounding-line which will go down to the depths of conscious life, they want it. If there is a generalization which will take cognisance of the facts of experience, they are in quest of it. If there is any way of voicing the world's unrest in an authorized and authoritative Litany, they are waiting to hear it. Christianity supplies their wants—nothing else will; and the formal statement of Christianity is Christian theology. It is a matter of regret that so many minds are turning away from Christian theology because it is an old subject, and because there are new fields which invite cultivation, and promises a larger harvest. Comparative theology has its lessons, no doubt, and some men may be professionally called to study it; but it is the theology of Christ and not of Confucius that we are commissioned to teach. Man that is born of woman has but a short time to live, and cannot afford to be tasting every muddy stream of religious thought, in order that he may the better appreciate the river of water of life which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. A comparative study of time-tables may be

an excellent acquisition in its way, but the engineer who possessed it would find it a poor substitute for a minute acquaintance with the schedule of his own road. Even the study of the evidences of Christianity, important as it is, and even essential when one is professionally called to deal specifically with such subjects, may occupy too much of a minister's time. Borderland studies are not the special and exclusive province of the pastor; and if some men deal too little with current questions of belief, others deal so exclusively with the apologetic side of Christian theology that they injure their general usefulness; they spend their whole time in making clean and clear the approaches to the temple, when their proper place is within the walls, and their proper function is to minister at its altar.

But there is much to encourage us in the prosecution of theological study on the side of dogmatics. A new theology is not needed, but new theologians are; and within the old lines of confessional orthodoxy there is ample room for fresh thought, and a rich reward for patient investigation. The doctrines are few, but there is a kaleidoscopic variety of combination. The pastor is preaching, let us say, on the resurrection of Christ. Well, it is but a step from the empty grave of Jesus to the throned glory of humanity. *Cur Deus homo?* Has all been said that can be said in answer to Anselm's famous question? I do not know; but it is safe to say that no one who has pondered much on the doctrine of the incarnation, can regard "*I want to be an angel*" as a valuable contribution to the hymnology of the Church.—*Professor Patton in the "Catholic Presbyterian."*

"I AM THE DOOR."

"I am the Door." O wanderer, come in!
Art thou not weary of a world of sin?
Stay not outside, where all is dark and cold;
Come to the warmth, the brightness of the fold.

"I am the Door" to life, to peace, to light.
Without, the storm, the startles, cheerless night;
Within, a scene of blessedness untold,
The "many mansions" of the heavenly fold.

"I am the Door," the true, the only way;
All other paths will lead thee far astray.
The wayward ones, who will not be controlled,
Shall never find the entrance to the fold.

"I am the Door." O child of sorrow, come!
Pause not upon the threshold of thy home;
Soon shall thy sad and tear-dimmed eyes behold
The wondrous radiance of that blissful fold.

"I am the Door." Pass through, and thou shalt see
The glories of the place prepared for thee;
The walls of jasper and the streets of gold,
The sapphire pavements of the upper fold.

"I am the Door." O weary one, come in!
A glad and eager welcome thou shalt win;
Thy name among the ransomed is enrolled,
The Shepherd gives thee entrance to the fold.

—R. M. S.

A RELIGION that never suffices to govern a man will never suffice to save him. That which does not distinguish him from a sinful world, will never distinguish him from a perishing world.—*John Howe.*

How time flies! Dr. Chalmers' fame and influence are so fresh and green that he seems to have belonged to a generation but just passed away, yet we read that at the March meeting of the Free Church Presbytery of Edinburgh, Sir Henry Moncrieff moved. "Whereas the late Dr. Chalmers was born on the 17th of March in the year 1780, and whereas it will be due to his memory that the next Free Church General Assembly should adopt adequate measures for having the centenary of his birth attended to with that manifestation of thankfulness to God which the raising up of such an advocate of Christian truth is fitted to call forth, it is humbly overtured by the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh to the ensuing General Assembly that they take this subject into consideration, and follow such action regarding it as in their wisdom may seem meet." The resolution was adopted.

THE First Congregational Society of Meriden, Conn., has just completed a church edifice costing \$176,000.

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XVIII.

May 4 } *THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR.* { Isa. lii.
1873. } 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Pet. ii. 24.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Isa. l. 4-11. His back given to the smiters.
I. Isa. lii. 1-15. His visage marred.
W. Dan. ix. 20-27. Cut off, but not for Himself.
Th. Isa. liii. 1-12. An offering for sin.
F. Matt. xxvii. 11-26. Christ rejected.
S. Matt. xxvii. 27-50. Christ crucified.
S. Acts viii. 26-40. Jesus the Christ.

HELPS TO STUDY.

The prophecies of Isaiah are made up of two chief collections, the latter including chaps. 40-66. This second collection consists of three sub-divisions, each of which ends with a similar refrain (lxviii. 22; lvii. 2; lxvi. 26), and each contains nine prophetic addresses, in all twenty-seven. The second of these sub-divisions, chap. xlix.-lvii., sets forth the contrast between the present suffering of the Servant of Jehovah and his future glory to which His humiliation leads. Our lesson is taken from the address of the second part, the centre not only of the entire second collection, but of all prophecy (ch. lii. 13 and 53); the "golden passion," as it has been called, of the Old Testament evangelist, which looks as if it had been written beneath the cross, and is illuminated with the brightness of Olivet. It sets before us the Servant of Jehovah, the Saviour of men, as a *Sufferer*, a *Substitute*, and an *Intercessor*.

I. THE SUFFERER—Vers. 1-3.

The prophet comes with a report, a message from God, the Glad Tidings of Salvation. But, he asks, who hath believed it? The Word preached, the message of life, will not profit unless it is mixed with faith—Heb. iv. 2. Those to whom the message comes are indifferent and unbelieving. Alas, that the heralds of salvation should still have so often to make the same complaint! Yet it is not a mere empty word, it proclaims a great work effected by the arms of the Lord, which is the symbol of His power—Isai. li. 9; lii. 10. By if of old He brought forth the children of Israel out of Egypt. And by it He now saves His people from their enemies. Yet to whom is it revealed? None see or understand. The prophet describes, as though he saw them now taking place, the feeble and insignificant beginnings of Messiah's life, which were, however, under the watchful care and protection of Jehovah, before whom He shall grow up. The proud cedar of David had been felled to the ground, but from the stump there would grow up a tender shoot (not "plant"). Out of the dry ground, the corrupt and degraded nation, there would spring forth a sprout (not "root" but a sprout which springs from a root left in the ground). Here is set before us the degradation of Israel through sin and unbelief, yet in its degradation there is vitality because of the promise of the Living God, who cannot fail. Messiah is born, but in obscurity and lowliness. He hath no beautiful form, no comeliness or majesty. When the Jews saw Him, they could find nothing good in Him, nothing that made Him attractive to them. He failed to meet the expectations and anticipations which they had formed concerning the promised and expected Messiah. They had false ideas of Him, and a merely worldly standard by which they measured what was great and noble. Judged by this, He appeared to them contemptible; and therefore they despised and rejected Him Luke xxiii. 8. He was a Man of sorrows, familiar with every kind of grief, "in all points tempted like as we are." He was like one from whom men hid their face, from whom all men turn away in loathing and disgust. He was not thought honourable and precious; rather He was not esteemed, or, as Luther puts it, estimated at nothing. His love is unrequited, scorned, rejected, betrayed. His cup of sorrow is full.

Striking lessons are taught us by these verses:

How feeble and despicable was Christianity in its beginning. But the grain of mustard-seed has become a great tree.

What a sufferer, was Jesus. What great love and compassion for us made Him submit to all this.

What good unbelief misuses, what false judgments it entertains, what mistakes it makes. In vain are set before an unbelieving world the glories and the love of Jesus. Is there nothing that will change the world's verdict, nothing that can touch the hard hearts of those who reject Christ, or open the blind eyes, so that they may see the beauty and the love which they have despised. Yes, there is a way, it is when they come to see that the Sufferer is—

II. THE SUBSTITUTE—Vers. 4-9.

Observe with what emphasis the prophet brings this in: Verily, He hath borne our griefs, and our sorrows, our sickness and sufferings. He hath laden them upon Himself. He removes the burden of our woe by putting His own shoulder under it. All His suffering, shame and humiliation was on our account. And yet we, in our blindness, did esteem Him stricken, smitten, bowed down by the hand of God. We supposed Him to be malefactor, bearing the punishment of His own sins; like Job's friends, we measured the sin of the Sufferer by the sufferings he endured. Whereas He was wounded for our transgressions. The prophet employs the strongest expressions he