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THE TIMES.

SIR,—You fearlessly invite criticism of preachers and preaching; and you are right. The true prophet who speaks of God's laws of life and liberty must know something of the desires, the longings, the aspirations, of the people ere he can know how to adapt his message to their comprehension and capacity. He must bring the truth given to him out into the facts of life with which they are familiar, and show it there, so that it may be seen and known. Only then and thus can it be either received and lived, or incur the hatred and opposition of that evil which loves darkness and hates light.

Speaking generally of preachers as a class, it is a self-evident proposition that they do not meet the real heartfelt longing of the age we live in. This age longs for truth, truth on all subjects—longs to know, that it may use the knowledge, either for self or for usefulness to others; and is quite prepared to believe that there is a boundless eternity of truth still to be revealed to man. Science relentlessly overturns any or every received axiom or supposed discovery in its search after truth. Political doctrine coolly dismisses bygone conclusions, though hitherto accepted as authoritatively as proven mathematical problems. For illustration, take the "N. P." recently inaugurated in the very teeth of all "free-trade" theories. Orthodoxy, however hoary with years and honours, cannot help but feel the same force of new and fresh enquiry, and must meet it or—perish. Modern preaching, as a whole, though there are individual exceptions, continues to assert that truth is authoritative and must be permitted voluntarily to over-ride the rational faculties vouchsafed to man, else no truth can be received. This is not a sufficient reply to one in a thousand of men or women in this age where science, natural and social, has penetrated every mind with more or less of knowledge of material facts, processes, and laws. A creed is sought for that shall rather reconcile existing material conditions or effects with their causes in spiritual or mental conditions. Men say, and say truly, it cannot be a high spiritual condition which induces belief that the world was created out of nothing in six days; that a serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field; that the sun stood still in order that Joshua might complete, by daylight, a savage war of extermination; for then a man must believe and assert what, in its literal sense, he knows to be untrue. Modern preaching must lose power daily and hourly so long as it continues to reject the light which Science, directed wisely by a Divine power, throws upon the sacred page, slaying the "letter which killeth," in order that the spiritual meaning within the letter, as a kernel within its shell, may shed its husk and fructify in the added warmth and radiance. The spiritual meaning of the Scriptures contains that spiritual science of which natural science is but the effect. When modern preachers are willing to learn that the external aspect of nature and the laws which mould and govern material things are but the correspondences or symbols of spiritual substances and spiritual laws, and are used in the Divine Word as the means whereby knowledge of man's spiritual condition and being may be perceived and rationally understood, then the conflict between Science and Religion will cease, for the two will work to one end. The more knowledge of Nature's laws we attain, the more wisdom, or spiritual knowledge of the causes of things as they appear will be opened up to us, and religion become a living force, controlling every action, every phase, of every-day life.

The modern preacher is without excuse. Surely modern science has already driven him from a literal interpretation of such passages as those to which reference has just been made. By the light of New Testament relation he might discern that the words of Jehovah our Lord which are spirit and life, live in Genesis as well as in Revelations; revealing the initial chapters of the Bible as the genesis of the moral heavens and earth within man, the dawn of conscious spiritual life both in the race and in each individual man as well now

as then; the serpent he might descry is sensuality, the love of self, sin—call it which you will—tempting man still with unabated vigour. He might see in Joshua's history that light from the sun of righteousness is never withdrawn from the man who desires in his heart utterly to exterminate and drive out the evils inherent in his own being, till that work be completed.

The modern preacher may yet learn, if he will, from the divine word, spiritual science—the science of those causes from which all material effects flow. Love of self and consequent hatred of others, lead *still* to enmity and war. War desolates the land, and famine follows. Scanty nourishment for the body and the careless and uncleanly habits bred of poverty and want, bring our pestilence. The cause is not a blind evolution, but wilful sin, love of self, transgression of those laws which pervade our being, framed as it is beneficently for usefulness and helpfulness to others, and not for self gratification. Such truth is written in Nature so that he who runs can read, and the origin of such truth, the science which permeates and guides the evolution of all the life of all the earths in the universe is contained in the spiritual meaning of scripture.

Reject it if ye will ye modern preachers. Cease to be useful if you will to have it so. Make of yourselves flaming torches only, gleaming fitfully in the night of a dark past; but, the dawn has begun. Light is abroad among the people; and when the new day has fully come your feeble ray must pale before it. Why not throw aside your self-derived man-made hereditary torch-light and come to the "True Light." Even though your deeds should be reproved by it, new life from above will give you strength for greater and better deeds than any you have yet done. You have helped to maintain some light amid the darkness. Work for the growth and spread of a gentler warmth of love and a fuller light of wisdom among your fellows now that it is called *day*.
"Excelsior."

SIR,—I have a word to say anent your remarks on preaching in last week's SPECTATOR.

I understand putting "religion in a sermon" to mean that the minister shall expatiate on man's natural and actual depravity, but always in a general way, *e.g.*, dwelling on the abandoned condition of the human race, the depth of degradation to which it has sunk, and the absence of anything good in man in his present condition; he must also dwell on the terrible retribution that is awaiting man hereafter, which cannot be depicted in too glowing colours; and, lastly, he must speak of the easy method of escaping from the consequences of sin, both here and hereafter, by simply believing. Let this be repeated Sunday after Sunday, and the more humanity is abused, and the greater the prospective retribution depicted, and the more men can be assured that at any moment in their career they can stop, and cancel all their past sins, with their present and future consequences, by a simple act of will, the more hearty will be their verdict that "this is Gospel preaching."

I have no wish to ridicule the great truths of man's sin and the terrible consequences of it, and of God's mercy to sinners; but I do think that the difference between "religion in a sermon" and "no religion in a sermon" lies chiefly in the former treating of sin, punishment and retribution in a general, stereotyped manner, while the latter treats of the individual and the community—*e.g.*, sins of private life, idleness, self-indulgence, intellectual apathy, selfishness, pride, wrong doing in commerce, unrighteousness in high places, in the city and in the Government.

It is dwelling on these themes as special subjects with the earnest effort to induce men to live a more moral life, apart from a direct appeal to flee from the terrible retribution that is awaiting them as a just reward of their sins, that is considered a "sermon without any religion in it."
Sinner.

SIR,—With reference to your remarks in last SPECTATOR on the intended expansion of the Dominion currency, I have only to remark:—

1. That there is but one institution in the world that by its charter carries dollar for dollar in gold in its coffers for liquidation of its notes, and that is the Bank of England.

2. That if you will refer to any standard book on banking you will find that this provision is considered unnecessary. All that is needful is that there should be a fund, however located, that can be drawn upon to liquidate in gold every note when presented for payment.

3. That a Government stands in a stronger position than any bank in one respect; and that is, that it has the power, whenever its credit might be