

if you have doubts, get them settled in the best way you can. What is the use of confiding them to your congregation? And in the name of all that is reasonable, what have we to do with Oopsetter and Stand-faster and all the tribe of learned dreamers, who spin out their interminable theories like a silk-worm in a cocoon? Life is too short, and the business of life too serious, for us to trouble ourselves about them.

As a rule, it is not desirable to preach sermons in defence of Christianity against scepticism unless, indeed, the subject is agitating the community, and your hearers are being influenced and carried away by the plausibilities of some infidel lecturer. Such sermons need to be preached very judiciously, or you will raise more doubts than you solve. Many minds have a singular affinity to doubts. They are a sort of good soil on which sceptical notions readily take root. A late Bishop of London used to tell a story of his experience when a curate. He preached on one occasion a sermon on "The Being of God," and entered into elaborate arguments against Atheism. Desirous to know the effect he had produced, he accosted a rustic on leaving church, and asked him what he thought of it? "Well, sir, it war a verra fine sermon; verra fine; but for my part, *spite of all you said* I believe there *be* a God." It is important also to avoid preaching in a way that is open to misapprehension, especially when preaching to plain and uneducated people. In the life of Bishop Wilberforce there is an admirable story which illustrates this. He had a parish in his younger days in the Isle of Wight. The county town, not far off, was Newport, in which place, very naturally, he purchased such household matters as were required. He lived, however, in a small village where several petty shop keepers plied their trade. Smuggling was prevalent in those days on the South coast. He more than suspected some of his parishioners, and determined to preach a sermon on the subject. He took for his text, "Custom to whom custom is due," and entered powerfully, and as he thought convincingly into the merits of the subject as applicable to the prevailing practice. A few days afterwards, his self-love received a terrible shock. Visiting some of his parishioners, he was told by a plain-spoken woman that he didn't practice what he preached. They can't suspect me of any wrong-doing, thought he, and naturally asked what the woman could possibly mean. "Why," said she, "didn't you tell us to give custom to whom custom is due, *but you buy all your goods at Newport.*" As a rule politics and political discussions are to be avoided, the only ex-

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