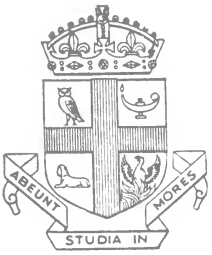

THE PREACHER AND HIS PLACE

THE PREACHER AND HIS PLACE

THE LYMAN BEECHER LECTURES ON PREACHING, DELIVERED AT YALE UNIVERSITY IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY, 1895

BY

REV. DAVID H. GREER, D.D.

RECTOR OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1895

University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U. S. A.

PREFACE

IN looking over the Lectures which are contained in this Volume, with a view to their publication, I was strongly tempted to recast them. Their style, as will be seen, is that of direct address, which for those who heard them was perhaps the most appropriate, but for those who may read them, it is not, to say the least, such as I should choose. For this reason, therefore, I was disposed to change, not their substance, but their form. I soon found, however, that the one involved the other, and that it was not easy, if indeed possible, to change the phrasing of the thought without changing also the thought; and that was something which I felt I had no right to do; neither had I

the desire to do it. The Lectures, therefore, are printed just as they were delivered, in the hope that if they were of any value to the hearer, they may prove to be not altogether valueless to the reader, in helping him to determine the distinctive place and work of the Christian minister in the economy of Modern Life.

DAVID H. GREER.

St. Bartholomew's Day,
August 24, 1895.

CONTENTS

THE PREACHER AND THE PAST

THE PREACHER AND THE PAST

IN accepting the invitation with which I had been honored to deliver this course of lectures, I felt very keenly the embarrassment of putting myself in the position of the last speaker upon a subject which had been already very fully traversed, and in regard to which it would not be easy for me to say anything that had not been more ably and better said before. There was, however, this mitigating and relieving circumstance: when the other lecturers spoke and delivered themselves of their burden, I was not in the audience, and therefore did not hear them; neither, although their deliverances have been published, have I had the privilege (except to a very limited extent) of reading them in print. While, therefore, I may repeat in part what has been already said, I shall be ignorant of it, and the ignorance will give me boldness, or at least freedom in my

utterance, and will help to relieve the embarrassment which otherwise I might feel.

But there was another embarrassment, proceeding, not from the sameness, but from the bigness of the subject. For it is a big subject. It is almost boundless in its bigness, and would be easier to treat if it were smaller. In my early schoolboy days it was, I remember, one of my appointed and somewhat dreaded duties to furnish an essay every week upon a topic of my own selection. In the attempt to discharge that constantly recurring and not welcome task, I soon came to the end of all thinkable topics, and did not know what topic to treat and write on next. Presently, however, I hit upon a device which seemed at the time both felicitous and fruitful. I tried to find a topic so generous and large that it might be continued from week to week without any fear of exhausting it; and I can recall now with what lively satisfaction I coined the fruitful phrase, as then it seemed, and selected for my theme, "The World and its Contents." That lively satisfaction, however, did not long live, and I soon dis-

covered, what in other ways, and with increasing fulness of realization, I have been discovering ever since, and not always to my comfort, that it is "the narrow chimney which makes the best draught," and that to have a theme too big is tantamount almost to having no theme at all.

Something like that is the feeling which I experience now. My theme is too big. There seems to be no end and no beginning to it. It is an all-out-of-doors theme, like "The World and its Contents," or the universe and its contents. For the work of the ministry touches and includes within its compass all sorts and conditions of things, in the heavens above, and the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth, and in the soul of man. It deals with things human; it deals with things divine; things physical, things metaphysical; things natural, things supernatural; mental, moral and spiritual. In at least the form of the speech, if not the speech itself, which Ruth addressed to Naomi, it says to all these things: "Where you go I go; where you lodge I lodge; your interests are my interests; your work is my work; your truth is my truth, and your God is my

God." The subject, I say, is very big, and with the consciousness that I can start almost anywhere, and proceed in almost any direction, it is difficult to start and proceed. I must, however, start somewhere, and perhaps I can do no better than to try to put myself in your place, young gentlemen, and start where you start, or where presently you will start, when you have taken your ordination vows and entered upon your work. And where, then, shall you start? And how, then, shall you start? And what, then, shall you be? Ministers of Jesus Christ going forth to preach to the world the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to build up in the world the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and to reconcile the world through Jesus Christ to God? Yes, that will be your work; that, I am sure, will be your ambition: and a great and noble work, and worthy ambition it is. But in the doing of that work, and in the fulfilling of that ambition, there is, or there will be, a limitation upon you, voluntarily imposed, to be sure, but still a limitation; namely, a theological limitation. You will be bound by forms of faith, and to those forms of faith — as the

religious organization which equips and sends you forth has received them — you must be loyal and true. That, I say, is the way in which you will presently start, with the self-imposed limitation of a theological subscription upon you.

Let me, then, start as you start, and in this lecture consider what that limitation is; what it means and implies; and what, in my judgment, it does *not* mean and imply. That is a question which the Christian world to-day seems to be very seriously considering. How can the new knowledge which has been brought to light by the spirit of modern inquiry be reconciled with the old knowledge which is reflected or expressed in the early forms of faith? Can it be reconciled at all? Is any reconciliation possible? Is the Christian minister free to accept that new knowledge, or free even to consider it? Is he, with reference to it, an independent man? Some persons maintain that he is not; and that while the student of science is free, and the student of philosophy is free, the student of theology is not free, or not free at least when he has been ordained and become a Christian minister. Then, it is

said, he is fettered and bound, and must teach, not what he thinks, but what the Church which has ordained him thinks. And that is true. But it is not, in my judgment, true in the way in which it is sometimes said to be true. In what sense, then, is it true, and in what sense is it not true? It is only right and proper that, standing as you do upon the threshold of the Christian ministry, you should consider and settle that question, and that before you go to preach the Gospel to the present, you should try to ascertain what your relation is to the past, and to what extent you are fettered and held in check by the past, and your freedom of utterance is impaired. That is the topic which I will ask you to consider in this lecture. The Preacher and the Past. Stated in other words, the topic or the question is this: "What is involved in a theological subscription? What does it mean, and what does it not mean?"

I remark in the first place, in attempting to answer that question, that theology as I apprehend it is not a stationary, but a progressive and constantly advancing science. It is different now in some re-

spects from what it formerly was; and it is not now in all respects what it will be hereafter. Truth itself, subjectively considered, is of course a fixed and definite quantity. It is always one and the same. But the knowledge of truth is not. That is a variable quantity, and is at one time greater and more than at another time. And this applies to all truth and all knowledge; whether it be the knowledge of the truth of God in nature, or whether it be the knowledge of the truth of God in Christ. And just as the knowledge of the truth concerning electricity, or heat, or light, or gravity, is greater now than it was, so is the knowledge of the truth concerning Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself is of course the same; and the truth that we find in Him now has been in Him always. It has been always in Him, but not always found in Him. It has been always true, but not always known, or it has been known only in part, and as it will be hereafter known only in part. For while there may come a time when we can say we know all the truth in things, there never will come a time when we can say we know all the truth in Him, who was before all

things, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made. Life in Him is limitless. Truth in Him is boundless. We do not know it all; we cannot know it all; and when we say we do, or when we draw the line at the fourth or the sixteenth century, and say that the knowledge of Christ was then complete and final, with nothing more to be added, we are to that extent denying Christ, or denying the God in Christ; and the faith which believes that any doctrinal statement has set Him fully forth, is faith in Christ as man. It may call itself evangelical; it may call itself catholic: it often does; but it is neither. It is an implicit negation of the evangelical faith, and militates against that catholic creed of the Church which it seeks to uphold and maintain. That creed declares that Christ was more than man, was God; and God, the Infinite, the Absolute, the Eternal, is always beyond the limit of human apprehension, is always more than the knowledge, be it ever so much, of man. When we say that something is boundless, we must not proceed to bound it. If we do, we deny what we affirm, and destroy what

we build. And when we declare in one breath that Jesus Christ was God, or God manifest in the flesh, and then in the next declare that all that is in Him is known, we deny what we affirm, and destroy what we build, and declare that He was not God.

We read of certain persons who in Christ's day tried to shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against those who were seeking to enter. The effort was not successful, nor will it ever be. The kingdom of man we may shut up; we may traverse it all and say, "It goes no further than this; and that here is where it stops." But the Kingdom of God we cannot shut up, and just because it is the Kingdom of God. There are treasures in it which we never find; and heights we never scale; and depths we never fathom; and regions we never explore. It is always open beyond us, and its gates we can never close. And if in Jesus Christ we see a King who is God, and in His truth a kingdom which is the Kingdom of God, we cannot say, "Thus far and no farther does it go." We cannot shut it up; or if we do, we shut it up as a Kingdom of God, and make it

something less. Because, therefore, we believe that Jesus Christ was God, with the Infinite in Him, we also believe that no doctrinal symbol of the Christian Church in the past is or can be the full expression of Him. It may be true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It does not go as far as He goes. There is in Christ something more than what it sees and states. That something more in Him has been gradually coming out, with fuller and larger disclosure to the apprehension of man. We cannot shut it up, nor prevent it from coming out. Men have tried to prevent it, and time and again have said, "Now we know it all; the form of Christian doctrine is now complete, final, there is nothing more to be added; — there is nothing more to be said, and controversy is ended." But it was not ended; and it is not ended yet. It has been going on; it is going on, and it will hereafter go on. Nothing has stopped it; nothing can stop it; and more and more will the truth of God in Jesus Christ be apprehended by man.

Let me not be misunderstood. So far as a creed or doctrine is a statement of fact,

such, for instance, as the Apostles' Creed, it is of course final. Fact is fact, and always remains fact; and the Creed which expresses fact in connection with Jesus Christ, as the fact of His birth, for instance, or life, or death, or resurrection, is to that extent stationary. But the interpretation of the fact, or of the significance of the fact, that is not stationary. One age apprehends it in part, and another age apprehends it in part. The different apprehensions are not contradictory, but supplemental. Each age looks from its own point of view, and through the medium of its own atmosphere, and sees something new in Christ, — not something new in fact, but something new in the meaning and application of fact. It is vision as it were from a valley, with mountains steep and high, sloping up on either side towards the truth of God in Christ; and it is only the one little section of the great and broad expanse immediately above that any one age can see, that any one man can see, or any one set of men. St. Paul looks up from the valley with clear and open eye, and the doctrine of faith is passing. "By faith a man is justified without the deeds of the law."

St. James looks up from the valley with an eye equally clear, and the doctrine of works is passing. "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only." St. John at the close of the century, when Jerusalem has fallen, and the stroke of doom is impending over imperial Rome, — St. John looks up from the valley, and the doctrine of judgment is passing.

So throughout all the subsequent history of the Christian Church. The various observations which at times it has made of the truth of God in Christ we may and do accept; but not as the observation of all the truth in Christ. They are partial, fragmentary, limited, and do not express it all, and cannot express it all. They are good as far as they go, and true as far as they go; but they do not go to the end of the truth of God in Christ. There is no end. It is endless; it is boundless; it is infinite; and more and more to every age it has been coming out, and more and more to every age it has been unfolding itself.

What then should be the attitude of the person who believes in the gradual unfolding of the truth of God in Christ, towards an ancient doctrinal symbol? He may ac-

cept it fully, unequivocally, and without any reserve; and if he accepts it at all, he ought, I think, to accept it in that manner. But he does not and cannot accept it as a statement which is exhaustive. He does not and cannot subscribe to it as something complete and final. What then does he do? What ought he to do? Ought he to repudiate and reject it? No, not necessarily. Ought he to try to change and revise it? No, not necessarily. Ought he to try by some clever process of interpretation to read into it a meaning — some new and modern meaning — which it does not legitimately bear, and was not intended to bear, thus putting new wine into old bottles, and new cloths into old garments, and making patchwork of them? No; that, it seems to me, is not ingenuous. I will not say it is not honest, for honesty applies to motive, and the motive in such a case is, I am sure, good; but the method I think is bad. What then does he do, or what should he do? He should ascertain in full or in part the purpose for which that doctrinal symbol was originally fashioned and drawn, and then proceed to inquire whether he can indorse and approve

that purpose. If he can, then, although the symbol in its outward form may be faulty, he is not called upon, in my judgment, to reject it, nor even to change and revise it. Let me illustrate: and as I am more familiar with the doctrinal symbols of the Episcopal Church, let me find my illustration there; and because of their admitted faultiness in some respects let me find it in those doctrinal symbols which are usually designated as the "Thirty-nine Articles," and which are in many respects like the other doctrinal symbols of the period of the Reformation.

Those Articles, as every student knows, were put forth by their framers as a strong and vigorous protest against many of the teachings supposed to be erroneous of the Church of Rome. At the time of the Reformation those teachings had been renounced and thrown off by the Anglican Church; and in order to keep them from coming back into her fold again, those doctrinal barriers were erected. That is the way in which they came to be. That is their meaning and purpose. Now, as long as we sympathize with that purpose, and believe that it is our duty to protest against

those doctrinal teachings of the Church of Rome, it would be both unwise and unnecessary to remove those doctrinal barriers. And yet, as is generally admitted with reference to other matters which did not enter into and constitute a part of the controversy of that time, those Articles are very imperfect.

The Sixth Article says, for instance, "Holy Scripture consists of all those books of whose authority there was never any doubt in the Church." And then it proceeds to enumerate the sixty-six books which we have in our Bible to-day. Now, modern scholarship has shown it to be a fact, which was not known then, but which now no one dreams of disputing, that the authority of some of those books in our Bible was for a long time doubted in the Christian Church, and that the doubt was not wholly removed until the fourth or fifth century. If, therefore, we accept the first part of the Article, which says that "Holy Scripture consists of all those books of whose authority there was never any doubt in the Church," we cannot without stultifying ourselves accept the second part of the Article, which says that the Bible

consists of the sixty-six books which are in it now. But what was the purpose of the Article? To determine the scope and limit of the Scriptural canon? Yes; but at the same time to protest against the attempted introduction into our Protestant Bible of those Apocryphal books, whose authority was coming to be recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, and which to-day are found in the Roman Catholic Bible. With that purpose we sympathize; at least I suppose we do, and therefore we do not wish to have the Article removed which declares and expresses that purpose. Faulty though it is, we can and do indorse it. But let us not, when we know that it was intended for one thing, apply it to something else which did not come into the range of the purpose for which the Article was framed.

And so with reference to other doctrinal symbols which we have inherited from the past. Some of them, to be sure, like the early creeds of Christendom, are on a much higher plane than those which I have been considering. They are Ecumenical symbols, and received the sanction of Christendom at large; while these are but provincial

symbols, and received the sanction of only a part of Christendom. But the method of interpretation is the same in both cases. We must not try to evade them, or twist them, or pervert them, or to make them yield a meaning they were not intended to yield. Our aim should be to ascertain the purpose for which they were framed, and our indorsement of them should be simply an indorsement of that purpose, and should not be made to apply to purposes to which the symbols themselves were not intended to apply.

And what is true of the doctrines of the past is true also of the practices of the past. Let me illustrate further: In an age when force and violence were more prevalent in human society than they are now, there were men in the Christian Church, brave and strong, who banded themselves together into a society which taught and enforced the doctrine of unquestioning and implicit obedience to authority. Monasticism in its day was good, was needed. It did a righteous work, and that righteous work we indorse; but we will not go back to monasticism. At a time when the laxity of public sentiment had almost legal-

ized and sanctioned a kind of practical polygamy and the most hideous and revolting excesses, and had produced in society, and to some extent in the Christian Church and ministry, an unbridled moral corruption, there were men in the Christian Church, brave and strong, who took upon themselves before God a vow of perpetual chastity. Celibacy in its day was good, was needed. It did a righteous work, and that righteous work we indorse; but we will not go back to celibacy. At a time when the Catholic Church for its own mercenary purposes was trafficking in good works and selling out indulgences to the people, it was not untimely or unneedful that a man of strong individuality, like John Calvin, should arise, making prominent again before everything else the doctrine of the divine decrees, declaring that the salvation of men was entirely independent of works, their own or others', and was determined solely by the sovereign purpose and predestination of God; thus cutting up the Romish doctrine of indulgences by the roots. Calvinism in its day was good, was needed. It did a righteous work, and that righteous work we indorse.

But, it is not necessary, some of us think, to go back to Calvinism.

And so I say with reference to other beliefs and practices of the Christian Church in the past. In order to understand them we must know something of what they were trying to do, and of the strength and character of the inimical forces against which they were fighting. Who can understand the tactics of a military commander without understanding something of the ground on which he is fighting, and of the difficulties which he encounters, and of the army arrayed against him? We judge of his conduct, not in the abstract, and up as it were in the air, but down on the ground, the earth, and with reference to the particular exigencies of that particular time and that particular fight. Was it right and good in its aim? Was it right and good in its purpose? Did the commander do the best he could with the forces at his command? Perhaps at another time, and in another conflict, and facing a different foe, he would proceed in a different manner, would occupy a more advantageous position on the field of battle, and would have besides a better equipment to

fight with. So, too, with reference to religious beliefs and symbols which have come to us from the past. They are the symbols, many of them, of an earnest theological warfare on the part of men who were struggling to apprehend and defend the truth. They are the weapons with which they fought, with which they went out — those old sturdy and doughty defenders of the Christian faith — to meet and do battle with the enemy; and they fought hard and well. They gave no quarter: they made no compromise. They fought to kill and destroy, and they did kill and destroy; and many a rampart have they taken, and many a stronghold razed. And we to-day are living purer and freer lives, and breathing larger liberties, because of what they did, and of the way in which they fought. Surely they could not have fought more bravely or more truly than they did. God give us the courage which they had! But surely, too, if they were living now, they would fight in a somewhat different manner. They would find, I believe, different and, in some respects, better weapons to fight with: a wider critical knowledge; a better critical equipment; a finer critical

insight; a larger field to move on; and different foes to encounter. But did they do, not what was ideally best, but what was best in the circumstances? Was their aim good, and their purpose? Do we sympathise with that purpose? Do we think it right and true? If we do, then we accept the doctrinal form or symbol in which it is expressed, "Not as a barrier in the way of progress, but as a badge of victory in some hard-fought battle of the past." We are not called upon, as another has aptly phrased it, to commit "retrospective suicide" in our loyalty to the present, neither are we called upon to commit present suicide in our loyalty to the past.

There are two things which the man who looks upon the Christian religion in the light of its historical development will not be likely to do, two mistakes which he will not be likely to make. First, he will not lightly throw off the past, but will stand upon, and believe in, and be strengthened by the past; saying, like Dante's pilgrim, as he faces the unknown future, "I journeyed on o'er that lonely steep, the hinder foot still firmer;" he will not lightly throw off the past. And, second, he will

not be slavishly bound by it. He will look upon the present, not as detached from, but as growing out of, the past, as the man grows from the child; and he will go forward into the future, not fettered, but equipped; believing, not in a God of confusion, but in a God of order, who has been working in the past, is working in the present, and will continue to work in the future; and, like a well-instructed scribe, he will bring forth from the inexhaustible treasure-house of the Christian religion things both new and old.

The Christian Church has not yet apprehended all the truth that is in Jesus Christ, for, as I have said, it is an infinite quantity, and embodied in an infinite personality, and she must continue to search for the truth; and when she stops the search she will suffer loss in power, and her vitality will wane. "I think," says John Locke, in writing to his young friend Anthony Collins, "that I am now beginning to see the truth in full and perfect form, and that I shall not have to search for it much longer. But this," he adds significantly, "is at the end of my days." Ah, yes, the old philosopher's life was waning and pass-

ing away, and this was the sign of it; ceasing to search, and therefore beginning to die. So will it be with the Christian Church. Ceasing to search for the truth of God in Jesus Christ, her redeeming power in society and her quickening force will fail; and when she thinks she has found it all, she will begin to die! But she will not die. She will live. And, searching more and more for the truth of God in Christ, she will more abundantly live; will more fruitful and vigorous become; more beautiful in her form, more helpful in her worship, more useful in her work, more attractive in her teaching, more comprehensive in her scope.

Christian theology then, young gentlemen, is not stationary, but progressive. It is the effort of men, and the successful effort, to interpret Jesus Christ; and that interpretation, or those interpretations, without reserve we accept; but not, of course, as fully interpreting Jesus Christ. We do not accept them in that way. We cannot accept them in that way. To accept them in that way is to reject them. It is to make Christ less than what they try to express, and what they do express. It

is to make Him limited and finite, which they declare He is not; and in declaring that He is not finite, they declare themselves to be but the partial expression of Him. Then, again, those doctrinal statements are, after all, but the words of man; and the strongest words of man, and the finest words of man, cannot always interpret even man himself, and have the effect often, not to express, but to stifle what is best and deepest in him. Have you never known what it is to listen to the strains of some magnificent music, which like an inspiration of heaven seemed to come and touch so sweetly, yet so strongly, your answering heart and soul, and to lift you up for a moment as into the very joy of the presence of God? And then, when you dared not speak or whisper, or scarcely breathe, lest the spell should be broken, some little critical, superficial soul has come bustling up into your presence with his chattering comment, and extinguished the dream which was on your soul, and driven its glory away. The music — that was your word, which best expressed and phrased what you thought and felt, or what you longed to be, and all others seemed out

of place. The artist stands with brush and palette, day after day, before his canvas, trying so hard to speak. He says nothing; his lips are dumb; there is silence around him, and he would not have it disturbed. Yet the deep, unuttered thoughts which are buried in his soul, with the best possible expression, and in the most appropriate manner, are gradually coming out; and then, when his work is done, he points to the finished picture and says, "There, that is what I think; that is what I feel; that is what I believe; that is my creed; and all the thought, and beauty, and life of my soul is there, as no language of mine can express it!"

An English traveller has told us that once in the course of his life he witnessed a storm at sea, so magnificent in its proportions, so sublime in its forms and effects, that he was lifted up out of himself, and lost all sense of himself. And, as the winds struck the waters and lifted them up into mountains, and the thunders uttered their voice, and the lightnings forked and flashed and wrapped the clouds in flame, and all nature reeled in the shock, there was borne in upon his soul such a sense of

the greatness, the glory, the awful majesty of God, as no language of man could express it, and whose only fit and proper word — symbol, doctrine, if you please — was the storm.

The words of man, I say, cannot interpret even all that is in man. How much less, then, can they interpret all that there is in Jesus Christ! And, standing before the picture of His great and wonderful life, as on the Gospel pages, — in the words of man, to be sure, but in the words of man so fitly chosen that they seem to be not the words of man, but part of the picture itself, — as on the Gospel pages that picture is portrayed, we are made to feel that there is a beauty, and a power, and a majesty there which no other words of man, however emotionally fine, or philosophically true, or metaphysically subtle, can express. Standing there, we seem, not by conscious effort, but instinctively, involuntarily, to be carried far above all formal definitions of Him, and Christ Himself is the Word which best expresses what we think and feel, and what we most truly believe. For practical working purposes we have, indeed, and must have, our definitions of Him,

and must try to put in forms of speech our thoughts and opinions about Him. Some in the past have done it; and what they have done we accept, and are grateful to them for it. We could not if we would repudiate their work; and we do not wish to repudiate it, nor even indeed to change it. It is theirs; it is ours; and we hold it as the heritage received from them; and we can no more reject it than to-day can reject yesterday, or to-morrow reject to-day; and yet to-day is more than yesterday, and to-morrow will be more than to-day.

As the men of the past contributed something, contributed much, to the knowledge of the truth of God in Christ, so must the men of the present contribute some further knowledge which will be added to theirs, as the knowledge contributed by the men of the future will be added to ours. The beautiful dream of Coleridge may then perhaps be realized, and the Christian Church may become like a great university school, in which all the members and pupils, having presented their admission contracts, will walk at large and at liberty, alone now, and now in groups, meditating and conversing, gladly listening to some

elder disciple whom the spirit of God has taught, or lovingly communing with some class fellow, while the common concern will be peace, order, courtesy, mutual forbearance, reverence, patience, kindness, charity, love for each and all, and the common devotion of all and each to their common Master and Lord. Yes, their common Master and Lord, who, as represented and portrayed on the pages of the Gospel story, is always greater and more than any doctrinal statement that can be framed about Him.

That, as Christian preachers to-day, should be your relation to the past. Grateful and glad for what of Jesus Christ it has shown you, but more grateful and more glad because He is more than what it has shown you. Who always has been more, and always will be more. Who, from the very beginning of the history of the Christian Church down to the present time, has been unfolding Himself in many ways and forms to the consciousness of the Christian Church. And, "From the vision and voice at Damascus," if I may bring this lecture to its close as one has closed the introduction to his book, "From

the vision and voice at Damascus, and the tremendous words uttered in the midst of the Seven Golden Candlesticks over the Greek Sea, the Mystical Presence still glides and shines. Gleams and echoes of it linger on the Roman roadside, by the Domine Quo Vadis, on the Hall of the Round Table at Winchester; on the clearing in the woodland where the Merciful Knight drew rein before the Crucifix. And again, and yet again it has returned, a voice and a vision, to such as have at any time believed they saw and heard it, of whom some remain to this present, but the greater part are fallen asleep."

The theme, then, young gentlemen, which you are called to study and preach, is an inexhaustible theme, for that theme is Jesus Christ. And depths below depths are in it; and heights beyond heights are in it, which have never been fathomed or scaled, and which invite you to the attempt. And, listening to the voices which are sounding about you to-day, and which at times seem so bewildering; and considering with an open and a fearless mind all the forms of thought which are pressing upon you to-day, and which at times seem

so disturbing, you will find, I am sure, at last, that just so far indeed as those voices and thoughts are true, they will simply give or be some new points of view from which to see new meanings and wonders in Jesus Christ.

> "Then stand before that fact, that Life and Death
> Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread;
> As though a star should open out, all sides
> Grow the world on you."

THE
PREACHER AND THE PRESENT

THE

PREACHER AND THE PRESENT

IN the previous lecture we considered the work of the preacher in its relation to the past. Let us consider now his work in its relation to the present, the society in which he lives, and of which he forms a part, and to which he is called to preach. The physician who prescribes without an adequate knowledge of the case for which he prescribes will not prescribe well; and the preacher who preaches without an understanding of the society to which he preaches, its prevailing temper or distemper, will not preach well. Before, therefore, I can hope to tell you anything about the method of your preaching to-day, I must try to tell you something about to-day. For it is to to-day, and not to yesterday, that you will presently preach. You must never forget that. And how can you preach to to-day, unless you have some knowledge of what to-day is? And what

is it? How may it be described? To answer such questions fully would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Society to-day is not simple in its composition, but multiform and complex. The tendencies in it are not only numerous, but various, and often indeed contrary. They run in different directions, and currents and eddies are in it proceeding in different paths. That is what makes society to-day so interesting. It has within it so much life; so much of the exuberance of life; so much of the heterogeneousness of life; and in looking at or describing it, or in attempting to describe it, one thinks of the way in which the waters come down at Lodore. It is not this *or* that, it is *both* this *and* that, and never seems still or the same, but is always moving, and changing, and rushing, and plunging, and dashing,

> "Smiting and fighting,
> A sight to delight in;
> Confounding, astounding,
> And deafening the ear with its sound!"

I am not about to attempt, therefore, anything so ambitious, or indeed so preposterous, as a comprehensive study of modern society. That, I confess, is a task

beyond my ability. It is also beside my purpose. I have no such generalizing process (a process always dangerous, and apt not to be true, because only partly true), I have no such generalizing process at present in my mind. I simply want you to look at society to-day from the point of view of the pulpit, and in its relation to the preacher, or rather in its relation to the message of the preacher, in order that you may understand the better not only what that message should be, but how to prepare and preach it.

Looking, then, at society to-day in its relation to the preacher, what do we find? We find, in the first place, that it does not care about preaching as much as society yesterday did, or society the day before; and that while it may need it just as much, it does not just as much think that it needs it. Preaching has been hitherto a very effective and much-appreciated factor in the development of the social life, and has helped very much to make it what at present it is. "It was by a sermon," says an English reviewer, "that the movement was inaugurated which has since grown into Christendom, and which is now by more

silent though not less potent agencies visibly overspreading the earth. Men went forth preaching 'Jesus and the Resurrection;' and from their generation we date, not our years only, but a new movement of human society which is filling the world with its pressures and its progresses still." That was true of preaching once. Is it true of preaching now? Is preaching equally valuable and important now? Does it still have in the world an important work to do, or has it become to-day an anachronistic thing, a something out of date, a venerable institution which has survived in form, but in form only, like a rudiment which has lost its function, and which in the vast, and varied, and more highly developed economy of the modern social life has no proper place?

This latter view of preaching is the view of many. They do not care about it, or do not care very much about it. Eloquent preaching they care for, but chiefly because it is eloquent, and not because it is preaching. And therefore they do not go, or do not go very much, to the place where preaching is done. Many, I know, do go; and many churches there are which are

always filled with earnest and interested congregations; but there are many more which are not. Nor is it always the sermon that constitutes the attraction in the case of those who do go to church. The Roman Catholic churches are as well filled as the Protestant, and perhaps better, and it is not the sermon that fills them. Neither is it the sermon that always fills the Protestant churches. Sometimes it is the service, the music, the ritual, the worship, the things which go before, which some of you call "the preliminaries." Sometimes, too, it is social convention that fills them, and people often go to church because their neighbors go, — their neighbors whom they esteem, their neighbors whom they affect; and the religiousness which they exhibit, or which they seem to exhibit, we find when we come to analyze it, is not religiousness, but fashionableness. "I have often met with women," says the author of the book, "Without Dogma" (and men, too, he might have added), "to whom religion was simply an item of the toilet; and they dressed themselves in it, or in some particular form of it, as seemed to suit their style." That sounds severe; but those of

us who have had an opportunity in the practical work of the ministry to mingle much with the people who compose our congregations know that there is truth in it; and the fact that many people go to church to-day does not of necessity show that they go for the sake of religion, and still less for the sake of the sermon. It simply shows, I think, that people, like motives, are mixed, — religious people with other people, — and that it is not easy at present to draw the line distinctly between the church and the world.

Whether, then, we consider those who go to church, or those who stay away, we find that people now do not as a rule attach so much importance to preaching as people formerly did. That is a fact, to be perhaps deplored, but not to be ignored, and which will not, I think, be disputed. And why is it a fact? What is the explanation of it? Is it the fault of the preacher? To some extent I think it is, and of that I will speak later. But it is not altogether his fault. It is due in a measure to causes for which he is not responsible, but which nevertheless he must try to overcome. The art of printing has a good deal to do with it.

There was a time when if people desired instruction on the subject of religion they had to go to church and listen to a sermon. That was then the way, or at least the principal way, in which to receive instruction. Now, however, it is only one of very many ways. The people to-day who are interested in homiletical instruction need not go to church and listen to a sermon, but can stay at home and read one, and a better one, perhaps, than many which they would hear, and thus be by the reading more than by the hearing helped. I know that truth is sometimes more persuasive, more stimulating and inspiring, when heard than when read; but I also know that the mind cannot so readily catch and hold the truth, or follow it out so fully as when it is "harvested by the quiet eye." And in these days of cheap and voluminous literature, with a public library in every town, and a private one in almost every house, when the sermons of a Liddon, or a Brooks, or a Spurgeon can be purchased for the small fraction of a dollar, when magazines and periodicals are freighted down with religious and theological lore, when the words spoken in West-

minster, in St. Paul's Cathedral, and in all the great pulpits of Christendom can be so soon delivered upon their study table, to be read quietly at their own leisure, by their own fireside, why, pray, should people go to church to receive religious instruction by listening to a sermon?

But that is not the only reason why many people to-day do not attach so much importance to preaching. There is another, for which the preacher is himself responsible. So much of the preaching to-day seems to be preaching to yesterday, or preaching about yesterday. It does not touch as it ought the contemporary life, and grapple with its problems, its duties, its difficulties, its dangers. There is, in consequence, a sense of unreality about it, a foreignness, a far-away-ness; and to men who are of necessity preoccupied with the exigencies of contemporary life, it is not helpful preaching. Then, again, there is in preaching at times too much of *other*-worldness, and not enough of *this*-worldness. Instead of making it appear that the religion of Jesus Christ is chiefly for the present, we teach it in such a way as to produce on men the impression that it is chiefly for

the future, disclosing to them the joys of the future, or the sorrows and pains of the future, — the joys of some future heaven, or the pains of some future hell. And they are apt, in consequence, to receive from us the notion that the principal function and use of the religion of Jesus Christ is to show them how to escape at last the latter, and to receive at last the former; or how to get ready in this world to enter at last another, and to meet there their God. Whereas we ought to teach, so it seems to me, that that, instead of being the principal use of the religion of Jesus Christ, is, in fact, its least; and that its purpose is not to help them to die right and to get into heaven after they die, but to help them to live right, and to get into heaven before they die. We should try to make them understand that there is a heaven here in this world, and a hell here in this world, and that those who at present are living in this world are in this heaven or this hell. And Jesus comes as light, we should try to make them understand, to show them how to get out of the hell which is here, or the hell-fire which is here, into the heaven which is here. The light with

which He comes, to be sure, with which He shone and shines, is the light of another world, declaring another world, disclosing another world, its reality, its power, its life, its discriminating judgments, its discriminating awards; the light with which He shines is the light of another world, but shining down upon and meant chiefly for this world. The sun is up in the sky, but it shines there for the earth; and the way in which to use that light of the sun is not to stand gazing up into the sky and acquiring thus a physical myopia, or shortsightedness, which prevents the gazers from seeing clearly the things immediately about them, but to walk on the earth in the light of the sun, and with which on the earth it shines. So, too, we should try to teach men and women to-day that the way in which to use the light of another world shining in Jesus Christ, is not to stand gazing up into the heavens and acquiring thus a kind of spiritual myopia, or shortsightedness, which prevents them from seeing clearly the forms of duty immediately about them, but to walk on the earth in the light of that other world which in Jesus Christ so brightly and beautifully appears.

This brings me to the consideration of another reason why so many people to-day are not interested in sermons. The feeling is more or less prevalent, not only among the few, but also among the many, that religion, so far as it relates to another world, is a subject upon which neither the preacher nor any one else can have any real and verifiable knowledge. It is admitted to be, indeed, a most important subject, and a most interesting subject, and yet of necessity unfathomable and unknowable. This necessary ignorance of the human mind upon the subject of religion has become in our time a philosophy or a science, or rather a nescience. And some of the most distinguished and influential thinkers in the field of modern thought are declaring that while there is some power back of phenomena, or some power pervading phenomena, transcendent or immanent, or both, from which they all proceed, and by which they all transpire, yet from the very nature of the human mind, its relatedness, its conditionedness, we do not know and cannot what that power is like, or what in itself it is. This philosophy, as I have already intimated, is not confined in its influence

to the philosophical few. Philosophy never is. It reaches the masses of the people, and is felt more or less by all. "Though I care but little," says the French writer, De Tocqueville, "about the study of philosophy as such, I have always been struck with the influence which it has exerted over the things that seem to be the least connected with it; and even over society in general, for abstract ideas, however metaphysical and apparently unpractical, penetrate at last, I know not how, into the realm of public morals." And so with that agnostic or nescient philosophy which is current now. Although in its metaphysical form it is intricate and abstruse, and beyond the popular grasp, it is not confined in its influence to the region of philosophy proper. It reaches the popular mind, it influences the popular judgment; and instead of dwelling apart like a star in the firmament of pure speculation, it is on the contrary shining with a light that leads astray (so at least I think) throughout the whole economy of the modern practical life. Or, changing if I may the simile, its spirit seems to be in the very air to-day, and everywhere we meet it, and everywhere we

breathe it. In colleges we meet it; in clubs and drawing-rooms, in papers and books, and magazines; in the poetry of the day; in the fiction of the day; in all the forms and phases of the literature of the day. And when from time to time the preacher's voice is heard speaking of God, and the soul, and the immortal life, and a world beyond this world; another voice seems to come back in a kind of antiphonal response, that these are matters, however interesting, upon which the preacher has no knowledge, or at least no verifiable knowledge; that these are problems which the preacher cannot solve, which nobody can solve, which are of necessity unsolvable, and that round and round in a circle we must forever go, and "ever more come out by the same door that in we went."

And so it has come to pass that the age in which we live is to a great extent on the subject of religion silent. In some respects, indeed, it is loud and noisy enough, and the battle of words is fierce, and the strife of tongues is great, and clamorous, and incessant. Possibly there never was a time, with the exception of the bright and palmy days of Athenian culture, when

there was so much mental inquisitiveness in society at large as there is in society now. And that mental inquisitiveness, which through paper and book and magazine, as well as through the medium of private and personal conversation, is causing itself to be heard, has contributed in no little degree to our mental enlightenment and enrichment. We are talking a good deal to-day on many and various subjects. We are talking, too, to some purpose; and in spite of the superficialness of much of our speech, we are, I think, as a rule talking wisely and well. But when it comes to the consideration of religious questions, there is a growing feeling upon the part of thoughtful people that it is better not to talk, that it is better just to be silent. I do not forget that there is a good deal of religious controversy, and discussion, and criticism going on; and that here, too, the strife of tongues and the battle of words is fierce. And yet despite this fact, which is obvious enough, there is a conviction stealing over the minds of many, like a creeping paralysis, that it is after all and for the most part simply a battle of words, in which they can make

no progress towards a permanent and final conclusion. What is settled to-day, they think, will be unsettled to-morrow; then the next day they will have to try to settle it again; and thus round and round in a circle of search they must go, in wandering mazes lost. It is just this feeling, I think, that drives so many people into the Roman Catholic Church. They are tired to death of searching and not finding, "of dropping buckets into empty wells, and growing old in drawing nothing up." They want to be settled and fixed in a way that will not have to be unsettled and unfixed. Their chief desire is for some kind of final faith. They are not, perhaps, particular, after a long and fruitless search, what kind of faith it is, if only it is positive and final. They think that Rome has it, because she so stoutly claims it, and so to Rome they go.

There is, however, another and larger and more thoughtful class to whom that kind of relief is no relief at all. They have almost made up their minds that there is no relief to be had. Religion presents a problem which they think cannot be solved. The philosopher cannot solve

it, they say, at least he has not solved it. The historian cannot solve it, the scholar, the theologian, the preacher cannot solve it; and while they are not indifferent to it, they have almost reached the conclusion that no conclusion can be reached, and that the best thing, therefore, which they can do is just to accept their limitations and make up their minds to be ignorant. That seems to me to be a characteristic of the present age. We cannot call it infidelity exactly; it is not infidelity. Or, if it be infidelity, it is very different from that old infidelity which formerly prevailed. That old infidelity, as has been said, was loud in its hate and defiance. This new infidelity, if we can call it such, is suave and serene in its ignorance. That old infidelity shrieked and screamed in its hatred of religion. This new infidelity simply shrugs its shoulders and goes on its way, and says, "You must excuse me; I really know nothing about it." And so it has come to pass, that while the age in which we live is noisy and loud enough on almost everything else, and talkative enough, and inquisitive enough, with a buoyant and hopeful inquisitiveness

which nothing stifles or stills, it is for the most part in religious matters quiet, and has but little to say. That is the temper, the philosophic temper or distemper, of the time; not only among the few, but also among the many, and who are made somewhat indifferent to the voice of the preacher by it.

And not only does it act negatively, it acts positively. It has an effect on conduct, and the agnosticism of the age accentuates and intensifies the secularism of the age. That is inevitable. For if the things of religion are past our finding out, then let us address ourselves, men say, or think, to the things which are not past our finding out; and in our ignorance of another and better world, let us make the best of this, and try the best we can to conquer, and overcome, and take possession of it. And so does life become chiefly a material thing, and its joys material joys, and its ambitions material ambitions, and its values material values. Its conception of greatness and power means chiefly material greatness and power: so many horse-power, or, if that has become an obsolete phrase in these days of electrical experiment, so many

volt-power. Its conception of growth and development means chiefly material growth and development, and facilities for getting about, or for going from place to place, and for talking at long distances, no matter how poorly it talks, and nearly all whose problems by rapid transit are solved. It is a conception of greatness which thinks it the highest pitch of civilization if, to use Mr. Matthew Arnold's phrase, it can only make its trains run every half hour between one little dismal village and another little dismal village, and carry messages to and fro of the dismal life in each. And that is the materialism which is upon us now. Not the materialism of the school merely, but the materialism of the street, or the materialism of the school producing the materialism of the street, the office, the shop, the bank, the railroad, the drawing-room, the counting-room. The blind man in the Gospel story whose sight had been restored, but not fully restored, looked out, we are told, upon the people who were pressing and moving about him, and saw them as trees walking. A poor and purblind vision of human life it was. But is it not the vision which so many seem to have of

human life to-day, as something chiefly physical, as something chiefly earthy, rooted in the earth, growing out of the earth, returning to the earth, receiving from the earth its substance, and having in the earth its home, as the trees of the forest have? The same vital forces are seen energizing in both, and feeding and nourishing both, except that in the case of our human life they have gone so far as to make the trees walk! Is it not so? Does it not seem so? And looking at the way in which so many regard the human beings about them, wherein, after all, does it differ so much from the way in which they regard the growing trees about them? They make of the tree a handle with which to do their work, and they make of the man a hand with which to do their work, and then they use them both, the handle and the hand; and it is often so hard to see where the handle stops, and where the hand begins. Or they gather from the tree the fruit, and they gather from the man the fruit, and both are good and useful because of the fruit they bear. And if sometimes the tree seems to be in their way they cut it down. And if sometimes

the man seems to be in their way, and to stop and stay their progress, or hinder and block their path, why then they cut him down. "Ah, the pity of it," they say; yes, the pity of it, and yet so it must be. It is the way of the world; it is the method of business; it is the law of trade. They cut him down and spare not, as the forester cuts the tree down and spares not.

Then look at the way in which those who are prosperous and better off regard the poor. Not recognizing chiefly and first of all the great and divine humanity in them, and trying to call it forth, but simply from their abundance ministering more or less to the immediate physical needs of those whom they seek to relieve, and stopping there and at that, and thinking that that is all, or thinking that that is enough, — as though their beneficiaries were not so different after all from the trees under which they rest in some city square or park, except that the trees have somehow learned to tramp. Again, look at the way in which the poor in turn so often regard the rich, as simply fruitful trees that have somehow come to be planted in better and finer soil, as fruit-

ful trees to be plucked, and by some ingenious and clever kind of appeal to be made to yield their fruit. And if sometimes, when the need is great, and the fruit is temptingly near, the garden is entered and spoiled, and the fruit plucked and robbed, why the crime, after all, is not so great, it is only like robbing trees. Or look once more at the way in which so many seem to regard themselves: and wherein does it differ from the way in which a tree, supposing it could talk, would regard itself? "I have come out of the earth," it would say, "and am simply a physical thing; and by and by I know, like everything else that is physical, I must crumble away, and perish, and go back again to the earth. In the mean time let me live a joyous physical life. Let me gather from earth, and air, and gases, and seas, and skies, and clouds and sunshine in them, a physical beauty and bloom. And even from the rocks beneath me, around whose forms I twine, and into whose fissures I send my gnarled and twisted roots, — yes, even from the rocks beneath me let me gather physical strength, that the storms may not destroy me, nor the tempests beat

me down, and that I may not fall and perish before my time." So would a tree talk if it could, and so indeed does many a man who can.

And that is the voice of to-day, or one of the voices of to-day. Everywhere we hear it, — in the social world, in the commercial world, in the political world. It is the voice of the man who speaks of the physical value of the age, of the physical prosperity of the age, and the physical wealth of the age, and speaks about it eloquently and fluently, as though it were all in all. It is the voice of the man who measures all human movements and opportunities, all human motives and methods, by a standard of physical excellence. And when you venture to say to him (not in the pulpit, where you are expected to say it, but out of the pulpit, where you are not expected to say it, and yet where you do say it, because you believe it) that the aim of a Christian man or a Christian people should be to seek first the Kingdom of God, and all those great, and pure, and lofty faiths and ideals which the Kingdom of God represents, he is smitten with dumbness or deafness, and does not know what

you mean exactly, or thinks you are an unpractical, doctrinaire sort of person, whose business it is to do, and to do well of course, some preaching work on Sunday, and not to have any part in the real and actual conduct of earthly things and affairs. That is the type of man, and that is the kind of voice which is so often seen and heard. A good enough type it is in a certain sort of way. I have no fault to find with it for what it is, but chiefly for what it is not. It is truthful, and upright, and honorable. It is honest, and pays its debts; and yet, withal, so earthy, so unspiritual, so unaspiring, except towards earthy things. It seems to have in its life so little use for God, except upon occasions, and those not very frequent; and if, as Dr. Martineau says, it should be told some day that God was dead, it would still go on pretty much as it does now. That, I say, is a very common type of humanity to-day, not in the sense of its being commonplace, but in the sense of its being prevalent. You will find it in the city; you will find it in the country; in the little country village; in the little country town, where life is supposed to

be (because of its pastoral environment) less sordid and mercenary, but where in fact you will find it just as hard and close ("nigh" I believe is the New England word), just as unresponsive to spiritual aims and ideals, if not indeed more so, than is the urban life.

And not only outside of the church do you find that kind of person; you find him in the church: as a regular attendant upon the services of the church, sitting perhaps in the front pew, and listening so attentively, so admiringly, to your eloquent discourse. A clerical friend of mine was preaching on one occasion from the text, "What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" He was a very gifted preacher, and was on that occasion particularly eloquent. And as he tried to show, in that rapt and fervid manner so characteristic of him, that the soul might be a present loss, a loss here and now, just as the mind might be a present loss, and that the wealth of the whole world would be in such a case to the man who had lost his soul, as to the man who had lost his mind, but a poor compensation, — one of the members of the church was

heard to say to a friend as he walked with him down the aisle at the close of the service, "Why, it is worth money to hear that man preach!" Here, indeed, was not indifference to preaching, but a certain kind of appreciation of it and fondness for it. And yet with that appreciation of preaching, because it was good and eloquent, there was also that dull, opaque imperviousness to preaching which prevented it from doing the good it was intended to do, and which knew no other or better way of expressing its appreciation than by rating it simply as a commercial commodity, and putting a commercial value upon it. And this, it seems to me, was not an exceptional case. And while there are not many who would express themselves perhaps with such a naïve and simple frankness, there are many and very many whom it represents. You will meet them by and by; you will preach to them; and they will listen to and admire you, and say to their friends how well you preach, and that they ought to come and hear you. And sometimes as you preach your soul will be all aglow, and your heart will be all on fire, and your very body will

tremble and quiver with the deep and strong emotion which is working in you, and you will think that surely now you have lifted up the people out of their spiritual apathy and dulness to seek first the Kingdom of God; and then you will take up the collection, and you will see how much you have lifted up — the people.

Now, I am not saying these things to discourage you, young gentlemen, I am saying them rather to encourage you by telling you about them beforehand, so that you may not be discouraged when hereafter you meet and experience them. The physician is not discouraged — recurring to the simile which I used at the beginning — when he knows what that sickness is which he is expected to treat and cure. Why, that is half the battle; and he cannot cure it unless he does know. Neither can you; and my purpose in this lecture has been to try to show you what that sickness is which you are to try to cure. It is not enough to say that it is sin. Sin is the source of all sickness. And yet there are different sicknesses, social as well as physical, and they are called by different names; and my pur-

pose has been to tell you something about the present social ailment, and to give you, as well as I could, a diagnosis of it. It has been, I know, a very partial and imperfect diagnosis, and has not covered all the symptoms of the case. But I have shown you some of the symptoms, the chief of which, and perhaps the most dangerous, from your point of view at least, is this: that the patient to whom you minister, and whom you hope to cure, does not always want to be cured, or believe that you can cure him, and therefore does not always call you in to prescribe. And yet the patient needs you, and what you have to give, or what you have to tell; your Christian message he needs. He cannot get on without it; or he cannot get on well without it. The men of to-day need religion as much as the men of yesterday. They do not need to have it presented to them in precisely the same manner, but they need it. They need it in temptation, in weakness and darkness and depression, in the conflict fierce and sharp of the modern competitive life. They need it to keep them pure; they need it to keep them clean, morally pure and clean; to keep in due control the passions of the

body, which without the restraint of religious hope and faith are apt, especially in these days of luxurious living, to break away and get dominion over them. And it is just as true now as it ever was, that the visible which does not rest on the invisible is apt to become the bestial. Scepticism concerning another world and sensuousness in this world are apt to go together. Sometimes, as in the case of a Don Juan, the sensuousness first, and the scepticism last. Sometimes, as in the case of a Faust, the scepticism first, and the sensuousness last. But whichever be the beginning, or whichever be the end, there is an affinity between them; and, not always, — it would be an exaggeration to say that, — but usually, they sooner or later meet; and the person, or the people, or the age which is not walking in this world in the light of a world beyond, is apt to become in time a coarse and sensuous age. Its pleasures will show it; its pictures will show it; its works of art will show it; its novels, its stories, its letters, its theatres, its operas, its conversations, its drawing-rooms will show it, and the realism of which it boasts will become sooner or later

the realism of impudicity and immodesty, of filth and mud! And with this realism of impudicity, which is coming to be somewhat symptomatic of our modern life, there is another and kindred symptom, namely, a feeling of sadness or weariness, and hardly worth-whileness, which the vision of the whole physical universe without the vision of God and another world does not and cannot relieve. "Praise the Lord, O my soul!" exclaims the Hebrew seer; "let all that is within me join to bless His holy name!" as with adoring wonder he looks at the starry skies, because he sees revealed the glory of God in the skies, while the greatest literary seer of the nineteenth century, looking at the same starry skies, says to his friend, Charles Lamb by his side, "Oh, mon, it is a sair sight!" So it is, cold, cheerless, overwhelmingly sad, if instead of revealing to us the glory of God and another world, day unto day uttering His speech, and night after night showing forth His knowledge; it only reveals the glory and greatness of man, of Newton and Copernicus and Kepler, and the other men of genius who have contributed to the ascertainment of its laws.

That, I say, is the sadness, in spite of all its enrichment and enlightenment, which seems to be resting so heavily on much of our modern life. As much, then, as ever, if not indeed more, men to-day need that light of another world which nearly two thousand years ago appeared in Jesus Christ. Quietly, gently, then it came, making no sound or noise, as the light always comes, —

> "It sparkles on the morning's million gems of dew,
> It flings itself into the shower of noon,
> It weaves its gold into the cloud of sunset,
> Yet not a sound is heard."

So it came then, and so it comes now, into the morning, noon, and sunset of human life on earth. And so, too, young gentlemen, it must shine through us, not chiefly by the noise and clamor of our theological strife and ecclesiastical contention or assumption, but by trying as well as we can to live and teach and preach as He lived and taught who was then, and is now, the Light and the Life of the world.

THE

PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE

THE
PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE

WHAT should be the message of the Christian pulpit to-day, and how should the preacher preach it?

These seem at first like simple, if not superfluous, questions, with only one answer to them. For it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which the preacher is sent to preach, and which, therefore, he must preach. That, and that alone, must be his word to men, must be to them his message. But suppose they are not interested in his message? Must he still continue to preach it? Surely he must, whether the people hear, or whether they refuse to hear. But suppose he can preach it in such a way as to make them hear, or make them willing to hear, ready and desirous to hear, ought he then to preach it in that way? That depends upon what the way is. If it is a right way, yes. If it is a wrong way, no. Preaching is not an end in itself, it is only a means to an end.

This distinction is, I fear, sometimes overlooked, and some there are who think, or who apparently think, that the great desideratum (if not the greatest and only) in the evangelization of the community, is simply to get the people into the way of going to church. And therefore they resort to many and various expedients for the accomplishment of that purpose, — and some of them, too, expedients of very questionable propriety, and others again not questionable at all, but cheap, vulgar, sensational, and unquestionably bad. The end, they seem to think, justifies the means; and the end here is simply going to church. But that is not the end. It is, as I have said, only a means to an end; and whether or not people should go to church depends a little, depends a good deal, on what happens after they get there.

I can conceive of cases where it would be better for people not to go to church, and where less harm would come to them by not going than by going. Have you not yourselves sometimes found it so? Have you not yourselves been made sometimes to feel, after you had been to some particular church, that what you heard

from the pulpit there had not only done you no good, but had actually done you harm, had irritated and exasperated you, and made you not better, but worse? I am sure you must have had such an experience as that; we have all had such an experience. And then, again, I am sure we have all had another and very different experience, and have felt as we listened to some men preach that we would like to listen to them often. They helped us so much; they inspired us; they seemed to touch and awaken what was best and purest, what was divinest in us, and to bring it out and express it, and to make it, for a time at least, ascendent and dominant in us. And why? What was the secret of their power? They may have been eloquent in the ordinary sense of the term, or they may not have been. They may have been learned and scholarly, or they may not have been. Nor did we always agree, perhaps, with what we heard them say. And yet, somehow, they always managed to make us feel as though they had a personal message for us. And so, indeed, it was a personal message for us, — simply because it was their own personal

message, a message which they themselves, in their deepest and innermost souls had found and felt to be good, had found and felt to be true; and which, therefore, produced an echoing response in us. It may have been some truth which we already knew, some very familiar truth; and yet as the preacher preached it, it seemed like something new and to have in it something new. And it *did* have in it something new; it had the preacher in it. He had made the truth his own. He had wrought it out, or fought it out, and won it for himself, and it was like a piece of himself. He was not simply defining some article of the creed. He was not simply disclosing and making known "the faith once delivered to the saints," nor telling us what had been "always and everywhere and by all received." He was telling us rather what he, by his own living thought, by his own living experience, had made his very own. It was the travail of his soul, and we saw it, and felt it, and were satisfied. This does not imply that the substance of his preaching was something new and different from what was in the creeds, or something new and different from what was in the theology

of the church to which he belonged; but it does imply that the truth which others had found, and which had been by them expressed in a theology or a creed, had also found him, and become incarnated in him. And it was his message to us, as well as the creed's message. And he, the preacher, the man, the living man and preacher, was living in the creed, and making the creed live, and breathe, and move, and talk. And as a living thing we heard it, and as a living thing we felt it, — not as truth in abstract form, but as truth in form concrete; as truth in flesh and blood. And that was his secret and power, or the secret of his power. It is always the secret of power. And when the pulpit loses that power it will have none, or none at least to differentiate it from other didactic agencies, and to make it a unique and distinctive force in the world.

Creeds are good. Theologies are good. But creeds however scriptural, and theologies however sound, are not of themselves enough. "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches" is not a formula that will exorcise the evil spirits and make the men who hear obedient to the faith. The creed,

they will say, we know, we have always known, and the theology we know; but who and what are ye?

Plagiarism in a preacher or any one else is generally and justly regarded as a very reprehensible thing; and when we find out (and we usually do find it out) that a man has been stealing the words of another, we have no further use for that man. But there is a plagiarism in theology as well as a plagiarism in language, and it is possible not only to steal from books, but also to steal from creeds. And the preacher who goes week after week to some venerable storehouse of accumulated doctrines, and opens the door, and takes some doctrinal treasure out, and gives it forth to the people, simply because it is the doctrine of his church, without having first, in some sense real and true, made that doctrine his own, is a plagiaristic preacher; and a plagiaristic preacher is not an effective preacher. And yet, it seems to me that much of our preaching to-day is of that plagiaristic kind. It is the preaching of things and doctrines which we have taken without buying, and which we accept and hold because others accept and hold them, — the school, the sect, the

party, the church to which we belong; and it is their faith we preach, and not ours. Perhaps we do not think so, but it is so more than we think; and that is the way in which it impresses those who hear us. They almost knew beforehand that we would say what we do say, because we are Baptists, or Congregationalists, or Episcopalians; and that is what Episcopalians, and Congregationalists, and Baptists usually say and are expected to say, and therefore they expected us to say it, and they are not disappointed in us. Neither are they much impressed, or helped, or quickened by us; and after a while they get tired of hearing us, and they do not come to hear us. And why should they? They know all that we have to say just as well as we do, — the scheme of salvation, sanctification, redemption, the new birth, the atonement, the doctrine of the divine decrees, the historic episcopate, the sacrament of baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and the decrees of the General Councils, and the inspiration of the Bible. They have heard it from their youth up, and know it all, I say, just as well as we do. And why indeed should they come, to hear it and know it some

more? And they do not come. And then it is that we are tempted to resort to those questionable expedients to which I have referred, such as advertising to preach on queer and fantastic texts and sensational topics, with a view to making them come, and which, though successful in drawing, perhaps, are not successful in edifying, and which cheapen the pulpit, and degrade it in the judgment of sober-minded people.

What then shall we do? Shall we give up doctrinal preaching, and try some other kind, not sensational, but at the same time not doctrinal? By no means. We cannot give it up. All preaching is doctrinal, and must be. It may not be doctrinal after the standard of the Thirty-nine Articles, or the standard of the Westminster Confession; but it is doctrinal, nevertheless, for doctrine means simply a faith, a conviction, a belief, and no man can preach without some faith or belief. What people mean, I think, when they say they do not care for doctrinal preaching is this: they do not care for that kind of doctrinal preaching which has in it more of the personality of Calvin, or Luther, or Athanasius, than it has of the preacher himself. Stolen

thunder is poor thunder; and so is stolen doctrine. It does not go off well; or it goes off by itself, simply making a noise, — "Sound and fury, signifying nothing;" and there is no lightning in it. It must have been an impressive thing to hear Martin Luther preach, or to hear Athanasius preach; and so it would be now. But it is not at all impressive to hear Lutheranism preached, or Athanasianism preached, — to hear a system preached. That is the kind of preaching to which the people object when they object to doctrinal preaching, and to which they ought to object.

The distinctive power of the pulpit is its personality. Not primarily what it says, though that, of course, is important, but who says it; otherwise a phonograph or a telephone would do. Truth, especially moral truth, is never very effective until we see it alive, — not truth in the fine discourse, or in the admirable essay, but truth in the soul, "that inmost centre," as Browning says, "where truth abides in fulness," and where, as from a throne, it speaks with authority to us. The orator who moves us most is the orator who is moved most; not the orator who displays the most emotion,

but whose own personality is kindled most by his thought. "If," says Horace to the sons of Piso, "you wish me to weep, there must be, first of all, a genuine grieving in you." "Whoever," says John Milton, "would not be frustrate of his desire to write well in poetry, must be a poet in life. Other things being equal, that will be the greatest and most effective verse, the soul of whose author is set on fire by the sentiment which it expresses." And as it is with poetry, and art, and oratory, and literature in general, so is it with preaching. Life responds to life. And how can the truth we preach be made quick and alive except by wrestling for it, or wrestling with it, and thus getting it into and making it a part of ourselves, so that we ourselves go with the truth we preach, and make it a personal force?

This was the power of Jesus. The truths He preached and taught were not, for the most part, new. Isaiah had taught them before Him, and Moses, and all the prophets. And not only by the prophets of Israel had many of those truths been taught, but by the prophets of Greece, India, and China, and the Wise Men of the East.

But when Jesus taught those truths they were old as though they were new. For He did not teach as the scribes, quoting texts and authorities. He was His own authority, and He spake with authority, — not with the authority of supernaturalism merely, but the authority of personality, a personality which had made those truths its own, and which gave them life, and power, and a confirmatory sanction that needed no other sanction. Surely we know what that means, though it is hard to describe it. We have often, however, felt it, — not in the case of the pulpit merely, but in matters outside of the pulpit. A person tells us something which he has heard from some one else, and that person again from some one else, — of an accident, perhaps, or a rescue, or some heroic deed, — and the information is trustworthy, and we believe it. But it is second, or third, or fourth-hand information, and not first-hand. And while perhaps it has gained something in the telling in the way of exaggeration, and is more verbose and rhetorical, it has also lost something. It has lost much; and never do we know how much until we hear him tell it who has himself seen it,

who was an eye-witness of it, and who gives to us his own eye-witness version of it. His words may be poor and few, and with stammering tongue may he speak; and yet his words have power, and his stammering tongue has eloquence. And something there is in his voice, his accent, his gesture, his emphasis, it is hard to say what it is, something perhaps in his soul, which touches the soul in us, and awakens the soul in us, and life responds to life, and we know not only that the man is speaking truth, but we feel the power of truth, and he speaks with authority to us.

This, I say, was the method of Jesus. He was not a mere teacher of the truth, He was an eye-witness of it. He saw it not merely through the medium of the observation of others, but through the medium of His own observation. He saw it, as it were, "first-hand;" not as it came from man, but as it came from God, as it came from God to Him, as the Spirit of God taught it, and made Him feel and know it, made it indeed His, or rather made it *Him*. And we, too, are to be eye-witnesses of the truth, as we see it in Him with our own eyes, with our own minds,

and hearts, and souls, with our own moral, and spiritual, and intellectual natures, and not as indirectly and obliquely we see it in Him through others. Here at least, it seems to me, whatever may be thought of it in other respects, is the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession true. Those who preach Jesus Christ must be themselves, as the apostles were, eye-witnesses of Jesus Christ. That is what constitutes apostleship, — eye-witnessing of Jesus Christ; and those who are the successors of the first apostles must succeed them also in that. They must be not only historical successors, but spiritual successors. The former kind of succession may be necessary in the judgment of some of us to preserve the polity of the Church, but the latter kind is necessary to preserve the pulpit of the Church, whether it be a Congregational or an Episcopal pulpit. That was the power of the first pulpit in Christendom, and it will be the power of the last. And from first to last men feel that power and respond to it. That, I presume, is what they mean when they say, as they often do, that they want practical preaching. Now, it is very difficult to define

practical preaching. No two persons, perhaps, would define it in the same way; for what would be practical to one man, in one set of circumstances, would not be practical to another man in another set of circumstances. It is, I believe, the author of "Ecce Homo" who says that practical preaching for him would be preaching on the doctrine of the Logos, — "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." That was what he would call practical preaching, and what most of those in our congregations would call very unpractical. And so, again, preaching on the forgiveness of enemies would not be practical preaching to the man who has no enemies, or who has no malice against them. Practical preaching for the old would not be practical preaching for the young. Practical preaching for the sick would not be practical preaching for the well. Practical preaching for the rich and comfortable would not be practical preaching for the poor and uncomfortable. It is not easy to define practical preaching.

It depends so much on the time, and the place, and the congregation, which is generally very much mixed, and a score of other things which the preacher cannot well have in mind when he is preparing his sermon. What men really mean when they say they want practical preaching is that they want *personal* preaching, — preaching that has in it the personality of the preacher. Perhaps they would not put it that way, but that is the way I put it; for that, it seems to me, is practical preaching, and the best kind of practical preaching. Nor does it matter much what the particular theme is, — the doctrine of the Logos, or the doctrine of the atonement, or the doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries. The people, as they hear, are stirred and kindled by it, because the preacher himself is stirred and kindled by it. It is his life going into them. And, again, life responds to life, and enthusiasm to enthusiasm.

That is the distinctive thing in preaching. It involves, of course, the giving of instruction. But it involves something more than the giving of instruction, for that, as we have seen, can be given in other

ways. With the giving of instruction there should be the giving of life, — the preacher's life, his moral and spiritual life, and intellectual life, — as the Spirit of God has awakened his moral, and spiritual, and intellectual life.

I spoke in the last lecture of the materialistic temper of modern society, and how it is disposed to judge and measure all things by standards of material value. That is the ailment which the Christian minister to-day must try to cure. And how must he try to cure it? Must he try to show the wrongness or the falseness of materialism by a philosophic discoursing about it? Must he be forever dragging what he believes to be a better and truer philosophy up the pulpit stairs, and discussing before miscellaneous congregations, in philosophic phrase and dialect, that subtle, agnostic teaching which is to-day so penetrating and pervasive, and which is doing so much to undermine the spiritual foundations of life, and destroy its spiritual ideals? No, I do not think so; although I think he should be competent to do it at proper times and in proper places, and that his training is sadly deficient if he is not

competent to do it. But for the preacher in the pulpit there is a more excellent way. There, it seems to me, he is not so much to talk in a philosophic way about spiritual forces and entities, as to be a kind of spiritual force and entity himself; thus touching, and quickening, and making real the spiritual forces and entities in those to whom he speaks. This is not an easy thing to do; and because it is not easy we are sometimes tempted to do what is not so difficult, and that is to try to meet a philosophic or practical materialism with an ecclesiastical materialism. Here, again, the Roman Catholic Church shows its knowledge of human nature. It represents God to the eye, or professes to do so at least. It makes Him visible in actual flesh and blood upon the altar. It gives Him shape and form for men to see and behold with physical sight and vision, and in the act of beholding to worship and adore. That is the charm, to the devout Roman Catholic worshipper, of the sacrifice of the Mass, that it makes Jesus Christ live and die before his very eyes. And the solemn scene that was enacted upon Calvary eighteen hundred years ago is re-enacted

for him with all its sad and tragic realism in the midst of the modern world. "To me," says John Henry Newman, "nothing is so consoling, so thrilling, so uplifting, so overcoming, as the Mass. I could attend it forever and not be tired; for it is not a mere form of words, it is a great action, the greatest action that ever can be on earth. It is not the Invocation merely; but, if I dare use the word, the 'Evocation,' the calling out, the manifestation in visible form to the physical eye of that Eternal One becoming actually present upon the altar in our flesh and blood, before whom angels bow and devils tremble!" That is what it meant to him; and although my whole nature revolts at the materialism of the doctrine that underlies it, I think I can understand how — not upon a cultivated mind like Newman's, but upon uncultivated or half cultivated minds — it can have such wonderful power, just because it is so appealing to the physical senses.

There is another phenomenon in our modern society which points in the same direction, which calls itself by the name of Spiritualism, but which is in fact the grossest materialism. It is a worse form of

materialism even than that which underlies the doctrine of the Mass, disclosing such an utter want of spirituality on the part of those who accept it that they are not able apparently to believe in the existence of spirit unless they can see and touch it, and hear it "mutter" and talk. And what a commentary it is upon the materialistic temper of modern life that so many otherwise sensible people to-day should accept a sign so puerile to strengthen their wavering faith in the reality of a spiritual world, and to save themselves from the sheer despair of having no faith at all.

The same materialistic method is implicit, I think, in much that goes by the name of Ritualism, which is the attempt to make religion more believable and realizable by making it more appealing to the physical senses. It is the attempt, when rightly interpreted, so it seems to me, to cure a worldly materialism by an ecclesiastical materialism. But there is in my judgment another and more effective way, and that is for the preacher, as the exponent of religion, to become himself in his preaching the expression of a spiritual force, and the embodiment of a spiritual life,

whose presence thus in the pulpit will awaken the spiritual life which is latent in those who hear him. This may seem to some of you a vague kind of method, but it is a real one. Do we not know what it is to come into the consciousness of new worlds, and the possession of new ideals and faiths, by coming into contact with the living presences which embody them? We stand before the patriot who has done some great unselfish, and patriotic act, and for the time at least we believe there is nothing more real and more admirable than patriotism. We stand before the soldier who, with a record of courage, of fine and splendid courage, has just come home from the wars, and for the time at least we believe there is nothing so real and admirable as courage. Pure and unalloyed goodness, nobleness, unselfishness, or disinterestedness of motive and conduct, — perhaps as a rule we do not much believe in these things, because as a rule, perhaps, we do not much see them. But some day we do see them; we stand in their presence, we look up into their eyes: they speak to us, and we hear them; they touch us, and we feel them; and we bow and

kneel before them, and ask them to give their benediction to us.

Now, in some such way as that must the preacher of Jesus Christ try to bring the people to whom he preaches into the consciousness of that high and pure ideal life which Jesus Christ was, which Jesus Christ is. That life must be in his preaching. And the people to whom he preaches must feel it in his preaching, and, coming thus into contact with it, they will for a time at least believe in the reality of it. Ordinarily, and for the most part, they are in very close contact with things of a different kind, with material things and affairs, and they become so absorbed in those material things and affairs that they find it hard to realize other things and affairs. We all know, again, what that is. How we can become so deeply engrossed at times in some one line of conduct, or some one line of thought, as not to see, or hear, or know what is going on about us, — the singing of the birds on the trees, the forms of people passing by on the streets, the striking of the clock on the stairs: we are not conscious of any of these things. They are real, and true, and are going on about us,

but we are not conscious of them; we are conscious only of that one thing which is going on so vehemently and engrossingly in us, until by some sharply asserting and interruptive influx of life from the world which lies outside, that part of our nature which had been asleep is quickened and awakened in us. So, I say, must the pulpit, in order to have and perform a distinctive mission to-day, become somehow a power which shall break in upon the engrossing secular life of men and women, and make them feel and become more spiritually alive. That, it seems to me, is what people go to church for. They want to feel themselves more alive, to be lifted up and exalted to some higher plane of life. Then with that warmer glow of life in them, and from that higher plane, they will see and know of themselves what their practical duties are, and will have more disposition to perform them.

That kind of preaching, too, as I have already said, is authoritative. It authenticates itself. For whether or not the people who hear believe what the preacher says, they believe *him*. They cannot help

believing him, and they cannot help feeling and responding to him, and he does them good and helps them. What did he say? Well, they are not quite sure that they know what he said. Did he not say such and such a thing, and surely you do not mean to tell us you believe that? Yes, now that they come to think about it they remember he did say that, or something like it, and it is true that they do not believe it. But then, *he* believed it. Ah, how much he believed it! How with his whole heart, and soul, and mind he believed it! How he seemed to be on fire with it; and it was, they say, the *fire* they perceived, and not the fuel that kindled it. They almost forget what the fuel was, — at least they did not notice it much at the time.

I am interested in a Rescue Mission in New York, and go there at times to speak to the men. A poor, forlorn, degraded, almost helpless and hopeless, set of men they are. They have lost their character, they have lost their reputation, they have lost their self-respect, they have lost everything except their souls, or except that soul-instinct which, no matter how down-

trodden, and buried, and covered up, is in every man, and never can be lost. I find it very hard to reach and touch those men. But there is a little woman who goes there sometimes, who was once a member of the Salvation Army, and whose words have much more power and effectiveness than mine. And to her they always listen with a rapt and eager listening; and often, as I have heard her talk, have I seen those hard, stolid faces lighten, and kindle, and glow, as though from beneath the rubbish their souls were coming out! But not only does she touch and move and quicken them, she also touches me as very few preachers do. Her theology is not mine; it is in some respects very different from mine. Many of the things which she says seem to me to be puerile and crude; and when I come to think of them afterwards, I am sure I do not believe them, and could not believe them. But *she* believes them, and her whole personality seems to be saturated with them, and to quiver and tremble with them; and the earnestness with which she speaks is not simulated and feigned, but most intensely real. And it is that real, unfeigned, and

deep personal earnestness which touches me as well as others, and makes me more alive.

Now, I do not wish to be understood as saying or implying for a moment that it makes but little difference what one preaches, if only he believes it very much, and is very much in earnest about it. It does make a difference, and a very great difference. I shall have something to say about that in the next lecture. Truth is truth always, and is always different from error; and our business is to preach truth, and nothing but truth. But the point I am making is this: that the distinctive power of the pulpit is not the mere preaching of truth, but truth so preached as to be preached in personality; truth made living, made life; and that even when it is not truth that the pulpit preaches, or not truth as we apprehend it, it may sometimes, and does, become in the pulpit a power, and a spiritual power, which awakens a spiritual power or a spiritual life in us. Is not this the reason why so much of the homiletical literature of the past fails to-day as we hear it to move or impress us much? It was impressive at the time, but

it is not impressive now. It was impressive to those who heard it, but it is not impressive to us who are only able to read it. "We are often amazed," says the author of a recent "Life of St. Francis," "on reading the memoirs of those who have been great conquerors of souls, to find ourselves remaining cold; finding in them all no trace of animation or originality. It is because we have only a lifeless relic in the hand. The soul is gone. The written word can no more give an idea of it than it can give an idea of a sonata by Beethoven or a painting by Rembrandt." Yes, the soul is gone; and that which made it power, so distinctively and effectively power, we cannot know and feel; and to us who only read it, it is not power.

I caution you, therefore, young gentlemen, against the tendency to introduce into your sermons long quotations or extracts from the sermons of those who were thought, and justly thought in their day, to be such eloquent preachers. Eloquent, indeed, those passages were when spoken by them, because by them they were spoken; and while you can put their words into

your speech, you cannot put *them* into your speech; and the only true way to imitate or to be like them is to be like them in being yourselves. God spoke to them, let God speak to you, in, through, and by you. Then will your message be, as theirs was, a personal message to men; and you will become as eloquent as it is possible for you to become. Every man in this world is different from every other man; and every preacher is, or ought to be, different from every other preacher, and cannot be a true and effective preacher unless in some respects he is. Copy, therefore, no one. Take no one for your model. In that way failure lies. "The great man," says Emerson, "is the man who reminds us of no other man." And the great or the greatest preacher is the man who reminds us of no other preacher. He may preach the same truth which other preachers preach; and yet, coming through his personality, his mind, his soul, his heart, he will not see it and feel it exactly as others see it and feel it. Nor will he say it like them; and while it is the same, it is the same with a difference, and it is that difference which cannot be imitated, which

cannot be reproduced, which makes him the great preacher that he is. And it is just so far, not as we resemble but as we do not resemble him, that we too become great up to our capacity of greatness.

This, then, is the substance of what I have been trying to say: that in order to make our preaching of the Christian Gospel effective, it must be the Gospel as it speaks through us, through our own personal knowledge and personal conquest of it. And yet how hard it is to have it so speak to-day! The truth of the Gospel comes to us cut and dried and labelled, and as such we take it, and preach it, and then so often find, and so often wonder, that it does not have, as we preach it, the life and power of truth. The reason of it is this: that while it is truth, it is not *life*, or not truth alive. We have not made it ours, as those who first formulated it made it theirs. And it is not easy to make it ours, just because it was they, and not we, who formulated it. And therefore to us it is apt to be only, or chiefly, a formula. As a formula we receive it; as a formula we preach it; and, as a formula, it has no power. But perhaps a change is coming.

God rules in all ages, and is ruling now. And in that sceptical and critical thought which seems at present to be shaking, if not undermining, the traditional faith of some, or rather that somnolent acquiescence which has been misnomered faith, God in His providence may be preparing the way for making it again, as once it was, a living and personal faith. And looking at, and feeling that spirit of question and doubt which is so prevalent now, may we not say, with the Pope in Browning's "Ring and the Book," —

"What if it be the mission of this age
To shake this torpor of assurance from our creed,
Re-introduce the doubt discarded, bring
The formidable danger back we drove
Long ago to the distance and the dark.
No wild beast prowls now round the infant camp;
We have built wall, and sleep in city safe.
But if some earthquake try the towers that laugh
To think they once saw lions rule outside:
And man stands out again, pale, resolute, prepared to die,
Which means, alive at last!"

Yes, and the pulpit alive at last; and having been made alive by having been

made to seek and win again for itself "That old faith in the thing grown faith in the report," and as a new and personal conquest to preach and body it forth. Then will it be a power, a unique and distinctive power. Then will its word and message be a word and message of power. Then, even in an un-ideal and materialistic age will it draw all men unto it; for the truth which then it will preach will be the truth alive. Life will touch and appeal to life, and life will respond to life. Men will not then be indifferent, cannot then be indifferent, to the pulpit's living voice; but listening to that voice, not from a sense of duty, but from a sense of need, they will be helped and quickened by it. Material treasures and joys will still be treasures and joys. Men will continue to seek them and to find them. But something else will they find; and the living voice of the pulpit will help them to find their souls. A new ideal will gradually dawn through the agency of the pulpit on an un-ideal age. A new ambition through the voice of the pulpit will be awakened in it. A new light will seem to come, as when the morning has followed the night, and the dark-

ness been driven away; as when, over the eastern hills —

"Forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed
Rose reddened; and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds; grew bold, then overflowed
the world."

THE PREACHER AND OTHER MESSAGES

THE PREACHER AND OTHER MESSAGES.

IN his interesting and admirable book on "Social Evolution" Mr. Benjamin Kidd has shown with great force and clearness of statement what a large and important factor religion has been in the growth and development of society. That indeed is the one thing which everywhere we see, and which I think hereafter we shall continue to see. Those who believe that the future will emancipate man from religion are poor readers, it seems to me, both of the future and of human nature. Mr. Herbert Spencer is not generally regarded as a religious apologist; and Mr. Herbert Spencer has put himself on record as having explicitly stated that as knowledge grows, and deepens, and widens more and more, so will the religious sentiment grow; and that the man of the future, more cultivated, more highly developed

than now, will be more religious than now.

While, however, all that is true, that man is so essentially a religious creature and can never get rid of religion, it must also be confessed and deprecated as true that religion has not diffused itself throughout the whole man, throughout the whole body of his conduct and thought; and that while it has been and still is an active force in social growth and development, it might be and ought to be more active than it is. There is still too much of a break or chasm in man's life. There is a lack of unity in it. He is not religious always, but only religious at times; and much of his life seems to be, and seems to be of necessity, beyond the sphere of religion. Now, there is something wrong about this; for religion should touch, and pervade, and compass all the life, and not simply a part of it. And why does it not? Perhaps we preachers are in a measure responsible for it. I think we are; and that in our zealous effort to strengthen and establish religion and make its dominion more, we have in fact narrowed it, and made its dominion less. Of course we

have not meant to do this, but nevertheless we have done it. And how? We have drawn the line too sharply between the secular and the religious, or rather have helped to make an impassable gulf between them, so that those who would pass from the religious to the secular cannot; neither can they pass to the religious who would come from the secular. We have made this distinction in the first place with reference to truth, and have been disposed to teach, or at least to give the impression, that what we call religious truth is something essentially different from what we call secular truth.

The difference we say is this: religious truth is something which God has revealed, while secular truth is something which man has discovered. Our object in making this distinction is to give to religious truth a more authoritative investiture, and to make men more disposed to hearken to and obey it; because it is God's truth, the truth which God has revealed. In emphasizing, however, the sacredness of the truth which we call religious, the truth which is in the Bible, we have diminished the sacredness of all other truth, the truth which is

not in the Bible, and have made it something secular. In their apprehension, therefore, of that other truth, men very naturally have become secularized, and have not been made to feel that in touching that other truth they were touching the garment of God, as we touch His garment who move within the sphere of the truth which God has revealed. They are outside of that sphere, we think; and while what they say may be true, it is not as true as our truth, and must be subordinated to our truth, because our truth is revealed truth, and theirs is not revealed. And so we become jealous of them, and they become jealous of us; and there is friction, and irritation, and antagonism between us. And we have the singular spectacle and the sad one, of men loving truth with an earnest and passionate love, searching for it, devoted to it, ready, if need be, to die for it, as they have died for it, and yet standing apart and separate from Him whose Kingdom is the kingdom of truth, whose weapon is the weapon of truth, whose voice is the voice of truth, and who said before the governor in the judgment hall, "To this end was I born;

for this purpose came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

It is, I say, a sad and singular spectacle, and one that ought not to be. And why is it? Are not we ourselves in a measure responsible for it by making a distinction in theory which does not in reality exist? Truth in the Bible is not distinguished from truth outside of the Bible by the fact that it alone is a revelation of God, that it alone is sacred, that it alone is religious. That is a wrong distinction. *All* truth is sacred. All truth is religious, and it is all a revelation of God. To think or teach otherwise is to deny the possibility of any revelation at all. It is to deny that the truth of the Bible is a revelation of God. Or rather it is to deny and destroy the only philosophic ground upon which we can consistently maintain that it is a revelation of God, and to go over at once to the enemy, — that positive school of thought which declares that God, being absolute and infinite, and because infinite and absolute, cannot make a revelation of Himself to the related and the finite, and must forever remain to us unknown and unknowable. We, on the other hand, be-

lieve that God can reveal himself and does reveal Himself, that He is essentially a revealing God. That is the crux of all our philosophic contentions. Can the Unknown Infinite become known to the finite? Can God reveal Himself? And here, too, is the essential difference between the religious and the non-religious mind, — one believing that God is a revealing God, and the other believing that God is not a revealing God.

Whenever, therefore, we teach with reference to any body of truth, with reference to the truth of the Bible that it alone is divine revelation, we fall, with reference to all other truth, into the very error which we deprecate. We teach by implication, as far as that other truth is concerned, precisely what non-religion teaches, what Positivism teaches, namely, that God is not a revealing God, and that that other truth is something which man by his own unaided effort has discovered, and which, therefore, has to be looked at in connection with man, as revealing the glory of man, and not as something rather which the revealing God, working in and through man, has revealed to man's apprehension. May we not be-

lieve, however, that God was once long ago a revealing God, but that He is not now a revealing God? Yes, we may believe it; but to do so is to believe in a changeable God, and not in a God who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, without variableness or shadow of turning. And if we believe in a changeable God, who is not now and always a revealing God, we make it difficult to believe that He was ever a revealing God; because we surrender that philosophic first premise by which alone we can prove it, namely, that God is essentially a revealing God, and substitute in its place that philosophic first premise of the Positive school of thought which declares that God is essentially a non-revealing God.

Do not misunderstand me. The truth which the Bible contains could not have been reached by the unaided faculties of man. That of course I believe, and would stoutly maintain. But neither, again, could the truth which lies outside of the Bible. That, too, is divine revelation. The method of the revelation may not be the same. It may be, if you please, less immediate and direct: those are questions

which I am not now considering. My point is this, that it is divine revelation, and must be regarded as such, as the logical sequence of that fundamental conviction in which religion finds its *raison d'être*, that God is essentially a revealing God, and that the whole of our human nature in its intellectual activities, as well as in its moral and spiritual endeavors, is quickened by and dependent upon, and has its being in this immanent and revealing God. What, then, is the difference between truth in the Bible and truth outside of the Bible? Not that one is revealed and the other not revealed; they are both revealed. Neither is it that one is more authoritative than the other; for truth can have no higher authority than the fact of its being truth. The difference is this: partly, if you please, that they are revealed in different ways; partly that they are different kinds of revealed truth; and partly, also, that in the Bible we have the revealed truth of God moving more and more towards a full embodiment, and in Jesus Christ made flesh. We see it not as theory there, not as an abstract principle, we see it there as life. It is

clothed in a living soul, in a living form and body; it speaks in a living voice. The Word of God is made flesh and glorified by an incarnation, saying, not *here* or *there*, or *this* or *that* is truth, but saying, *I* am Truth; look unto *Me;* come unto *Me;* follow *Me.* Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.

But suppose there should be some conflict between the truth within and the truth without the Bible? Why, the very asking of the question is the answering of it. Truth is truth, and God's truth, and God's revealed truth, and can no more be in conflict with itself than God can be in conflict with Himself. That there is indeed, or may be, a conflict more or less, between certain propositions which by the different teachers have been put forth as truth, I do not of course deny, and in the face of facts could not. Those whose business it is to study the truth of God contained outside of the Bible may be at times mistaken in what they say and teach, as they have been mistaken; and we should be slow and cautious in accepting what they say, because it may not be true; but we should also be slow and cautious in

rejecting what they say, because it may be true. Let us wait and see: not antagonistically, but sympathetically; and let us be willing that they should go on and do their work in their own proper way. And what is their way? It is to put forth at times new and tentative hypotheses, not as being themselves positive statements of truth, but simply as working theories with a view to ascertaining how well or ill they work. If it is found that they work well, and continue to work well, then by that well-working they are validated and confirmed. But if it is found that they work ill, and continue to work ill, then by that ill-working they are invalidated and set aside, or changed somewhat and corrected. In the mean while, then, I say, let us wait and see whether they work well or whether they work ill. And let us give to those who are working them a hearty and appreciative encouragement. Let us cause them to understand that we are with them and not against them, and that if, as the result of their working, their brave and patient working, they should at last disclose and make known to us some truth not known by us before, — then, no matter through

what medium it comes to us, no matter what surrender of cherished belief it costs us, we will submit to it, and bow to it, gladly, gratefully, reverently, as the truth which our God, our revealing God, has through them revealed.

Above all things, let us not seem to put ourselves in an attitude of hostility to those who are simply trying with an apparently honest purpose to bring to light more and more the hidden things of darkness, and to find out what is true. Let us be careful not to create the impression that we are afraid of truth, of any truth, and that we are not in full sympathy with those who are seeking truth. Let us be willing, therefore, to forego the pleasure, so appealing to the clerical mind at times, of refuting so successfully in the presence of sympathetic congregations those vain and deluded men of scientific research, who remain, alas, so insensible to our refutation of them, and still go on with their searching. And let them go on with their searching. What we hold we believe is true; and because it is true we hold it; and because it is true we teach it. But we hold not all the truth. "The first man

knew her not perfectly, no more shall the last find her out. Her thoughts are more than the sea, and her counsels profounder than the great deep." There is more yet to come; there is more yet to appear. And to all who are honestly trying to make it come and appear, the voice of the Christian pulpit should be always ready to give and speak an encouraging word; and to claim and maintain for them that same liberty of prophesying which it claims to-day for itself. In the exercise of that liberty they may make mistakes, as we do, and go wrong; but without the liberty to go wrong there can be no liberty to go right; and it is better to run the risk of mistaking the false for the true, than, by not running the risk, to fail to find the true.

Let us then be willing to give, and to let it be understood that we are willing to give, the fullest and broadest liberty to all those persons to-day who, in spheres outside of the Bible, are trying to find the truth. Let that be our attitude towards them, — not inimical, but friendly; not at variance with them, but at one with them; believing that through them God can also speak, and does at times speak, and that

the truth which they utter is not therefore secular, but sacred and religious, the truth which God reveals.

Is that then the truth which we as Christian ministers are called upon to preach? That does not necessarily follow. I should say that as a rule we are not called to preach it. Truth, to be sure, is one, and not two, or many; and yet there are many kinds, and phases, and forms of truth, like the many notes of music, or the many hues of color, which, though connected, are different. The truth of geology is in harmony with the truth of astronomy, but it is not the same as the truth of astronomy. Nor does it follow that because one teaches geology he should also teach astronomy. It rather follows that he should not; and that if he does undertake to teach it, he will not teach it well. The blade (to use Lord Macaulay's simile) which is intended to serve the double purpose of a carving-knife and a razor, will not carve so well as a knife, nor shave so well as a razor; and the bakery which should also be a bank, would be likely to make poor bread, and to discount bad bills.

The tendency of civilized society is a tendency towards specialization; and the specialized task of the preacher is not to try to preach all the truth which God has revealed (though it is all true, and God has revealed it), but to preach that truth which God has revealed in Jesus Christ; and the less he has to do with the preaching of what is called scientific truth, the better, I think, will it be both for the preaching and the science. His preaching will be touched or affected more or less by that scientific truth. It cannot help being affected by it. And more or less incidentally and collaterally and as a kind of side light it will show itself in his preaching. But he is not, in my judgment, and as I interpret his office, called upon to preach it, any more than he is called upon to preach against it. He is called upon chiefly to preach the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ; and through his own personal absorption and assimilation of it to make that truth a power in the lives of those who hear him. That is his special task, and that is task enough, — hard enough, great enough, sublime enough to tax him to the utmost, and to give him

employment enough. And yet, while performing the task of preaching the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ, let him not forget that there is other truth, and that there are other teachers of truth. Is his task sacred? So is theirs. Is his truth revealed? So is theirs. Is he a minister of God? So are they. Is he a prophet of God? So are they. And the work which they do is religious work, as the work which he does is religious work; because it is not chiefly the work which is done by them, but the work which is done by God, or done by God through them. And the verdict of the heart is a true one, when, looking back over the ages and seeing the beautiful things which have been brought to light by literature and art, and the wonderful things which have been disclosed by physical or metaphysical and philosophic research, and the great results and principles which have been evolved in the progress and conflict of the nations, and the historic march of events, it is moved to say as it sees, not what hath man, but "what hath God wrought."

Instead, therefore, of making a distinction between sacred truth and secular, let

us claim all truth as sacred, because all truth is God's, and comes from God, and is doing God's work in the world.

And the claim which we make for truth let us also make for life; and teach that life, though engaged in secular duties and affairs, is still a sacred thing; and that the secular sphere in which it moves is still a sacred sphere; and that the secular work which there it does is still a sacred work. Jesus Christ is there in that secular sphere, or may be there. For what is Jesus Christ? Not merely the name of a person who lived on the earth some eighteen or nineteen hundred years ago, and then died, and was buried, and rose again, and went off somewhere into some invisible world. Jesus Christ is the name of the Life on earth of God; and that Life of God we find upon the earth to-day in the hearts and souls of men. The image of God is on them, and cannot be effaced. The Life of God is in them, and cannot be destroyed. And every now and then, at unexpected times, and in unexpected ways, gleams and flashes of it appear in secular things and affairs. And the name of that Life of God in the hearts and souls of men is Jesus Christ,

in whom it fully appeared without let or hindrance, without spot or blemish, and of whom it was said in consequence, that He was the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person.

Ordinarily, however, men do not feel that the life of God is in their secular sphere of conduct. Christian men do not feel so; and when they go from the duties which they perform in church on Sunday to the duties which await them in the office or shop on Monday, they seem to themselves to be going away from Jesus Christ, from a territory which is religious to a territory which is not religious. They may be religious in it; to some extent they are religious in it, many of them, perhaps most of them. But the territory itself they feel is not religious, but common, worldly, and secular; and that they while in it are doing common and worldly things. And they get into the habit of doing them in a common and worldly way, according to the way of the territory, according to the rules of the territory, which is not a religious territory, and whose rules, therefore, are not religious rules. The religious rules belong only to the religious territory,

which is back there, somewhere. They were in it for a while on Sunday, or at the week-day prayer-meeting; and there, indeed, in that religious territory they observed religious rules. But out here, in the great, broad, busy non-religious territory, those religious rules do not work or apply, and are not expected to apply.

And so we have the spectacle of men, good and true, observing one kind of rule at one time, and another kind of rule at another time. On Sunday they are religious, and seek first the Kingdom of God. That is what Sunday is for. On Monday they are worldly, and seek first their own kingdom. That is what Monday is for. On Sunday they believe in unselfishness, and altruism is the rule. On Monday they believe in selfishness, and egoism is the rule. On Sunday they believe in trying to win their souls by sacrificing themselves. On Monday they believe in trying to win the world by sacrificing others. Nor do they think that in doing this they are doing anything wrong. They are simply living in two territories, or going from one territory to another, like a person who goes from a monarchy

to a republic, and observing in each the rules, and laws and manners of each. In the religious territory they are religious, and conform to religious customs. In the worldly territory they are worldly, and conform to worldly customs.

Now, such a conception of religion and of religious observance is a very poor one, stunted, dwarfed, or abortived; and yet it is the conception which so many seem to have. Not only do so many laymen seem to have it, but so many clergymen; and so many laymen perhaps because so many clergymen. Like priest, like people. And their preaching shows that they have it. They exhort their congregations, for instance, not to give so much of their time and strength to the world, and the doing of things that are worldly, but to give part of it to God and to the doing of things that are religious. By which they mean the things that are marked and labelled religious, that have a religious stamp, a religious name upon them, such as teaching in Sunday-school, or attending the weekly prayer-meeting, or the sewing society, or the Dorcas society, or the benevolent society, or the missionary society, —

the things that are connected more intimately with the activities of the church. And thus they give the impression that religion is a sort of side issue on the earth, or a little sphere of conduct and activity by itself, and that there is another and larger sphere of conduct into which religion, and religious laws and rules are not expected to enter, or not to enter much; and into which, in consequence, they do not enter much, and where other laws and rules which are not religious, which are not the laws and rules of the Kingdom of Christ, prevail.

Now, I believe thoroughly in that kind of religious work which is known as "church work," or parish work, — Sunday-schools, prayer-meetings, benevolent societies, etc. I believe that the Christian people in our congregations should take hold of that work and help it. That surely is religious work, and very important religious work. I shall have something to say about that before I finish this course of lectures. But there is another kind of religious work which seems to me to be still more important. I mean the work which is done in what is usually des-

ignated as the secular sphere of conduct, — politics, society, business. And the men who are in that so-called secular sphere should be made to feel that God is also in it, and that they are in it with God and for God, who is above all, and through all, and in all. They should be made to feel that they are in it to do God's work in the world, in God's way, according to God's rules, as Jesus Christ has revealed them. They should be made to feel, therefore, that all the activities in which they there engage, or the things which there they do, are religious things and activities. This will make them, not less inclined, but more, to participate in and do those other religious things, those other religious duties, such as teaching in Sunday-schools, attending prayer-meetings, and helping and relieving the poor, for which the parish stands. Naturally, easily, gladly, will they pass from one kind of religious work to another kind of religious work. There will seem to be no break in it. And if you want to get your congregations (when the time comes for you to have congregations) more interested in the religious work which is going on in your parishes, you

must first get them to understand (it is a difficult thing to do, for it is always a difficult thing to get people out of ruts), that religious work is something which is going on all the time. You must first make them realize that in this world which God made and owns, there never was meant to be any other kind of work except religious work, and that the distinction which has been made between the religious and the secular is a false and misleading distinction. First get them to understand that, I say; then your Sunday-schools will be well equipped, your prayer-meetings will be well attended, your missionary and benevolent societies will prosper and flourish as you would have them flourish. Yes, and other things will come in time in your parishes which will also prosper and flourish.

We hear the fear expressed in some quarters to-day that the minister of Jesus Christ is giving too much of his time to the development in his parish of secular works and activities, and is himself in danger of becoming secularized. Instead of devoting so much of his energy and strength to the starting of guilds and clubs, — girls' clubs, men's clubs, boys' clubs, —

and coffee-houses, and gymnasiums, and dispensaries, and kindergartens, and day-nurseries, and loan bureaus, and employment bureaus, he should, it is said, confine himself more strictly to his proper work, which is the work of preaching the Gospel. Now, if this criticism simply means that the work of preaching the Gospel is for the Christian minister, the first and paramount work, then I accept and indorse it; for that is what I believe, and have already said. And if the doing of those other things to which I have referred interferes with his preaching, then in my judgment he should not try to do them. If he cannot do both, let him not try to do both, but only to do the one which is in importance first. But if the criticism means or implies that in doing those things in his parish which are commonly called secular he is not doing things which are in reality religious, then it seems to me that the criticism is not well taken, and is calculated to give a conception of religion which impoverishes and enfeebles it, and makes it so much less, and so much less sublime, than what it really is or what it was meant to be. For religion, accord-

ing to the Christian conception of it, does not mean to have the consciousness of God in some particular places, or in some particular things. That is the pagan conception of religion, that God is in places and things, — lo here, lo there! But our religion is better and more sublime than that, and means to have the consciousness of God in all places, and in all things. With that consciousness of God all duty is sacred duty; all service is sacred service; all life is sacred life. Wherever we go or are, we have the consciousness in us that we are standing on holy ground. Whatever we try to do, we have the consciousness in us that we are doing holy work. And even when through parish coffee-houses, and clubs, and gymnasiums, we minister simply to the bodies of men, we are ministering unto bodies which Jesus Christ taught are the temples of the Holy Ghost.

That, it seems to me, is the conception of religion which you and I are to try to give to the people of this generation. And if in any way we can make our parishes stand for that and express it, we shall be doing something towards the establishment on earth of the kingdom of the

Son of God. Human life hitherto has been too much divided, and cut up into fragments and sections. Each of the departments of knowledge, says Mr. Kidd again, which has dealt with man in society, has regarded him almost exclusively from its own standpoint. "To the politician he he has been the mere opportunist. To the historian he has been the unit, which is the support of blind forces apparently subject to no law. To the exponent of religion he has been the creature of another world. To the political economist he has been little more than a covetous machine. The time has come, it would appear, for a better understanding and for a more radical method." And that better understanding, it seems to me, must come from a better understanding of religion, from a conception of religion which shall include in its synthesis all forms of human conduct and all departments of human activity. It is eminently fit and proper, therefore, that the minister of Jesus Christ should take an active part in all social and political movements; not merely because he, too, is a man and never forfeits his manhood; but because also he is a man of religion, a re-

ligious man. And all those social and political movements are essentially religious movements which tend to establish on the earth, or should be so directed as to be made to establish, the kingdom of Jesus Christ. As long, however, as the minister of Jesus Christ has but little to do with them, men will continue to feel that those social and political movements are not religious movements, and that the work which they do along those different lines is not a religious work. And it is just that conception of the work of the world, of the real work of the world, which we must try to change. That great political reformation, it has been said, which broke out in Europe near the close of the last century, and whose influence has extended to these western shores, has made the people feel that the sovereignty of the world is in their hands to-day, and that they indeed are the kings. What is needed now, it has been also said, is another and greater reformation, which shall make the people feel that they are priests as well as kings, and which shall give to them in their work, whatever it may be, and however secular it may seem, the consciousness of God and the sense of responsibility to Him.

In this way, I think, and only in this way, will social antagonism be abated, social irritation appeased, and that social reformation wrought, which is both needed and imminent and which cannot be long delayed, when the rich and the poor and all, will be made to realize that they are priests as well as kings, and are everywhere doing their work in the world as at the altar of God. In that way, too, it seems to me all human life on earth is to be gathered up into Jesus Christ, — not by separating it from the secular sphere, but by sending it into the secular sphere with the consciousness there of God. When Abraham was called by the Divine Spirit to leave his native country, he went out, we are told, looking for a city, the symbol of secular life, whose builder should be God. The men of Shinar and Nineveh were building up their cities in selfishness and sensuousness. Abraham looked for a city whose builder should be God. When St. John in the isle of Patmos looked forward into the future, and saw the eventual triumph of the Christian religion on earth, he saw that triumph coming to pass, — not in the form of a church, in which all men

should be doing things technically called religious, but in the form of a city, the symbol of secular life, a New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, in which all men should be doing things technically called secular, but doing them with the spirit of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

St. Augustine, at the beginning of the fifth century, when the city of Rome by reason of its inherent moral corruption, was falling into decay, put forth his celebrated work, in which he attempted to show that the Christian religion was not hostile to the secular life, but that its purpose was to build a city of God on earth. Two cities, he says, began to be upon this earth with man, founded by two loves, — the one by the love of self even to the despising of God, whose greatest creation is the city of Rome; the other by the love of God even to the despising and sacrificing of self, whose greatest creation will be that society, that city, that sphere of secular activity whose life has all been gathered into Jesus Christ.

That is the task, young gentlemen, to which to-day you are called, of trying to

gather up into Jesus Christ, not some, but all human life on earth. I do not know any task more noble, more sublime, or which appeals more strongly to every true and sublime and worthy impulse in you. To what vocation greater, can any young man devote his talent, his time, his life? Touching all pursuits, and including within its compass all kinds of social endeavor, all phases of moral reform, what field so broad, so vast? It is indeed the world, and that is the field, the world, in which as the ministers of Jesus Christ you are called to work.

THE PREACHER PREPARING HIS MESSAGE

GENERAL PREPARATION

THE PREACHER PREPARING HIS MESSAGE

GENERAL PREPARATION

IN venturing to tell you something about the preparation for preaching, as I shall try to do in this lecture, I must, of course, go over the same ground in part which you have already gone over, or which you are now traversing with your teachers here; and this may seem in me both superfluous and presumptuous. But the purpose of this lectureship, as I interpret it, is to impart such information as one has been able to gather from his own practical ministry, and to supplement the valuable instruction of the school, with the hints and helps suggested by an experience outside of the school. Assuming that I am right in this, let me proceed to tell you something about the preparation for preaching.

There are two kinds of preparation for preaching, one general, and the other special. They are both important, and I

propose to speak of both. In this lecture, however, I shall confine myself to the first. You remember, perhaps, the story told of that eminent preacher after whom this lectureship is named, that when upon one occasion he was asked how long it had taken him to prepare a sermon which he had just delivered, he replied, "Forty years." I do not know whether the story is true; but it might be. It is substantially true of every sermon preached. The time involved in the preparation is more than the few days which have been devoted to the task, and includes within its compass all the days on earth which the preacher himself has lived. It began, that preparation, when the preacher began; not when he began to be a preacher, but when he began to be, or rather before he began, It began with his ancestors; and he is what he is because they were what they were. And the temperament or the talent which is possessed by him he has received from them, or received through them from God. He enters upon his task, and he performs his task, with a preparation for it which has been bestowed upon or given to him by God.

First of all, then, the person who is ex-

pecting to preach should try to be reasonably sure that he has been thus prepared by nature or by God. He should try to be reasonably sure that God has bestowed upon him a fitness for the work. It is not every good young man who is called upon to be a preacher. Goodness, of course, is essential; and it goes without saying that that is a qualification which he should possess. But that is a qualification which everybody ought to possess for his work in life, the layman as well as the clergyman, and the layman as much as the clergyman. For there are not two kinds of goodness, there are not two moral codes, one for those who preach, and another for those who hear, but the same moral code for both, emanating from the same God. If it is the duty of the minister to be good after the highest type of goodness, — or rather after the only type, for there is but one, — so is it the duty of the mechanic, the lawyer, the man of affairs, the president of the railroad, the president of the bank. But just as in the case of the mechanic something more than goodness is required, so in the case of the preacher is something more required. Each of them must have, in order

to do his work, or to do it fairly well, some aptitude for his work, some gift or fitness for it which has been bestowed by nature, and that means when rightly interpreted, which has been bestowed by God. Without that preparation he will not be successful, and the work to which he devotes himself will not only be ill done, but uncomfortably done. He will not rejoice in his work; he will not be happy in it.

But how can a person know whether or not he possesses that kind of preparation? How can a person who is contemplating the work of the ministry know? He can know after he has tried. But how can he know before? He cannot know fully and infallibly, "for the fire in the flint shows not till it be struck." And yet I think he can tell with a reasonable degree of assurance even before it be struck whether the fire is there. Emerson somewhere says, not in these words, but in substance, that what a person most of all desires to do in the world, is as a rule the thing which best of all he can do, and ought to try to do, and was perhaps intended to do. Like so many of Emerson's aphoristic sayings, this one has to be taken, not as un-

qualifiedly and as in all cases true, but only as measurably true. But it is measurably true. And of one who is considering whether or not he is called to preach the Gospel of Christ, whether or not he is fitted for that particular work, and has been prepared and sent of God to do it, I should simply ask these questions, or should ask him rather to ask them of himself: Is the preaching of the Gospel of Christ the thing which most of all I desire to do in the world? Does it like nothing else appeal to and arouse and seem to set me on fire with an enthusiasm for it? Does it possess for me an attraction which nothing else possesses, not because of what in the way of personal reward it may be able to give me in this world or another, but just because of what it seems to be in itself as its own sufficient reward? Does it make me feel as I think of it, or see it, and hear it done by one who is fitted to do it, that I, too, am a preacher, — not perhaps as he is, I cannot hope for that, but still that I am a preacher, that I ought to be, that I must be, and that I cannot rest contented until I try to be?

I do not say that that is an infallible

test, but it is a test. If a person feels with reference to the work of preaching in some such way as that, then I think he may be reasonably sure that God has given him that general preparation or fitness for the work which first of all he must have, and which will enter as a factor, secretly perhaps and unconsciously to himself, yet vitally and helpfully, into the preparation of every sermon which he prepares.

That is the first requisite in the general preparation for preaching; but it is not all. The treasures which God has put in the human mind and soul are like the treasures which He has put in the ground. They are there; but they are there to be brought out. If they are not there, they cannot of course be brought out; but they are there as though they were not until they are brought out. You cannot make a preacher of one who is not born to be a preacher, who does not have it in him; and yet he has it in him as though he had it not until it has been brought out. And what will bring it out? The same thing that brings the treasure out of the ground. Work will bring it out, — hard work, and only hard work. In other respects also does the

parallel sometimes hold, not always, but sometimes, that the better and finer the treasure, the harder is the work required. Herein, is the saying of Carlyle true, that genius means, or is, the capacity for infinite exertion. And the preacher who trusts chiefly to his native gifts and endowments, his quickness of thought, his fluency of speech, his readiness with his pen, or his facility with his tongue, his poetical temperament or his oratorical temperament, or whatever his gifts may be, without trying to train, and discipline, and enrich them by patient and persistent study, by the hardest kind of hard work, will find sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, and his congregation will also find, that he is preached out, and that he has exhausted both himself and them.

Now, that is a kind of general preparation for preaching which you are acquiring here. That is what you are here for; but it does not end here, it only begins here; and hard as your work here may be, it will be still harder when you go away from here. Every man who succeeds to-day is a hard worker. He may not work with worry, and he will not work well if he does so

work; but he works with energy. This is true of every calling. It is, I think, particularly true of the minister's calling to-day. Some people have the notion that the only day in the week on which the minister is very busy is Sunday. I have not found it so. Sunday to me has always been the easiest day in the week; and when people ask me, as they sometimes do, When are you most at leisure? or, When can we hope to find you the most disengaged? I usually say, "On Sunday." I have less to do then than on any other day in the week. It is true that I preach on Sunday; and it often happens that I preach — though it ought not to happen — two or three times on Sunday; but then I don't mind preaching when I am ready to preach, any more than I mind eating my dinner when I am hungry. But where the labor comes in, is in the cooking of the dinner, and in the going to market, and the many different markets to get the things to cook. That is what takes time for the subsequent prandial exercise, as for the subsequent pulpit exercise.

Hard, therefore, as your work here may be, it must be still harder when you go away from here. You must still be stu-

dents, and diligent students; and there are three directions which your studies must take. You must be students first of the Bible. You have not yet exhausted, you never will exhaust, the truth of that wonderful book, or that wonderful collection of books; and the more you study the Bible, the more will you be impressed both with its wonderfulness and its inexhaustibleness; provided, that is, you study it with a fresh and open mind, not taking something to it which you already know, to be by it confirmed, but ready always to find in it, and expecting always to find in it, something more than you know, and which will add to your knowledge. You must study it, too, let me say, not simply as a book of yesterday, but as a book of to-day; not simply as a book of facts which happened long ago, but as a book of principles rather which are in operation now, and which the facts illustrate and suggest. This is not always done. Some persons study the Bible in the way that Balzac makes one of his characters say history ought to be studied, not to find "principles, but only events; not to find laws, but only circumstances." That is the

way in which some persons study the Bible, and the way too in which, judging them by their sermons, some preachers seem to study it. They find in it a fact in the history of Abraham, or Moses, or Samuel, or David; or an event in the history of Israel; or a circumstance in the history of the apostles; and then they tell the people all about that fact, that circumstance, that event; and the people are not much interested in that circumstance or that event. Why should they be? It happened so long ago, and to people so far away, in Jerusalem, or Babylon, or Arabia, and has apparently but little to do with what is happening now. And they take, I say, in consequence, but little interest in it; and the interest which they do take is a kind of archaic interest, like the interest which one takes in old monumental remains, or the forms of plants and animals which have become extinct. Very curious things they must have been, and wonderful, and real and true. And how well the preacher describes them; how eloquently he sets them forth; what choice language he uses in discoursing to the people about them. And yet they are not *their* things, or do

not seem to be theirs, as things which bear on them. And while, perhaps, there is in his fine discourse about them some little practical lesson, or helpful moral drawn, it is an incidental or parenthetical lesson, or a moral drawn by the way; and the things and the events from which the moral is drawn do not seem real and near, or to be alive now, as they were alive once, or to be as true for the people living now as for the people living then.

Now that, it seems to me, is not what the Bible is, nor is that the way in which to study it. Your aim should be, not simply to find archaic facts and historical statements in it, but beneath those facts and statements, whatever they may be, living rules and laws, or principles and truths; not true because they are in it, but in it because they are true, universally true, eternally true, for all times, for all places, for all persons, whether they lived long ago in Palestine or Arabia, or whether they are living now in Connecticut or China. It is only in this way that you can make the Bible, and the truth which the Bible contains, a real and living factor in the life of the modern world. Of what value will be

the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden, unless you can also show that it is the story of men and women now? Of what value will be the story of the call which came to Abram in Ur of the Chaldees, unless you can also show that it is the same call which comes to people now? Or that the word which was spoken to Ezekiel, dwelling by the Chebar River, is the word which is spoken to them, dwelling on the banks of the Hudson or the Thames? Or that the message which came to Isaiah in Jerusalem or Babylon is the message which comes to them in Boston or New York, and a message just as true and just as needed now, as it was true and needed then. That message and that word you will not find on the surface of the Bible. You must dig for it beneath the surface as the miner digs for the ore; and in your attempt to find it, like the miner, you will find some local stuff and material closely connected with it, but which is not it.

I remark again that you must use your imagination in your effort to find it, — a dangerous weapon and a sharp one, which cuts both ways, towards error as well as truth, but which, nevertheless, you must use in

trying to find in the Bible the living word of God. And then when you have found it you must give it forth and present it, not always in that rhetorical and idiomatic form with which it was originally associated and which is but the superficial accessory of it, but in that form of expression which appeals to the people *now*, and which they now understand and use. In this way you will do what you can to make them see and feel that while it is old it is new, the word of God to Isaiah, and the word of God to them; the message which Ezekiel heard, and which they should also hear. Study the Bible in that way, with a reverent imagination, with an open heart and mind; trying always to find, not merely local facts, but eternal principles in it; not as a book of yesterday, but as a book of to-day; not as a book which shows that once, long ago, God was near to the world, but as a book which shows that He is always near to the world. Then it will not be necessary for you to be always trying to prove and vindicate the Bible, trying to prove to the people that it *is* the word of God, or *how* it is the word of God. It will *be* the word of God, and will prove

itself to be, first to you, and then through you to them, quick, powerful, penetrating, and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that righteousness which in the Old Testament Scriptures is declared to be eternal, and which Israel tried to express, and which in the New Testament Scriptures is defined as love, and which Jesus Christ embodied. And topics will it give you, and subjects will it suggest, which will always be fresh, and timely, and pertinent to the occasion. And topics, too, they will be which you will never exhaust, will never reach the end of in meaning or in number; and fast and often as the Sundays come you will never be preached out.

But there is still another direction which your studies should take. The preacher should be a man of broad and generous culture, and should study, not only the Bible, but books outside of the Bible. Those other books will help him to teach and interpret the Bible, will help him to know the Bible, to understand the Bible, and will help him to help the people to understand the Bible. And by this I do not mean that they will furnish him with

facts, and incidents, and stories which he will be able to use as illustrations in preaching, thus making his preaching because more pictorial, more interesting and attractive. That indeed they will do, and that is desirable; for an apt illustration in preaching is always helpful. But here let me say, in passing, that it must be an illustration which is the preacher's own; not necessarily one which he has invented and in that sense made his own, but one that he has found in the course of his general reading. There are, I believe, books of illustrations, stories, incidents, and anecdotes which are intended to be a kind of homiletical bank, upon which the preacher can draw at sight without the usual discount; and there is apt to come a time in the experience of every preacher (it usually comes very early in his experience) when he is tempted to use such books. My advice to you is, to let such books alone. Don't buy them; don't borrow them; don't use them at all; and if you have them, burn them. They will not help you in preaching, or the help with which they help you, or with which they seem to help you, will be spurious help; and the sermon which is adorned

with that kind of adornment will be to that extent a spurious kind of sermon. It will be like those houses of mixed architecture which suggest the thought, as we look at them, that before they were completed the money gave out, and that they had in consequence to be finished off with a cheap and spurious kind of embellishment, which, though it is on them and in them, is not *of* them, and which does not therefore improve them.

Illustrations in preaching are good; but they must be illustrations drawn, not from books of stories and encyclopædias of anecdotes, but from that general fund of knowledge which by his personal study the preacher has made his own. Then they are good and helpful, and may be legitimately used.

But that is not the reason why the preacher should be a diligent student of books other than books of the Bible: not for the purpose of finding illustrations in them, but *illustration* rather of how the books of the Bible, or the truths which are in those books, seem to touch, and meet, and mingle with the truths contained in other books, and to be by the truths of

those other books illuminated and confirmed. It is only in that way that one can really know what the truths of the Bible are. You cannot surely know what a young man is when you see him only at home, under his father's roof, and in his father's house, and how he acts and behaves, and what he does while there. You must see that, but you must see more than that. You must see him away from home, and living in other places, and moving in other spheres, and going forth on journeys, and travelling in other paths, and how he acts and behaves, and what he does while there. So with the truths of the Bible. In order to see and know them, you must see and know them not only in the Bible, and in their Bible home, or in that home of the church which the Bible has made to protect them, and how they act and work, and what is their character there. You must see them away from home, in history, and government, and politics, in social affairs, in commercial affairs, in the affairs of yesterday and in the affairs of to-day, and how in those affairs they energize and work, and what is there their influence, and what is there their fruit, and how all life on earth,

individual and national, is strengthened where they are, and weakened where they are not. And thus by seeing how well, how admirably they work, how admirably they behave, not only in their home, their venerable Bible home or their ecclesiastical home, but also away from home, when brought to the test of experience in the life of the world at large, — by seeing them there, I say, you will apprehend them better, you will appreciate them better, you will acquire new confidence in them, and hold them with firmer grasp.

Then, again, you will find in the books outside of the Bible new and unexpected applications made of the truths which are in the Bible. You will see them in a new perspective, or under a new sky, or through the medium of a new light; heights and depths will be disclosed, and vistas made to appear which otherwise would be obscured and unapprehended by you. The truths which are in the Bible will seem to be born again, to have within them a life, to have within them a power, which you never dreamed that they had. Trains of thought will be started, and suggestions will be awakened, and beauties will be

revealed, and visions will be unfolded, which will come to your soul at times with a great and glad surprise. There will be in your preaching a freshness which will make it more interesting both to you and to those who hear you. You will preach old truths, but not in old ruts, and the doctrines will seem new set, and to have new meanings in them. So much depends, you know, not only in physical vision, but also in mental and moral, upon the point of view. And the knowledge which you acquire outside of the Bible will not be other knowledge than the Bible, but other knowledge *of* it, and will give new points of view from which to see the Bible. Or, again, so much depends for the development of life upon the atmosphere, and things which seem to be dead and to have no life at all in one kind of atmosphere, are energized and quickened and vitalized in another. And your studies outside of the Bible will give a new atmosphere to the Bible; and in that new atmosphere many of the germinal truths which are in the Bible, and which to you are in it as though they were not in it, will open, and expand, and grow, and yield new blossom and fruit,

and become to you alive, and will make your preaching alive.

Is not that the reason, or one of the reasons at least, why the pulpit to-day is sometimes heavy and dull? It is learned enough, and scholarly enough, but it is too exclusively a theological scholarship, or an ecclesiastical learning. And would it not make the pulpit more attractive and edifying if it had around it more of the atmosphere of another kind of learning, with a view to giving it a deeper and livelier insight into the word of God, and making it see some finer and better meanings in that word of God? We sometimes hear it said that what is needed in preaching to-day is not that it should be more eloquent and learned, but more expository and scriptural; that it should be more closely confined to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. And that I believe is true. The people who go to church to-day go there to be helped. They have been working hard all week long, and they want to hear something that shall strengthen, and refresh, and inspire them, and lift them up towards a better and purer life. They have been listening to the words of man, which are

not always inspiring words, and now they want to listen to the word of God for a while, and lay hold on eternal life, and to touch as it were the hem of the garment of Jesus Christ. And that will be the best and most helpful kind of preaching which will enable them to do it.

Let your preaching, then, be expository and Scriptural, the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. And in order that it may be that, study the Bible. And in order that you may know better what the Bible is, do not confine yourselves in your study of the Bible to the study of the Bible itself, or to the study of books and commentaries written upon the Bible. Begin there, but do not stop there. Study the Bible through books which are not themselves biblical, — through history, and philosophy, and poetry, and science, and fiction, — and you will understand better what the Bible is, and also what is in it, and will be able better to bring it out, and better to enforce and apply it.

What particular course or method you should adopt in traversing that field of literature which lies outside of the Bible, it is for you to determine; only do not

neglect it, or think that in studying it you are neglecting the Bible. You are, on the contrary, studying the Bible, and getting ready to preach it, not only more attractively, but more effectively as well.

But there is still another direction which your studies must take. You must be students of human life; not simply as it was yesterday, but as it is to-day. The story is told of a theological instructor in one of our seminaries, whether true or not I know not, and it matters not, that he was in the habit of saying to his pupils in his closing lecture to them, "Three things are necessary, young gentlemen, to success in the ministry, — grace, learning, and common sense. If you have not grace, God can give it to you. If you have not learning, man can give it to you. But if you have not common sense, neither God nor man can give it to you." His purpose I presume was to impress upon them, not so much the hopelessness in certain cases of acquiring common sense, but the desirableness of acquiring it in all cases. And surely it is desirable, not only in a layman, but also in a clergyman. He cannot get on without it, or cannot get on well; and the only way

in which he can succeed in acquiring it is by coming into touch with life, — the life of the people about him, their real and actual life, seeing it, feeling it, studying it, and learning thus what it is by personal contact with it, and how to guide and direct it. That is a quality which the preacher, which the minister of Jesus Christ, like every one else, must have, and without which his preaching, however learned and eloquent, will not be effective preaching. And yet, while the Christian minister needs it just as much, it is, I think, for him more difficult to acquire. He is so fenced about with conventional limitations and forms that he cannot come near to the people, nor can the people come near to him; and it is not easy for him to see them as they are. He cannot do what other people do; and go where other people go. He lives and moves and acts as a different being among them. His pursuits are different; his pleasures are different; his habits of life are different; even his clothes are different. He is a different being among them, and they meet him in consequence in a different way, with a different kind of speech, with a different kind of conduct,

and with reference to him they are, or at least are apt to be, a different kind of people from what they usually are. And so I say it is hard to get acquainted with them, to know them, to understand them. His office makes it hard; and that knowledge of human life which he ought to have, which he ought to acquire in order to be able to discharge the duties of his office, his office does so often prevent him from acquiring.

How is this difficulty to be met and overcome? I would not willingly say a word which would tend in the least to disparage or depreciate the ministerial office, to lower it, to cheapen it, or to detract from the dignity of it. It is, in my judgment, the noblest and highest of all offices, as I have been trying to make you feel; and in every proper and lawful way I would magnify it and proclaim its worth and value, and set its dignity and greatness forth. And yet I cannot but think it is a great mistake to so regard that office as to make it like a fence, and a high fence, and difficult to get over, between the man on one side, and his fellow men on the other. They should not so regard it, and he should not so regard it.

Let him go among them rather, and live and be among them, simply as a man among men, as an honorable and high-minded man, living like other honorable and high-minded men, trying thus to win their confidence, and to secure and have their respect, not chiefly because of his office, but chiefly because of himself. And if there is to be a difference between them, let it be a difference in manhood and character, and not in official status. Let it be a difference which attracts and binds them more closely to him, and not a difference which repels and puts them further away.

But the minister, it is said, is often prevented from doing what other people do, innocent though it be, because it is his duty to set an example to them. In one sense that is true. The minister of Jesus Christ should set an example to men; but it should be a real example, and not to any extent a feigned and simulated example. It should not be an example simply for the sake of example; for the person, whether minister or layman, who aims to be an example, simply for the sake of example, will sooner or later, and inevitably and in spite of himself, become more or less of a hypocrite.

The example which he sets will not be the example of one who is doing what is right for its own sake, regardless of consequence, but the example of one who is doing what is right chiefly or in part for the sake of others, and solicitous of consequence; and the example which he sets will not be a good example. It will have more or less of the element of dissimulation in it, which people will be quick to perceive. It will not be a genuine example; it will not be a wholesome example; and the influence which it exerts will not be a wholesome influence. Let the minister, I say, be a man among men; not careless, not lax, not indifferent, but at the same time not afraid of what they say or think, and not anxious about it. Let him go and be among them, not thinking much or at all of the impression he makes upon them, but only of what is right, and careful only for that, — honest, fearless, straightforward, and scorning consequence. Whitcomb Riley has described him, —

> "The kind of man for you and me,
> He faces the world unflinchingly;
> And smites as long as the wrong resists
> With a knuckled faith, and force-like fists.

He lives the life he is preaching of,
And loves where most there is need of love.
. . . . . .
And feeling still with a faith half glad
That the bad are as good as the good are bad,
He strikes straight out for the right: and he
Is the kind of man for you and me."

That is the kind of man who will know men. That is the kind of minister who will know men, and how to direct, and lead, and be an example to them, because he is of and among them, in sympathy with all that is natural, with all that is human in them. He will not be worldly, but he will understand the world. He will not be a participant in wrong-doing, but he will know what wrong-doing is; and to the wrong-doer he will know how to speak a strong and searching word. Separate from evil as his Master was, but not separate from man, as his Master was not, like his Master he will know what is in man, and something of his Master's power he will be able to exert. Go among men, therefore, and live among them, and see and learn how they live and what their habits are, their frailties, their temptations, their sins. Do not let your office be a bar-

rier between you and them, but an open door rather that leads into their midst. That is what your pastoral visiting should be, not simply a process of running about and placating people, and persuading them to come to church. It has always seemed to me as though there were something unmanly and undignified in that. It should be an opportunity, rather, to read and study new pages, or to read and study new chapters in the book of human life, as you see it in the homes and families which you visit. Often will you find in that book of life, not only new subjects for sermons, but new and better ways for the preparing and preaching of sermons. But not only through pastoral visiting should you seek that opportunity: seek it everywhere; for if you are to preach to men, you must know them; and if you are to know them, you must be more or less among them. You must not be afraid of hurting or contaminating yourselves, or your character, or your reputation; it is not your business to be afraid. It is your business to know and minister to human life with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to know its needs and perils, its struggles, its privations, its hardships,

not in a general way as you learn about it from books, but in a particular way as you learn about it and know it from your personal knowledge of it. That is your business; and in the performance of that business I say you must not be afraid; and if you are the kind of man that a minister ought to be, with high and noble aim, with pure, lofty, and unselfish purpose, you need not be afraid. No harm will come to you, or your character, or your reputation, but much that is good will come.

Here is the advantage of that kind of work in your parishes of which I have spoken in a previous lecture, and which is usually designated as "secular" work. It will at least give you a better and truer knowledge of human life and nature, and how it thinks and feels, and what it really is; and you will know better how to preach the Christian Gospel to it. There will be in your sermons a straightness, a downrightness, a directness which otherwise they will not or cannot so easily have.

By every means in your power, then, seek to know the human life about you, and to which you are called to preach. How in-

teresting it is; how suggestive; how much it needs preaching; and how much to-day, if you know it, you can by your preaching help it. Study not only books, study not only the Bible, but study human life; and the aptitude for preaching which God has bestowed upon you, you will thus unfold and develop, and be better prepared to use for the glory of God in the world, and the good of man in the world.

THE PREACHER PREPARING HIS MESSAGE

SPECIAL PREPARATION

THE PREACHER PREPARING HIS MESSAGE

SPECIAL PREPARATION

IN the last lecture I spoke to you of the general preparation for preaching. My purpose now is to supplement what I then said, and to speak of the special preparation for preaching, of the preparation, that is, which one should make for preaching, say, next Sunday. That is what next Sunday he will have to do. How shall he do it? How shall he get ready to do it? How, in other words, shall he best prepare himself for the task which then awaits him? That is the question which I will ask you now to consider, and upon which I will venture to offer some suggestions. Before doing so, however, let me say that I recognize the fact that what is valuable for one may not be equally so for all; and that every person must work out his own preaching and his own method of preaching as he must work out his own salvation,

and learn and determine for himself what for himself is best. And yet while that is true, it is also true that he may learn something from the experiences of others. And if the little that I have learned by a practical experience for myself shall be the means of helping you to learn a little for yourselves, it is all I hope to accomplish.

With this prefatory remark, let me proceed to consider, with you, the question, "How shall a person prepare himself for the immediate duty of preaching?"

Observe, I do not say, "How shall he prepare his sermon?" That is a different question. To prepare a sermon is one thing, and to prepare to preach is another; and the preparation involved is a different kind of preparation. It is in this latter case both more comprehensive and more personal: more comprehensive, because more personal; and the whole personality of the preacher in all its varied make-up enters into the task. It is not simply a process of thinking and writing, but a process of living and being, as well as thinking and writing, and involves not only the exercise of the mind, but the exercise of the soul, the conscience, the heart, the body, — yes,

even the body; and the preacher himself is a factor in his preparation to preach. That is what the preacher is called upon to do, — not to prepare sermons, but to prepare to preach; to prepare himself to preach. And how shall he do it? He must have, in the first place, something to preach about. He must have a subject. And how shall he find a subject? Will anything do? No; anything will not do. He must have something which at that particular time is particularly appealing to him. It is not necessary that it should be suggested by his own personal experience: it may be suggested to him by the experience of others; by the need of the congregation to which he is called to minister; or by the need of the community in which he is called to live, — by a book, by a visit, by a conversation, by a circumstance of recent occurrence, by an event of recent happening. There are scores of ways in which it may be suggested to him. But it must be something which when it is suggested appeals to and takes hold of him, and becomes for the time a part of him, and makes him feel that that is what he must surely preach about next Sunday.

But suppose the days go by and no such subject comes. Sunday is coming. There is no doubt about that; and he must be ready to preach when it does come; and yet no living theme, no timely theme and appealing, has been suggested to him. Will not that sometimes be the case? Yes, it will; but it ought not to be the case very often, and will not be very often if he has been diligent in making that general preparation to which I referred in the last lecture. I said then, you remember, that he should be a diligent student both of the Bible and of books outside of the Bible. I add now that while he should not study with an immediate view to preaching, he should not forget in his studying that he is a preacher. By this I mean that he should have in the course of his studying, not only the scholar's temper seeking knowledge for its own sake and apart from its practical value, but something also of the homiletical temper. He should have, in other words, a mind that is open towards sermons or towards the suggestion of sermons; and as from time to time subjects are suggested he should make a note of them, not in his memory merely, where they will fade,

but in a book, where they will not fade. He should have such a book, or a number of such books, beside him on his table while he is studying, in which he can write down, not too fully nor at too great length, — that would be interruptive and tedious, — but fully enough to subsequently recall the subjects suggested for sermons, and making at the time a hasty outline of them. Then, when he is at a loss to know what to preach about, let him go and consult those books, those books of sermon stuff, not of somebody's else sermon stuff, but of his own sermon stuff, or sermon thought and outline. Presently he will observe that his divining-rod begins to dip; there is something there which attracts him, to which he seems to be drawn. He has not fully found it yet, but he is finding it. His sympathies are moved, and he yearns towards it. The blood begins to go up into the brain, or the wheels begin to go round, and it will not be long before he has his subject, or his subject has him, and takes possession of him; and he will clearly see and know, without any misgiving, what to preach about next Sunday.

Let me advise you, then, in your studying, your reading, or your thinking, to have such books beside you, to catch and hold your thoughts, and to catch them just as they come, and to hold them just as you catch them, without making an effort to group or arrange them in an Index Rerum, or according to the letters of the alphabet, or with any sort of systematic classification, — that will be burdensome, and will take up too much time, — but just for the purpose of not losing them, and so that you can get them again when you want them. I have quite a pile of such books in my library (pardon this allusion to myself; but I must be more or less autobiographical in these lectures, and am, I presume, expected to be), and I find them very helpful; and when I do not know what to preach about, I turn over the pages of those books. It is like pouring a dipper of water down the pump when it is dry and does not work: it fetches the water, and the static fluid in the quiescent pump is started and begins to flow. I find them, I say, very helpful; and so, I think, would you find them, — not my books but yours; and if throughout your ministry you make it a practice to

keep such homiletical notebooks, you will not experience much difficulty in finding subjects for sermons; for the preacher who has by his side these suggestive aids will generally have suggested to him something to preach about.

But suppose even that fails, — and the best devices do fail sometimes, — what then shall he do, and how then shall he proceed? Sunday is coming, is drawing near, and he must be ready to preach; and yet he has no word, he has no message to preach. His mind is a blank; he has turned over the pages of his notebooks, and nothing seems to appeal to him, nothing seems to take hold of him, and his mind is still a blank. What shall he do? Let him leave his books for a while, and try to forget all about them, and put on his hat and go out, — not for physical exercise, though that, perhaps, will help him, but for *human* exercise, for the exercise of his heart, his soul, his mind, in the midst of human life. If he is living in a city like New York, let him go down into the tenement houses, and put himself into new and sympathetic touch with that form of life which there he will see and find, — its patience, its courage, its endur-

ance; or its misery and its degradation, and which there afresh he will feel. Or let him go into the business houses, into the counting-houses and the dwelling-houses; and whether living in some metropolitan centre or in some country village, let him go where the people are, where they toil at their tasks, their common every-day tasks, and where they carry their burdens, their hard and heavy burdens, and break and fall beneath them! Let him study and learn their ambitions; let him see and know their sorrows; let him hear their cries of distress, their hopes, their fears, their shames, their wrongs, or their wrong-doings; let him feel the full pulse of their life, — and he will presently have and feel some subject on which he can preach, some subject on which he must preach.

His biographer has said of St. Francis, the eloquent and gifted preacher of the Middle Ages, that he felt himself the man in whose body were born all the efforts, the desires, and the aspirations of men, with whom, in whom, through whom, they were yearning to be renewed and to be born again, and that in that respect, more

than by any external imitation, he was to them a Christ. And the preacher who, like St. Francis or like St. Francis' Master, goes out among the people, and by his sympathy with them embodies them in himself, will not be lacking of subjects on which to preach to the people.

If, then, the books in his library do not give him the theme, let him leave his books for a time and go out, and try to study the book of human life, and he will surely find a theme.

Assuming now that he has found it, how shall he prepare himself to preach on it? What shall be his method of preparation? That will depend somewhat, will depend a good deal, upon his method of preaching. If it is his habit to preach with notes or from manuscript, he will not go to work to prepare himself to preach in the same way or fashion in which he will go to work if it is his habit to preach without notes. And here, perhaps, I should say something, as I presume most of my predecessors in this lectureship have said something, in regard to these different methods of preaching. My own practice is to preach without notes; and of course I prefer that

practice, otherwise I should not practice it. It has proved itself for me to be the better way; though I am far from saying that it is the better way for everybody. I am satisfied, however, after having tried both ways, that preaching without notes is the better way for me. I can in that way put myself more fully into my preaching; and however it may seem to the people who hear me, it seems to me, at least, as though I came in that way nearer to the people, and could speak with greater freedom and more directness to them. A manuscript fetters and binds me, and I seem when speaking from it, to be speaking also to it. It gets in my way, and I become impatient of it, and I long to push it aside and look away from it, and not to look back at it again, but to continue to look at the people; and every time I do look back at it again, I feel as though something had come between us, and broken the current between us. And something *has* come between us, — the manuscript has come between us; and I experience then the truth of what Dr. Storrs says, that paper is a non-conductor, and does not easily let the electric current go through. I am

sure, then, that for me, preaching without notes is the better way to preach; and while I am not sure that it would be the better way for all, I am sure that there are many who would find it the better way if once they had the courage to try it, and the persistency to keep on trying.

You will pardon me again if, with the hope of persuading and encouraging some of you to try it, I refer to my own experience, and tell you how I was induced to try it myself. I had been in the ministry several years before I was led to attempt it, and during that time I wrote my sermons fully out, and preached them as I wrote them. I was not satisfied, however, with that way of preaching, and was always restive under it. I wanted to preach in some other way. I wanted to preach without notes; and occasionally I did at the second service on Sunday, when the congregation was smaller, or at the week-day lecture. But to go up into the pulpit Sunday morning when all the people were present and to preach without notes, — I was horribly afraid, and had not the courage to attempt it. Upon one occasion, however, just after I had come back from my sum-

mer's vacation, I preached, as usual, a written sermon which seemed so exceptionally poor (I think one always preaches his poorest when he has been out of it for a while) that I said to myself, I remember, "Now is a good time to try to preach without notes, for you certainly cannot do worse next Sunday morning without notes than you did last Sunday morning with them." I therefore resolved to try, and with a good deal of trepidation I did try. I selected as my text, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press towards the mark;" and while of course I did not allude to the fact that that was just what I myself was doing at that moment, I had the consciousness of it, — the consciousness that I was at that moment practising what I was preaching, and trying to do in my way what I was telling the people to do in theirs. That consciousness helped me a little, and enabled me to get through better perhaps than otherwise I should have got through, and some of my vestry came into the vestry room afterwards and quoted my text at me, "Forget the things which are behind." At all events, I did get

through, and I am glad I did; for it encouraged me to try it again, and I did try it again, and again. I have been trying it ever since; and although I have preached many poor sermons since, — it is now fifteen years ago, — the poorest of them have been the sermons which I have written.

Having made bold to say this much about my experience in preaching without notes, perhaps I should go on and say a little more and tell you something about my method of preparation. After I have found my subject I go to work, of course, to think about and develop it, and I do my thinking about it to some extent in words. I think with a pencil in my hand; and many of the thoughts as they come to me I try to express on paper, especially if when they come to me they are not very clear. I try to make them clear by putting them into words and giving expression to them; and while I do not memorise that expression, I find that in preaching it often comes to me easily, naturally, and without any effort on my part to recall it. It is simply an instance of the mnemonic aid that is furnished by clear thinking. That, however, is but an incidental result, and my purpose in

writing, as far as I do write, is simply to make sure that I apprehend with distinctness the thought that is in my mind. I want to make sure that I have it, and not that I merely seem to have it; and the only way sometimes in which I can make sure that I have it is to try to write it. And so I go through with my subject, writing a little every now and then, sometimes more, sometimes less, as the subject seems to require, not for the sake of the writing, or because I expect to use it in preaching, for I do not, but for the sake of the thinking, and the clearness of the thinking. Then, when I have got through with the subject, — no, I never get through with it until I preach it — it is in my mind to some extent all the time, not only when in my study, but at other times; I live with it more or less throughout the week, and it grows and develops in me, and becomes a part of me, and more and more I have it, or more and more it has me. And when Sunday morning comes, or Saturday afternoon or evening, I look over the notes or the writings, many or few, which I found it helpful to make in the tracing out or the clearing up of some of the thoughts of the sermon, in

order to be sure that I have them, and then, without taking them with me, as best I can, I preach. I do not even take the heads or outlines with me into the pulpit; I take nothing with me but the text. I tried the other plan at first, but it did not work well; it hindered me almost as much as a manuscript did. I cannot tell exactly how or why it hindered me, but it did. It was, I presume, like trying to swim by having all the time one foot on the bottom, or one hand on a board; and I found that the better way, if ever I was going to learn to swim, was just to jump right in and swim — or sink. At all events, I did jump in, without anything to depend upon, and after a fashion, — perhaps not a very good fashion, but still after a fashion, — I have been swimming ever since, or preaching ever since without manuscript. I do not call it extemporaneous preaching, or *memoriter* preaching, — it certainly is not that, or not consciously that. I am not particular to call it anything except preaching without notes; and poor as the preaching may be, it is the best that I can do; and my reason as well as my excuse for referring to it now is to encourage some of you to

try it, if you care to try. If you want to do it, I am sure, from my own experience, you can do it; for I was not, and am not naturally fluent in speech, nor do I possess the faculty above the average of thinking on my feet; and the little power in that direction which at present I possess, I have acquired by practice; and what I have learned to do a little, I am sure that most of you can learn to do better and more. Let me add, however, this word of caution. To prepare to preach without notes is a much *more difficult process than to prepare to preach with them.* If you adopt the former method simply as a makeshift, and with a view to finding it easier and less exacting, you will surely fail, as you surely ought to fail. But if, on the other hand, you address yourselves to the task with earnestness, and thoroughness, and persistency, with that faith in the truth of your message which you ought to have, and with that due faith in yourselves, which is, after all, but faith in the God who made you, you will not fail. Your rhetoric may not always be the best, nor your language always the choicest, and yet sometimes it will be; and it is quite likely

that you will hesitate at times, and be at a loss for a word, and become a little involved. But if it does not matter much to you, it will not matter much to the people, and if you are not confused by it they will not be confused; and your message, though broken in form a little, nor always to your satisfaction when you come to review it from a literary point of view, will have, in spite of its ruggedness, and sometimes because of its ruggedness, an impressiveness and a power which it would not otherwise have.

One other thing let me say about this method of preaching, in answer to an objection which is sometimes made against it. Suppose, when the time comes to preach, the preacher himself is not in good physical condition; the nerve force is scant and weak, scintillating sparks of pain, and he has what is usually called a nervous headache; or he is in some other way, and for some other reason, physically below par and not quite up to the mark. Will not this make it more difficult for him to preach without notes? Surely it will. But it will also make it more difficult for him to preach with notes. It will make it more

difficult for him to preach at all; and perhaps in such a case he ought not to preach. But if he is not too sick to preach from manuscript, he is not too sick to preach without manuscript; and the consciousness that he has no manuscript to depend upon will sometimes have the effect to improve his physical condition, and put him in better physical form. I, at least, have often found it so; and in an experience of fifteen years, in which I have had my physical ups and downs, like other people, whenever I have been well enough to preach at all, I have been well enough to preach without manuscript.

But whatever method of preaching you may adopt, whether with notes or without them, let me remind you again that there is a difference between preparing sermons and preparing yourselves to preach; and that it is this latter task which you are called to perform. You may, if you choose, write your sermons, but you must do something more than write them. You must write yourselves into your sermons, or must write them into yourselves. You must manage somehow to make the sermon which you prepare, the expression of what you are, or

of what throughout the week you have been, not only thinking, but acting, doing, living; it must be as it were to your people your weekly story or epic. The message which you have heard, it must be, and not only heard but obeyed. The lesson which you have learned, it must be, and not only learned but practised. The ideal which you have seen, it must be, and not only seen but embodied and realized and become. Not merely some truth of God must it be which you have carefully written out on paper and put away in the drawer until the time comes to take it therefrom and use it, but some truth of God must it be which the Spirit of God has written out in you, which He has put into your mind, your soul, your very blood, so that when your heart beats it will seem to beat with it and send it pulsing through you. Remember always, I say, that you are not simply to prepare a sermon for Sunday, but prepare to preach on Sunday. As incidental to this you may use paper, twenty sheets or forty; but be careful to bear in mind that the paper is for the sermon, and not the sermon for the paper, that the sermon is lord of the paper, and should not be en-

slaved by it. Then, when Sunday comes you will be ready, not merely to deliver a sermon, but, what is more, to preach; and your preaching will be better than any mere delivery of a sermon, however fine and admirable the delivery may be. And you will not need any books on oratory or elocution to teach you how to preach. To a certain extent such books may be of assistance to you, but it is only a very limited extent. Sometimes they are helps, but sometimes, too, they are hindrances; and your instructors in elocution will, I am sure, tell you that the best kind of elocution is the elocution of the man who, with some gift for preaching, stirs up the gift that is in him, and without much thought of elocution simply prepares to preach.

And here let me say that I think it very questionable whether a person should prepare to preach more than once on Sunday. Many preachers do it, I know; but there are not many who do it well. It is exceedingly difficult to do it well. It is not difficult to sermonize twice on Sunday; but it is difficult to preach twice on Sunday, or to prepare to preach twice. One living thought, or one living theme, living with

the preacher, living in the preacher throughout the week that intervenes between one Sunday and another, and preparing him to preach, is usually enough for the preacher, and is usually enough for the congregation. It was, I believe, Mr. Beecher who said that two sermons on Sunday were like two wads in a popgun, — one shoots the other out; and that is apt to be true with reference, not only to the congregation, but with reference to the preacher as well. The two sermons are apt to interfere with one another, and hurt and cripple one another; and in the preacher's mind, as in the congregation's mind, the tendency of one is to shoot the other out. I am aware that Mr. Beecher did not observe his own rule; but Mr. Beecher was an exceptional man, and yet not exceptional enough to be altogether independent of established usage and custom, but was, like the rest of us in this respect, victimized by convention; and it would be, I think, a desirable thing if the convention could be changed. Instead of having two preaching services on Sunday, it would in my judgment be better to make the second service a different kind of service, —

a Praise Service, if you please, or a Prayer Service, or a Vesper Service of some sort, or a service simply of worship, with a few remarks by the minister, not more than ten or fifteen minutes in length, and suggested perhaps by some fragment of thought left over from the morning discourse. Or, if there are to be two preaching services on Sunday, then let the parish provide two preachers, not to preach to the same congregation, but to different congregations. Why indeed in some parishes, especially in the large cities, would it not be a good rule to have not only two preaching services on Sunday, but four or five such services by four or five different preachers? Why should not our church buildings be utilized more than they are? Looking at it simply from a commercial point of view, is it not a poor and inadequate return for the investment, to have them open only for two or three hours on Sunday, or for about one hundred and fifty hours out of the whole year? If I could do in this matter just what I should like to do, I would never close the churches except at night, when everything else is closed. I would keep them open always; not only on Sunday, but on every other

day; and I would have some kind of service in them every day in the week; not always, perhaps, a preaching service, but a service of some kind. In the case of many of our city churches that is what is done. That is what is done in St. Bartholomew's Church. It is open every day in the year, with the exception of a little while in midsummer, when it is open only on Sundays. With that exception, it is open every day in the year, and every day in the year there is a service in it. This involves the having of more than one minister in the parish, for one minister, of course, cannot do all that in such a case is required. And here let me say that if there are to be several ministers in the parish, one of them in my judgment must be the head, — call him Rector, call him Pastor, call him what you please; he must be in fact the head. I know that some of my Congregational brethren differ from me in this, and that they are trying the experiment of having associate pastorates; but I venture to express the opinion that it will not work well, or that when it does work well it will be the exception and not the rule. In the majority of cases, however, I presume it

would be found impracticable to have more than one clergyman in a parish; and when that is the case, the congregation should be contented with one preaching service on Sunday. It will be better, as a rule, for the parish, and better, as a rule, for the preacher, and better for the parish because better for the preacher. One message a week is enough for him to prepare, and enough for them to hear; and if they insist on more, the quality will be sacrificed to the quantity, and they will both suffer loss.

I remark again that if the preacher prepares himself to preach in the way that I have suggested, he will have to prepare himself with a new preparation for every new occasion upon which he preaches. He will not have much use for old sermons, unless he can get back into the old moods of thought and the old moods of life, of moral and spiritual as well as mental life, — those old appealing moods which were with him indeed and possessed him when he prepared the old sermons, or when he prepared himself to preach them. Sometimes he can do that, but not often; and usually he will find when he preaches an

old sermon that it *is* an old sermon; and that although when first he preached it it was fairly good and effective, something seems to have gone out of it which then he felt was in it. And something *has* gone out of it, — the *life* has gone out of it, or part, at least, of the life. The thoughts are the same, the arguments are the same, the illustrations are the same; he makes the same points, and perhaps with the very same words; but they are the same with a difference, and that difference is vital. He preached before; now he is delivering a sermon as a substitute for preaching. That is not always the case, but it is often the case; and while there are some sermons which he can preach over and over again, and preach perhaps better, every time he preaches them because they are the product of permanent moods of thought, of mind, of heart, of soul; there are not many such sermons, and he will not produce many such. Instead, therefore, of turning over the barrel and searching from time to time among its musty contents with a view to finding in it some suitable sermon to preach, it would be better to let it alone. Or, if he is disposed to turn it over very

much or often, it would be better still to destroy the barrel, and not have any, so that every week, with little or nothing in the way of old preparation to fall back upon, he might find himself committed to the task which is always new, and always interesting and stimulating because new, not of preparing to sermonize for half an hour on Sunday, but of preparing himself, mind and heart and soul and body, of preparing himself to preach. He may not always preach as he would like to preach, or as he feels he ought to preach; but he will always feel that he is preaching, and his congregation will feel it, and will like to hear him preach; and a congregation, too, place him where you please, he will always have.

One thing more, it seems to me, the preacher should have in mind in preparing himself to preach. It does not bear directly, perhaps, upon his preparation, and yet perhaps it does. At all events, he should not forget it, but should have in mind the fact that he is preparing himself to preach to an assembly of men and women who are gathered for something else, or who ought, at least, to be gathered.

for something else than simply to hear him preach. They are gathered for prayer, for praise, and to engage for a time in worship, and in the various acts and phases of worship. For that he must also prepare. That also is his task, not only to preach, but to worship, and to help the people to worship; and to be to them, not merely the prophet of God, but the priest, — not in the Romish use of the term, as the human hierophant through whom God's blessings come, — but in the Protestant use of the term, as the human *soul* through whom God's blessings come. On whose soul as it rises to God the souls of the people rise, and by whose soul as it catches the inspirations of God the souls of the people are inspired, and enabled in spirit and truth to engage in the worship of God. Whether he can do that with a liturgy or without one, I will not say. I have an opinion on that subject, but this is not the time nor the place to express it. I am not here to defend or advocate the use of the Prayer Book. But whether you use in your parishes a liturgical form of worship or a non-liturgical form, I may at least urge you not to slight

worship, but to emphasize and make much of it, and to try to induce your people to make much of it. They will make much of it if you yourselves make much of it; and it seems to me that you ought to make much of it. Something people must worship; something they do worship, — wealth, or power, or nature, or humanity, or God, or something. The only question is, what? And the office of the Christian minister, in part at least, is to take that innate, ineradicable impulse of the human heart, and to give it expression towards God as Jesus Christ has revealed Him. It is to quicken in the mind that slumbering, spiritual faculty by which alone man can apprehend the reality of the spiritual life and of things unseen and eternal.

Our human nature is as a rule very much under the dominion of the sensible and the near. Things at a distance, or which do not in any way appeal to the physical senses, are hard to realize. That is the standing difficulty which religion, dealing as it does so largely with super-sensible matters, must always encounter, and which it essays to meet and overcome by means of Christian worship, giving

thereby to the soul that consciousness, that sureness, that certainty of itself which can only come by communion with the pervading and eternal soul of the world, that Father in whom all things live and by whom they are sustained. Never was it more needed than in this materialistic and not very reverent age, — an age which as George Eliot says, is so often flippant and coarse, mistaking a cynical mockery for the gift of penetration. This, she says, is the impoverishment which threatens us and our posterity, — the new famine, the meagre fiend, with lewd grin and clumsy hoof, breathing a mildew over the harvest of our moral sentiments. The office of the Christian ministry is to try to recover men from this flippant and irreverent materialism, not by preaching merely, but by lifting them up into the consciousness of that higher, nobler, albeit immaterial and invisible life which comes from communion with, and is found in the worship of, God.

Make much of worship, then; and in making much of worship you will not be making little, but much of preaching too. You will be preparing yourselves to preach

on those great and important themes with which the pulpit deals, and which will never grow old, and to answer for your people and with your people, and in the midst of your people, those great and important questions whose importunity will never abate. For, as an English reviewer and Congregational divine has said: "It is in the great congregation where heart beats with heart, and breaths conspire, and common beliefs and experiences draw the children of toil and pain into close, dear fellowships of sympathy and hope, that those answers will best be given. . . .

"There is a power in public worship, in the utterance of common sorrows, needs, and hopes, in the prayer that is breathed and the praise that is sung in concert, not merely with the crowd that fills some particular sanctuary, but with the innumerable company of all lands and ages who have drunk of the same spring and gone strengthened on their way, which they strangely miss who teach that worship is a worn-out superstition, and that only in the clear light of law can men walk and be blest. Ah, no, while man sins and

suffers, while there is blood-tinged sweat upon his brow, while there is misery in his home and anguish in his heart, that voice can never lose its music, which speaks, not through preaching merely, but through worship as well, of the comfort and inspiration of the everlasting Gospel of Christ, which seems to tell the sin-tormented spirit the tale of the Infinite Pity, and to bid it lay its sobbing wretchedness to rest on the bosom of the Infinite Love."

In the best way, then, you can, in the way that is best for you, try, not to prepare a sermon simply, but to prepare yourselves to preach, and to prepare yourselves to worship; to preach *to* the people, to worship *with* the people, and thus not by preaching merely, and not by worship merely, but by preaching and worship to lift up Him who has "lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages;" and who, when lifted up, will draw all men to Himself.

THE
PREACHER AND THE PARISH

THE

PREACHER AND THE PARISH

SO far in these lectures I have been considering the preacher simply as a preacher, for that is what it seems to me he is chiefly called to be; and with those who would belittle or depreciate that ministerial function I have no sympathy. While that, however, is his most important work, it is not his only work. He is a preacher, but he is more; he is a worker in the pulpit, and he is a worker out of the pulpit. He is a worker in the parish: not in his personal capacity merely as a member of the parish, but in his capacity as the head of the parish; and the parish which has made him its head and over which he presides is the instrument with which he works. And a very effective instrument for Christian work it is. There are not many workers so well equipped as he, for there are not many who have a constituency so compact, so tractable, so

sympathetic as the Christian minister has. If he fails to use that effective parochial instrument, like the servant in the parable of the talent and the napkin, he is failing with a culpable ignorance, perhaps with a culpable sloth, to do in the world the work which he might do, which he ought to do, and for the doing of which in the providence of God he has been so especially equipped.

It is one thing, however, to have an instrument given with which to do a work; it is another thing to use it, or to know how to use it well and to the best advantage, and so that the best results may be accomplished by it.

These are the questions to which I will venture now for a while to direct your thought and attention; or, putting the matter more plainly, I will ask you in this lecture to consider with me the question, "How shall the Christian minister proceed to make the parish over which he presides, to the utmost possible limit and in the most useful way, an active and working parish?" That, of course, will depend very largely upon the character of the parish, what it is, where it is, and how

strong or weak it is. A parish in the city cannot be worked in the same way precisely that a parish in the country can; or a parish in one part of the city or country like a parish in another part of the city or country; or a weak parish like a strong parish; or a rich parish like a poor one. Parish work in this respect resembles pulpit work, and depends upon the circumstances, which are not the same in all cases, which to some extent indeed are different in all cases; and some of the methods and rules which are found to be good for one will be found to be bad for another, or at least not good for another and not adapted to it. There are rules, however, which are good for all, and applicable to all, and the first of these I have already intimated in saying that every parish should regard itself as unique, in its duties, its difficulties, its responsibilities, and should not try to copy any other parish, as every preacher is unique and should not try to copy any other preacher. He will make a mistake if he does, and so will the parish. In St. Bartholomew's Parish, for instance, we have a Loan Bureau, where we lend money in small amounts of from ten to two hun-

dred dollars, aggregating about fifteen hundred dollars a week, charging a fair rate of interest, and taking as security a mortgage upon the furniture and household goods of the borrower. I believe in that form of benevolence, and think it does great good. It is particularly needed in a city like New York. And St. Bartholomew's Parish was able in part to supply that need, and did and does supply it. But it is not particularly needed in a village like New Canaan, in this State, where I am in the habit of spending my summers. There are other needs there, more pertinent and imperative; and for any parish there to undertake to start a Loan Bureau, even if it could, would be a misdirection of energy. The thing itself is good and wise, but it is not good and wise in all circumstances; and whether or not it should be attempted will depend upon the circumstances, the circumstances of the parish, and the circumstances of the community in which the parish is located.

Or, take another illustration of a more general character. There is no problem perhaps in this country more pressing and wide-spread, and at the same time more

difficult, than the drink problem, than the problem which deals with the traffic and use of intoxicating liquors; and there is in my judgment no greater mistake than to try to solve that problem in the same way in all places. I am satisfied that it cannot be solved in a community of ten hundred thousand inhabitants in the same way that it can be solved in a community of ten hundred inhabitants. The best method in one case is not only *not* the best, but often the worst in another. And the reason why in America we have made so little progress towards the solution of it is, I think, because we have failed to recognize that fact, and have tried each of us to universalize his own method, and to make it the method always, for everywhere, and for all.

But I have no desire at present to discuss the Temperance question, or to stir up strife and prejudice on that vexed and vexing subject. I have referred to it simply because it furnishes in my judgment an apt illustration of what I am trying now to show, that even when a social problem is everywhere the same, the method of its solution is not everywhere the same; and that what is wisest and best for one

place or one parish, may not be wisest and best and expedient for another.

This, then, is the first rule which I would venture to give you for the development of a parish; and wresting from its connection, and reversing the apostolic injunction, I would say, Let every minister of a parish look not upon the things of others, but upon his own things. Let him look with a hard, practical, open-eyed common sense upon his own parish, upon his own community, its circumstances, its conditions, its needs. Let him not think because some particular clergyman in some particular community has made himself conspicuous, and deservedly so, in some particular kind of work, in the work, let us say, of municipal reform, that he, the clergyman in some other community, is called upon to undertake the same kind of work. Let him be not an echo, but a voice; for while the echo may be just as loud as the voice, and sometimes louder and shriller, it is nevertheless an echo. It is chiefly an amusing thing, and will certainly not accomplish what the voice accomplishes, for the voice has personality in it, and the echo has not. Let not the clergyman

think, again, because there is in some other parish a flourishing Blue Ribbon Society, or a Girls' Friendly Society, or a Christian Endeavor Society, or a St. Andrew's Brotherhood, or a Brotherhood of St. Andrew and St. Philip, that that is just the thing which he must start and have in his parish. Perhaps it is; but perhaps it is not. He must determine that for himself; and there is no Board of Control, at Boston, or Chicago, or New York which can determine it for him. He knows his own parish, or ought to know it, better than any one else; and if it is desirable (and it is) that he should co-operate with others in doing some large and general work in the church, or the nation, or the world, it is also desirable that he should co-operate with them in his own way, and that those who have the management of that large and general work should make its rules so few and flexible that he can co-operate with them in his own way and according to the differential exigencies of his own parochial situation. He must not be trammelled in his co-operation by alien and inapplicable rules. He must be free to adopt new methods which have not been

elsewhere adopted. He must be free also to attempt new works and enterprises which have not been elsewhere attempted. There are in business general rules which business men adopt, and which they observe and practise, and that is right, is necessary; but they are not enslaved by those rules. And the successful man in business is the man who sees in the business world some new thing to do which has not been seen by others, or which at least has not been done by others; who sees it, and seizes it, and makes it yield its rich and fruitful bounty to him.

As it is in the business world, so should it be in the parish. Let every parish learn as much as it can from others, and let it as far as it can co-operate with others in the work of the Church at large. And yet let it not forget, and let not the man who guides and directs its activities forget, that while general rules are good, so are particular rules, and that the valuable quality in the parochial as in the business world is not the quality which is always following precedents, or waiting for precedents to follow, but the quality which sometimes makes them, and then follows its own precedents.

Let every minister then study his own parish, its needs, possibilities, and opportunities, and the needs and opportunities of the community in which it is placed; prepared to unite with others and to do what others do, and also prepared to do at times something new and peculiar which others cannot do; and thus he will contribute some new and peculiar force towards the regeneration of human society at large, towards the establishment on the earth of the kingdom of the Son of Man.

This, then, is the first rule to be observed in the development of parochial activity. It should be a form of activity germane to the parish, which the parish ought to do, and is able to do.

Now, let us go on a little further, and see what the next rule is. Here, we will say, is a work to be done which the parish is capable of doing; and how shall the man in charge of the parish proceed to have it done? The place, let us suppose, is a manufacturing or mill town, with a good many operatives in it; and the minister in that town feels that he and his parish ought to do something for those operatives, for the men who work in those mills. He

thinks it would be a good thing to establish among them a society, a guild, a brotherhood, a club, for mental and moral advancement, or for wholesome recreation and pleasure; a literary society, a debating society, an athletic society, or some kind of society which would be elevating and improving, and which would tend to give its members a more abundant life. Assuming, I say, that that is an expedient thing to do, what is the first step to take in the doing of it? To call a public meeting of the people of the parish, or of the people who work in the mills, or a meeting including both, to talk about and discuss it, and listen to objections, and offer resolutions, and appoint committees, and draw up a constitution, with articles and rules and by-laws? No; a good many societies have been started in that way, and when they got started they stopped. After the constitution and the by-laws had been fully and carefully framed there seemed to be nothing else to do, or at least nothing was done. The societies in question were born, they had strength enough to be born, but not strength enough to go on living after they were born; and having a constitution,

but not the right kind of a constitution, they presently collapsed and died. What, then, is the right kind of constitution to start with? Not a constitution on paper, however elaborate and admirable, but a constitution in flesh and blood. Let the minister who wants to start such a society as I have indicated start with that; not with by-laws, but with a man, or a woman. Let him try to find some one, whether man or woman, and whether in or out of the parish, who feels about the matter as he does, who will make it his personal work, or her personal work, and will devote himself or herself to the faithful furtherance of it. Let him try to find some one who has not only the time for it, but the gift for it, the capacity for it, the patience, the courage, the enthusiasm. Let him begin, not with the establishment of a society, but with the establishment of a personality, making that the nidus, the living and attracting nidus to which the society will come, and around which it will gradually gather, and strengthen, and grow. Then after a while he can make his rules and by-laws for the government of the society when he has a society to govern,

and will know, not from a doctrinaire and theoretical conjecturing, but from a practical experimenting, what laws and rules he ought to make, and what he ought not to make. But let him try to find, first of all, the right kind of person in starting his society. Let him not start it until he does, for that, I am satisfied, is the way to start; and, started in that way, the society which he starts will become a successful society. There will be in it a personal force, and the magnetism of a personal force will draw to it in time other personal forces; and the people of the parish, seeing it going on, will be more likely to support it, and to rally around and help it, not only with their approval, but also with their money, as far as they are able to give it. By and by they will boast of it, and be proud of it, and will appropriate it as their own, and speak of it as the society which *they* started, and as the good work which *they* inaugurated, and which *their* parish is doing. And the minister will be pleased to hear them talk so, and will encourage them so to talk, and yet will know in his heart that it was the *one* resolute man, or the *one* energetic woman, standing as the significant figure

at the beginning of it, who more than any one else, or than all others together, has contributed to its success.

Now that, it seems to me, is a very important rule, and perhaps the most important in the development of parochial activity. And not only is it important in the development of parochial activity, but in the development of all activity of a useful and wholesome kind. And if we take any one of the great movements of the world, social, political, or religious, — or any one of its great institutions, its schools, its academies, its hospitals, its benevolent societies, its missionary societies, its temples of art and learning, — and try to trace it back through its history to its start, we shall usually find that it started, not with many, but with one; that it started as the Bible starts, with a personality, "In the beginning, God;" or that, as in the case of the Christian Church, a personality is its corner-stone. Nearly all the great and fruitful activities of the world have been started in that way; and from them we may learn the rule to be observed by us in our parochial world. Business men have learned it, and the first concern of the busi-

ness man in trying to develop his business, or in trying to start and establish some new department in it, is to find some suitable person to whom he can give it in charge, and whom, placed at the head of it, he can make responsible for it. So much depends, he knows, upon finding the man to begin with, and the right and fit man, that he will not begin until he does find him. And then when he does find him (except for general guidance and direction), he does not interfere with him, but leaves it largely to him, if not to plan, at least to execute, the details of the enterprise which has been committed to him.

This leads me to speak of another rule which it would be well for the clergyman to adopt in the development of parochial activity, and which, if not like unto the one which I have just mentioned, is at least suggested by it. And that other rule is this: not to do himself what somebody else can do as well.

It has doubtless occurred to you, while I have been speaking and telling you that the way in which to promote and develop some new parochial adventure is to find the right person to start with, that that

is not always an easy thing to do. It may be comparatively easy in a very large parish, which has the constituency of a very large membership to draw from; but most parishes are not large, or not very large; and in the ordinary parish, however desirable it may be, or however necessary, it is not always easy to find some suitable person, some suitable man or woman with whom to begin to do some needed parochial work. And surely it is not easy. If it were, then everything would be easy, and the problem of parochial activity would not be much of a problem. And yet, despite the greatness of the difficulty, it is not, I am convinced, even in the ordinary parish, insuperable. And if the parish clergyman, instead of devoting so much of his time to the doing of things himself, would devote it rather to the finding of some one else to do them, he would be, I think, very often — oftener than he supposes before he tries — successful in his search. That, it seems to me, is what he should have in mind in visiting in his parish, and in trying more and more to become acquainted with it, namely, to discover individuals in it who are fitted for particular things, for

particular kinds of work, saying to one and another, as from time to time he finds them, here is something for *you* to do, and here is something for *you*, and *you*. That is his parish problem, not how he can do all things himself: he cannot do them all himself; he has not the time nor the strength; nor ought he indeed to do them even if he could. His work is to set others to work, and to be active in making them active. And if he tries to do everything himself, he will not only fail in the attempt, but will also fail in developing the activity of his parish. And that is what chiefly he is trying to do: not simply to work himself, but to make his parish work; and however busy and industrious he may be personally, unless he can thereby make his parish industrious and busy, he will not, and cannot, become a successful parish worker. There are some clergymen, it has been said, who are forever confounding inspiration with perspiration. It is a homely phrase, but an apt one; and the confusion to which it refers does, I fear, exist in the minds of not a few. They are active in moving about, and in making parish calls, and in doing this and that, and going here

and there, and hastening on to attend to something else, with but little time to give us when we happen to come across them. They always seem so busy, so breathlessly busy, and they always are so busy; and as in our quieter and humbler spheres we stand apart and look at them, the words of the apostle will somehow force themselves upon us and come into our minds, that "bodily exercise profiteth little." They are not, at least, the models, so we venture to think, of the ideal parish clergyman who, in a quieter way, with less fussiness and more thoughtfulness, is forever working upon, and working out the problem how he can best succeed in making his people work. He is not idle, far from it; he has much to do, very much; his work is hard and exacting, and taxes all his strength. But it is the work of one who leads, or the work of one who inspires, who is always trying to find the right things to be done, and the right persons to do them; and who, when he has found them, trusts them, and does not needlessly interfere with them, knowing that people will work best when they are allowed to work in their own way, and to put their

own personality into their work. It will be his duty, of course, to suggest and plan the work, the character of it, the scope of it, and the policy for the workers to pursue. He will also have to encourage and help them in their work, and to keep himself in touch with it; and yet he will let them feel that it is their work, and that what they can do as well as he, he will not do, but will reserve himself for the doing of what they cannot do.

I have referred to the methods adopted by men in the business world, and that is one of their methods: not to do themselves what others can do as well, or well enough, and only to do themselves what others cannot do. That is the way in which they are able, often to our amazement, to accomplish so much. They have learned the secret of transferring whatever is transferable to agents, to clerks, to book-keepers, to stenographers, to various kinds of deputies; and while they guide and direct those deputies and clerks, they let them do the work, and trust them to do the work, and expect them to do the work which has been given to them to do. It is a good rule in the business world, experience has proved it

good; and it is equally good in the parochial. I know, indeed, that the two cases are not exactly parallel, and that we cannot proceed in precisely the same manner in both. The vicarious work in the business world is paid work, and if it is not done, or not done well, the persons intrusted with it can be and are dismissed; while in the parochial world the work that is done by others is largely gratuitous and voluntary, and the workers themselves in consequence cannot be so closely and strictly held to the mark. As far, however, as it is feasible, it is a good rule to adopt; and the best results, I am confident, cannot be developed or obtained in the parochial world until something like it has been adopted there. A little work can be done, but not a large work. It will be a work done by the minister, and not a work done by the parish; and it is a work done by the parish which the minister wishes done, and should exert himself to have done, but which, of course, by the parish will not be done, nor even attempted, as long as the minister tries to do it all himself.

May I refer to my own experience here, and say that that is the method which I

have found it necessary to adopt. We have in St. Bartholomew's Parish a good many departments of parochial activity. We have not only our Sunday-schools, and missionary societies, and benevolent societies, but a Swedish mission, and a Chinese mission, and an Armenian mission, and a Syrian mission, and a lodging-house, and a loan bureau, and an employment bureau, and a coffee-house, and a penny provident fund, and a girls' club, and a boys' club, and a men's club, and a gymnasium, and a kindergarten, and a surgical clinic, and a medical clinic, and an eye and ear clinic, — but the list is long enough. Now, it would have been absolutely impossible for me or any other man to get all these things started, unless I had adopted the rule, not simply of trying to do things myself, but of trying to find others to do them. I am in touch with all those things, and try as best I can to guide and direct them. And once every week I have a conference with the heads of all the departments of parish work, and the head of each department makes to me at that conference a weekly report of his work, and we talk over the matter together, and wind things up, as it

were, for another week; and so the work goes on, and there is but little friction in it. The head of a parish, therefore, like the head of a business, if he would have the parish do its largest possible work, must learn to transfer whatever in his work can be transferred to others, and must not do himself what they can do as well, but must only do himself what they cannot do. Even then he will find, as the work of his parish grows, that his hands are more than full, and that the work which he is called upon to do is more indeed than he can do.

This leads me to speak of still another rule, which is like the rule of transference, namely, the rule of a wise and a judicious postponement. I do not know who said it first, but it has been often said since, that one should never put off until to-morrow what can be done to-day. That may be a good rule for an idle man, or for a man who is disposed to be idle; but it is not good, I am sure, for a man who is crowded with work. Such a man must learn, not only how to transfer whatever can be transferred, but also how to postpone whatever can be postponed. For even when he has transferred whatever can be transferred,

there is often still a residuum left which is more than he can do at that particular time, and he must make another transference, not to another person, but to another time. And from the various things which have been devolved upon him, — the letters he has to write, the calls he has to make, the directions he has to give, the plans he has to form, and the activities to superintend, or the wheels to set in motion and to keep in motion, all of which that day he cannot personally do, — he must select those things which are that day most urgent, and which cannot well be left to another and later day; and whatever can be left to another and later day must be so left. He must learn the art of a wise and judicious postponement, not because he is lazy, but because he is very busy. It is an art, and the busy man has learned it. He has had to learn it; and instead of not putting off until to-morrow what can be done to-day, he has found from personal experience that it is sometimes wise to reverse that proverbial precept, and not to do to-day what can be put off until to-morrow. He has found, too, from experience that it is an economical rule, and that a certain percentage of

the work he is called to do, if postponed, will not have to be done, or will somehow do itself. And he reckons on that percentage, and counts it in his work, or rather counts it out, — he discounts it, and learns to do each day only what each day he can do and ought to do, or ought most to do, and to leave the rest undone, and not to worry about it. And not worrying about to-morrow, he will be better prepared for to-morrow and for whatever to-morrow brings, and will sometimes find, when it comes, that it does not come at all as he supposed it would come, or does not bring at all what he supposed it would bring. Now that is a rule for the man who is very much pressed with work, for the very busy man. It is not a rule for the man who is not much pressed with work, who is not a busy man. And in saying that it is a rule for the clergyman to adopt in the development of parochial activity, I take it for granted, of course, that the clergyman is a very busy man, a man pressed with work, and pressed for time in which to do his work. If he is that kind of man he will learn the art of postponement: experience will teach it to him. He will use it

without abusing it: not with a view to shirking his work, or to letting it go undone, but simply with a view to the better performance of it; and he will know what I mean. But if he is not that kind of man, he will not know what I mean, or will pervert and wrest my meaning, and think that the counsel which I give is neither wise nor safe. And for him it is not safe; and this much of my meaning at least I should be glad to have him understand, that I do not mean *him*, and that in saying what I have said, I have had in mind the man who, to the utmost of his capacity, and without sparing himself, is trying to make the parish for which in the providence of God he has been made responsible an active and working parish. And because I believe, young gentlemen, that that is your ambition, I have ventured to give you some of the rules which I have learned from experience, and which in my case, at least, experience has proved to be helpful.

What are those rules? Let me summarize them. First, you should study your own parish, and try to develop in it only such activity as it is fitted to do.

Second, you should do it by finding the right persons to do it. Third, you should transfer what you can transfer, and keep for yourselves only what is your personal work; and fourth, you should learn in doing your work the art of a wise and judicious postponement, doing to-day what you can do, or what seems to-day most urgent, and then without fret or worry leaving the rest undone.

Let me add two or three counsels more. In the development of parochial activity do not go too fast. Do one thing well first, get it well started and established, and make a success of it before you start something else; and that, when you have made a success of it, will suggest something else to start, and not only so, but will enable you the better to start it. Your people will see that you are a practical man, and a wise one, and that what you undertake to do you carry through and do. They will be more likely to give you their confidence, to believe in you, and to help you. They will look upon you as a man who always succeeds in his work, and and they will contribute to your success, and success will lead to success, and to

still greater success. And when, from time to time, you make some new proposals to them, they will feel that you at least know what you are about; and your opinion will be their opinion, and your judgment their judgment, for they will have had experience of your judgment, and will have found that it is good, and they will follow where you lead.

In the development of parochial activity, therefore, do not go too fast. Make one thing a success before you start something else, and you will find in the end that that is the fastest way.

This other advice I give. In the development of parochial activity you will need money, — not much, it may be, but some; and the money which you need must come from your parishioners. They are the persons to whom you will have to look to obtain it; and if you would be successful in your efforts to obtain it you must inspire them with confidence, not merely in your moral character, but in your business character. You must make a report of the money, whether much or little, which from time to time they give you, and which passes through your hands:

not with a view to showing or proving that you are honest, — that of course they do not question, — but simply because it is business, and you are dealing with business men who are accustomed to that sort of thing, and who in the business world require it. They may not require it of you as their clergyman, but they will be gratified if, without requiring it, they receive it. And when as business men they see that you deal with money in a practical and business-like way, and are always able to account and always do account for every dollar, for every cent, that has been intrusted to you, it will be not only a satisfaction to them, but a kind of satisfaction which will be productive of liberality in them, and dispose them to intrust you with more money.

Be careful, then, about money matters. You cannot be too careful. And when you take a collection, take it in such a way that the people will understand, not that they are being asked to give to something they know not what exactly, and simply because it is a custom to take collections in churches, but to something they *do* know what, which you have made them know

with clear and full knowledge. Then when you have taken it, be particular always to account for it, and to show that it has been used in the way you promised to use it: not for the sake, I say again, of making clear your integrity in the matter, — that is not doubted, — but simply because that is the business way to proceed; and in dealing with business men in the business aspects of your parish work you want to be business-like. A little knowledge of book-keeping is desirable in a clergyman; and whether he handles thousands of dollars, or hundreds of dollars, or less, it is equally desirable; and the clergyman who keeps an account of the money which he handles, and in proper times and ways reports it to his people, will not, I think, as a rule, experience much difficulty in obtaining from his people such reasonable sums of money for the development of parochial activity as they are able to give. The American people are practical and business-like, but they are also generous; and when they believe in the cause, and when they believe in the man who embodies and pleads the cause, they will help him to his heart's desire.

And now, having said all of this to you about your parish work and the way in which I think it ought to be done, what I have said would be incomplete unless I should supplement it with something else. For I would not have you feel that in doing your parish work in the way that your parish requires, you are doing only your parish work. You are doing a work which reaches far beyond your parish. No man can live to himself to-day, and no parish can live to itself. Every man is related to every other man, and every parish is related to every other parish. And it is, after all, not our parishes merely that we are trying to develop and build, it is the kingdom of God we are trying to build. Human life on earth is not many, but one; and to-day we are beginning to perceive and realize that fact as we have never perceived and realized it before. Barriers between the people still exist of course, and always will exist, for God has made men different, and we cannot make them alike. Barriers still exist, therefore, but they are not so high as they used to be, they are not so hard to get over. The "demos" is asserting itself. The people are coming up and getting nearer together;

and as they clasp each other's hands stretched across the boundaries, and heart beats against heart, and they look over the walls with a glad surprise into each other's faces, they are astonished to see and find how much alike they are, how much they have in common; and that the humanity which unites them is greater and more than the circumstance which divides them. That, I say, is what at present we are beginning to realize as we have never realized it before. We are beginning to realize as never before that the true field of human life and effort is not that little spot of earth on which our feet are standing, — the village, the town, the city in which we are dwelling, or the parish to which we belong. We are moving to-day upon a larger plane. We are finding our correlations in a wider sphere. We are gathering our subsistence for heart, for soul, for mind as well as for body from a vaster expanse of territory. All the people to-day in all the world are thronging us. What we think is going far beyond us into the thought of the world. What we do is going far beyond us into the conduct of the world. The individual touches the multitude; the multitude

touches the individual; each overflowing into all, and all flowing back again into the bosom of each. Hence it is that people feel to-day there is nothing so out of place as narrow-mindedness; nothing so galling, so fretting, so hard to bear as provincialism; because they feel that provincialism is a wrong accent in this closing decade of the nineteenth century life; and that the little narrow-minded man who takes no interest in anything except what he is doing, is born out of due time, and should have been born ten hundred years ago, when the field of human sympathy and fellowship was more in correspondence with his little narrow thought.

While, therefore, we must do our parish work according to its needs and opportunities, and in the way that it ought to be done, we must not allow ourselves to become little narrow-minded clergymen, taking upon us simply the hue and complexion of our parochial environment. We must try to realize rather that the field in which we are working is as broad as the world itself; and that while in our several parishes we are doing our parish work, we are at the same time doing a work which

is more than our parish work, and which is somehow contributing to the establishment on the earth of the Kingdom of God. It was, as you know, the custom of the Roman emperors to celebrate with their subjects the annual feast of the Terminalia, in which they worshipped the god Terminus, who presided over the boundary lines; but the Kingdom of Jesus Christ has no boundary lines, or not now at least, and its Terminalia will not be celebrated until the whole wide world shall have been made subject to Him whose temple on the earth we are trying now to build. Not indeed in our time will that temple be built; but it will be built some day, and we can help to build it. And if the angels in heaven can somehow see and rejoice over penitent sinners here, may not we perhaps, somewhere in the universe, we know not where, but somewhere, see the structure finished which we have helped to build; and mingle our voices with the shoutings of those who cry, "Grace, grace unto it!" when the headstone shall be brought forth at last, and the world in which we are living now shall have become the Temple of God!

THE PREACHER MAKING THE MOST OF HIMSELF

THE PREACHER MAKING THE MOST OF HIMSELF

IN approaching the end of this course of lectures, in which I have been trying to tell you something about "The Preacher and His Place," I am impressed very strongly with the feeling, not that I have said what I ought not to have said, but that I have left unsaid so much that I ought to have said. More and more it has been borne in upon me that it is impossible for one person to lay down rules or prescribe methods for another. No man can tell another the secret of himself, however poor that secret may be, for the reason that it is even to himself a secret. He may do things fairly well, but he cannot tell how he does them, or he can tell only in part, and the part which he does not and cannot tell is the most vital and important part. I remember once saying to a very gifted preacher just after I had heard him preach one of his inspiring and inspired sermons,

that I was not surprised the people came in such great crowds to hear him, and that I could well understand why they came. "I can't," was his simple and modest answer; and I do not believe he could; neither could I, although I said I could. But what I meant was this, that there was a great and helpful attractiveness in his preaching which I perceived and felt, as did everybody else who heard him; but what that attractiveness really was, or in what it consisted, I could not say then, and cannot say now. Personality, perhaps, would express it as much as anything else. But then, again, what is personality? Or why is it that that force which we call personality is so much more forceful in some than it seems to be in others? I do not know. That is part of the mystery of life which cannot be explained. Mr. Ruskin says, somewhere, that the greatness or smallness of every person is determined for him at the outset, just as it is determined for a fruit whether it shall be an apricot or a pear. And that I presume is true; and as far as it is true the individual himself has nothing to do in the matter except to be what God made him, or except

to become what the God who made him meant that he should become.

But how may he become what he was meant to become? Here, perhaps, is where advice and counsel may legitimately come in, and where the suggestions of one may be helpful and useful to others. And in this closing lecture I will try to tell you how I think the preacher can make the most of himself, how he can develop such power of personal force, such power of personality as may be potential in him, and which more than anything else will make his preaching a power.

First, however, let me call your attention to the fact that it is not easy to-day to develop that personal force, and that the constitution of modern society is such that instead of tending to make personality rich and strong, it tends sometimes to make it poor and weak. Let me show you what I mean by the help of illustration. It is, I think, Mr. Herbert Spencer who somewhere says that there is an antagonism oftentimes between what he calls the increase of size or bulk and the increase of organism or structure, the one growing not infrequently at the expense of the latter.

In the vegetable kingdom, for instance, those plants which grow very rapidly in bulk do not possess, as a general thing, as much strength and toughness of structural fibre as those which grow more slowly. They are not so vigorous and hardy; they have less power of resistance, and cannot encounter so successfully the adverse influence of the elements, and are more likely to wither and die. So, too, in the animal kingdom. The boy who grows very rapidly in size is apt to become weakened for a time in vital force by the precocity of his physical development, and to be made more liable to disease.

Now, what is true of existence in the animal and vegetable kingdom seems to be equally true of existence in the social kingdom. The size of life in our time, its physical proportions, so to speak, have been characterized by a precociously rapid and unprecedented development and growth. Our extent of vision to-day, our opportunity of action, our curriculum of study, our range of influence, our sphere of sympathy, the entire circumference of our being, by reason of modern invention and skill, has been most wonderfully enlarged.

The life of the whole round world to-day is humming and buzzing, shouting and singing, laughing and crying, whispering and thundering, and all at once, its story into our ears. Yes, and more than that. By spectroscope and telescope we of this generation have been carried beyond the society of this earthly planet, and introduced into the society of the universe itself. We have grown so in size that we can reach out and touch the stars; so large and giant in form have we become that we can take them into our arms, resolve them into their constituent and component parts, and weigh them in our scales. And yet this rapid development of our life in social size and bulk may militate against the development of individual organism and structure, — the great power of society weakening personal force. The very multitude of our opportunities and privileges paralyzing our action. The very abundance of our pleasures diminishing our joy. The very greatness of our educational advantages dissipating the mental force. There are so many books to read to-day that we read none of them well. There are so many things to think about to-day

that we are in danger of losing the power of concentrated thought. It is so easy to-day to read the Bible in our mother tongue that it lies on the table neglected. It is so easy to-day, in comparison with what it used to be, to go to church, that we don't go. The house in which we live is luxurious in its appointments, and the life that we live there is so often sluggish and dull. The church in which we gather to worship God is rich in its splendor and beauty, and the worship that we offer there is so often barren and dead. The schoolhouse splendid and the scholar dull; the church magnificent and the worshipper drowsy. Socially becoming stronger and greater, personally weaker and less.

We are told to-day that the genius of the drama is declining; that the power of the pulpit is waning; that literature is losing its originality because of its voluminousness; that statesmanship is degenerating; and while the statement is not unqualifiedly true, it has enough truth in it to illustrate how the great development of life in social size may militate against the development of individual structure, weakening personal capacity and force.

There are so many things going on in our modern world, so many oracles of wisdom clamoring to be heard, so many prophets prophesying, so many preachers preaching, so many critics criticising, so many voices of one kind and another sounding in our ears, that we feel like a person in an overcrowded drawing-room at an evening party, utterly dazed and bewildered, unable to speak or listen to anybody coherently for any length of time on any subject, or to give forth any sound having sense and meaning; stupified, asphyxiated, spellbound by the great chattering, brilliant world society about us.

Instead, therefore, of making much of individuals to-day, we put our trust in corporations, in institutions, in organizations, in machines; the individual man becoming less and less important, shrinking into smaller and smaller proportions, gradually going down into the depths of obscurity and darkness, dropping out of sight and mind. The corporation everything, the individual nothing; socially great and strong, personally weak and unimportant. That, I say, is a tendency to which we are exposed. Society has

become overgrown, and we cannot easily keep up with it. The world of human interests is getting to be too big for us, is developing too rapidly, and we are trying to absorb and assimilate so much in our attempt to keep up with the times, as we say, that the faculties are in danger of becoming congested.

How may this danger be avoided? How may a man to-day, in spite of all these antagonistic tendencies, make the most of himself, and develop to the utmost his potential personality? I answer, first, by a fixed and steadfast purpose to serve the human life about him. See how a fixed and steadfast purpose operates in one's life. Two persons, we will suppose, go on 'Change together at some great commercial or metropolitan centre, New York, or Chicago, or Paris, at some feverish crisis in the market. One of them goes there for no particular purpose; he simply drops in as a stranger visiting the city to note what can be seen and heard. And the power of that strange, tumultuous life, that shouting, and screaming, and flinging of arms overhead, that hurried and feverish movement to and fro, as though all Bedlam

had broken loose, it is too much for him. He is stupefied, dazed, lost. He seems to be in everybody's way. Everybody else seems to be in his way. He is tripping over everybody. Everybody seems to be tripping over him, and he is in danger of being crushed. But the other man goes there for a purpose. There is somebody he wants to see there, must see; or there is business of a particular sort that he wants to transact there. He has stocks to sell, or grain, or cotton, or wool to buy. He goes there for a purpose, and the power of that purpose guards him, guides him, steadies him, saves him from being crushed and overcome. Well, it is the same way in the broader areas of life. Go out into the world, and live your lives without any fixed and definite object, and the bright glare of the world's great society will dazzle you; the roar of the world will deafen you, perhaps madden you. So many things there are you could easily do if you wanted to; so many things inviting you to their performance; so many things, I say, that you could easily do if you wanted to, that you do not do any of them; thus floating, sinking, gone at last, having ac-

complished little or nothing. But hold up the shield of a purpose, no matter what it is, and stick to it, and you are protected thereby from the confusing and bewildering noises about you. The roar of the battle may be at the very gate; but the voice of the inspiration of the purpose that is crying in you is louder than the surrounding strife, and your life goes straight on with your purpose.

Then, further, let it be a purpose not to be ministered unto, but, as in the case of Jesus Christ, to minister to the human life about you. And how strangely and quickly will all the best forces of that human life about you give themselves to you, their beauty, their power, their life, and become incorporated in you, become as it were you. They will take their crowns and crown you. They will lift you up and exalt you, and give their blessing to you, and will help to make you all that you are capable of becoming. Is it not the same great principle which we see operating everywhere else? "Serve me long and well," says art; "be my minister first, and then some day you shall become my master." "Kneel low at my footstool with

patient and reverent homage," says the kingdom of nature to the inquiring disciple, "and then some day you shall sit on my throne." So does the world of human life about you seem to say the same thing to you. "Take your life and live it for yourself alone, and I will do little or nothing for you. I will give you none of the enrichment wherewith I am enriched; and my best and strongest influences, which would help you so much to come to yourself, you will never know or reach. But take your life and live it, not for yourself, but for me, and then I will give it back a hundredfold unto your bosom again, and you shall thus become and reach your best and truest self, your greatest and highest self." Is it not the way in which everything comes to itself, — not through itself, but through others? Take, for instance, anything you please, — a tree, a house, a church, this church, or this chapel, or some particular object or feature in this chapel, this window, for instance, behind me. Is it a thing by itself? Apparently it is, but in reality it is not. How did it come to be where it is? Somebody put it there. Before somebody put it there somebody else

made it. And where did he find the material out of which to make it? He found it in the earth. And how did it come to be in the earth? By a long, long process, too long to tell about, it grew there. And what made it grow there? Heat, and cold, and moisture, and summer, and winter, and fire, and vapor, and snow, and friction, and decomposition, and petrifaction. It came to be itself not by itself, but through other things outside of itself; and except for those other innumerable things outside of itself it would never have reached itself. Its personality, so to speak, would never have been developed.

And that is just as true of human nature as it is of inanimate nature. No man can reach the full stature of his personality except through others. Living alone and standing apart from others, he can never show what he is, "but only what he is not." He can only show, as some one has said, that he is not a friend, or acquaintance, or companion, or comrade, or neighbor; he exists for nobody; and presently, to his surprise, and generally to his horror, he will discover that he is nobody. The people about us to-day are not really other

people, they are ourselves, in whom we become alive, and reach, and find ourselves, and in whose features, masked and disguised by suffering, and need, and ignorance, and foolishness, and want, we shall find as the mask is lifted the features of ourselves.

There is, therefore, no more effective way in which a man can develop and bring out to the utmost the potential force of personality in him than by that manner of life which in the Christian ministry is yours, or which is in theory yours, and should be yours in fact. It is sometimes said, I know, that the Christian minister's life is a very narrow life; and so sometimes it is. But if it is so, it is not because it ought to be so, but because he has made it so. Let him steadfastly maintain in his ministry the great unselfish purpose of his ministry to touch, and heal, and help, and in some way to serve the human life about him, and more and more will that human life give itself to him, and make his power more, his personality more. It is not, then, young gentlemen, a little and narrow calling into which you are going; it is the biggest and the broadest of all callings; and a calling,

too, which as you pursue it will make you big and broad. With a heart and mind and soul open on all sides towards your fellow men, you will acquire that most effective of all forces, personal force, and which more than anything else will make your preaching effective.

And yet, while all this is true, it is not the whole truth. There is something more to be said. There is another environment about you besides the human environment, and Godward as well as manward you must open your hearts and souls. And if you are to become the highest and the best that you are capable of becoming, you must learn to live in communion with the highest and the best. I am a strong believer in prayer as a factor in personal development. And the men who have been the great leaders in the Christian Church in the past, and whose personality has contributed much to the making and moulding of the Church, have been men who prayed much as well as men who worked much; and who, through prayer, were made patient, and brave, and strong in work, and fitted for their work. And in the same way, young gentlemen, must we be fitted for our work,

through the quickening power of prayer; and whatever tends to weaken confidence in prayer tends to weaken us, and to prevent us from reaching and using that power of personal force by which alone we can do our best and greatest work. It cannot be denied, however, that there are tendencies to-day which seem to be energizing in that direction. We meet them not only in others through reading and conversation, we often feel them ourselves; and sometimes, indeed, when with bowed head or bended knee we are engaged in the very act of prayer, the thought will somehow suddenly come and be suggested to us, What is the use of it after all? Is there any good in prayer? Is there any reality in it? Are we indeed speaking into the ear of God, or simply articulating into the air? Does the Lord Almighty hear our prayer, and will He answer? Or are we simply repeating and mumbling pious words and phrases because we have been taught to do so, whose only response is their echo, and not even that?

It may not be amiss, therefore, if in the closing part of this closing lecture I venture to say something to you about these

tendencies which seem to militate against the reality of prayer. Most of them might be summarized in some such statement or objection as this: Nature being uniform in its working, effect following cause there with an unerring regularity of sequence and occurrence, prayer is an exercise contrary to the law of nature. But that, it it seems to me, is exactly what it is not. Prayer contrary to the laws of nature? What nature? Whose nature? It is not contrary to my nature. It is not contrary to your nature. It is not contrary to human nature in general, for in all ages men have prayed; and, judging the future by the past, as long as human nature remains human nature they will continue to pray. It is the one thing, indeed, which everywhere we see, which everywhere we hear, — prayer: in all lands, among all peoples, in all conditions of life, among all sorts of men, in all the past we hear it. In the song of the Parsee priest on the top of the Persian mountains; in the sound of the Mussulman's cry, breaking forth with the sunrise from the turret stone of the mosque; in Mohammedanism; in Buddhism; in Zoroasterism; in the monotheism

of the Jew; in the militarism of the Roman; in the fetichism of the African, — the voice of prayer is heard. And the spirit of prayer is felt breathing through the hymns to Indra and Varuna, as well as through the Psalms of David to Jehovah.

What is the story of human life in the past but the story of religion? and if of religion, then of prayer. It is the story of human life trying to come to itself through a power outside of itself; and to somehow tell itself, its deepest, inmost, secretest self, into the listening ear of some sympathetic God. And not only in the story of the past do we hear it, in the story of the present we hear it. The voice of prayer is heard in all the lands to-day; among all the people to-day; not only among the people who call themselves religious, but among the people who do not call themselves religious, who yet, in spite of themselves, are a little religious at times. They cannot keep God out of their thought. They cannot keep God out of their speech. The instinct of God is in them, and they cannot get rid of it. And that instinct of God which is in them carries with it the instinct to appeal at times to God. And they do appeal to God;

not always reverently, sometimes profanely, using His name as a name with which to curse and swear. But what is cursing and swearing but the instinct in them of prayer, of appeal to God, gone mad, because *they* have gone mad and angry for a moment; the instinct in them of prayer blasphemously expressed. It is an irrepressible, an ineradicable instinct. It shows itself in wrath, in anger, in love, in fear, in danger, in death, in the sudden escape from danger, in the sudden exemption from death, when involuntarily they are moved to say and can't help saying, "Thank God!" as though, somehow, He did it, and they feel and know He did it. Or, when touched with some emotion, some deep and strong emotion beyond the common want, of gladness or of joy, which they know not how to express or how to others to tell it, or how with others to share it, the heart goes up to God as though it would share it with Him, and would say to Him, "Oh, see, as no one else can see, my gladness and my joy!" Or when in some hour of need, confronting some difficult or perilous task which they have not strength or energy to perform, and yet which they

must perform, without any human guidance and without any human aid, treading the winepress all alone in darkness and in weariness, with none to help or understand, or bring deliverance to them, and the cry goes up to God for help, and the appeal to God is made!

Prayer contrary to the laws of nature? Why *it is* a law of nature, of human nature at least, which lives, and breathes, and moves, and has its being in prayer; which is forever, reverently or irreverently, sacredly or profanely, silently or vocally, somehow appealing to God; swearing in His name, protesting in His name, testifying in His name, deprecating, imprecating, expostulating in His name; forever carrying up its great case in equity to God as unto its highest and ultimate Court.

Contrary to the laws of nature? Why, more than anything else it is our nature. It ripples through all our laughter, which is in its last analysis but the breaking forth for a moment of the imprisoned spirit trying to reach and touch the glad surprise of some unknown life. It ripples through all our laughter, it shines through all our tears; it shows itself in our weaknesses,

makes stronger our strengths, and quickens within us the dream of some ideal life, not seen as yet, but believed in, towards which we now press on, towards which we now aspire as the home of the soul in God. In human nature, at least, I say, there is no other law so imperiously dominant, so supremely transcendent, so universally prevalent as the instinct in us of prayer; and we can no more get rid of it than human nature can get rid of human nature.

Now let us go on a little farther. What is human nature? What is our physical science to-day declaring our human nature to be? Where does our physical science to-day say it originated and came from? You know what it has to say upon that point. Human nature, it says, is all of a piece and one with all the rest of nature: one organism, one growth, one development; just as the growth of the plant is one, from the seed where it starts to the blossom where it ends; as the growth of the tree is one, from the root below the ground to the fruitage and foliage above. So is nature all of a piece, and one; from the nature far down and below, which is not human, to the nature far up and above, which is human. It

is all one growth, through protoplasm, and molecule, and mist, and star-dust, and rock, and mineral, and vegetable, to man; one growth, one organism, one development, all of a piece. Now, without entering upon a discussion of the merits of that theory, let us assume, if you please, that it is true, that man has been evolved by a long process of development out of a molecule, or a protoplasm, or a lump of clay. Will it be maintained, can it be maintained, that the lump of clay out of which he came, enters more essentially with its laws and tendencies into the constitution of things, than the human being with his laws and tendencies who came out of the lump? "Is that a consistent science which maintains that man is to be included within the scope of nature, and then excludes him from the scope of nature in trying to ascertain what are the laws of nature?" If man be part of it all, connected with it all, related to it all, then why should he, the highest, biggest, best part, in trying to interpret nature, be thrown out of the count? And if the tendency to pray be, as from the induction of all human life it seems to be, an essential part of his being, an essential law of his

being, why is it not just as much a law of nature, as the law which binds the planets in their course, or makes the earth to turn to-day, or the sun to shine to-day?

"The reality of a growing thing," some one has wisely and truly said, "the reality of a growing thing is in its highest form of growth;" the last explains the first, not the first the last. And the highest form of growth in this growing universe, if it is a growing universe, is man, with the spiritual instinct in his heart to pray.

But then it is said that that spiritual instinct of prayer must be confined to spiritual things. Possibly so. But who has a metaphysical scalpel or blade that is sharp enough and keen enough to draw the line of demarcation between them, and tell us where spirit in its influence on matter ends, and matter in its influence on spirit begins? It cannot be done. Spiritual things and material things cannot be separated. They move and go together; here and now, at least, they stand or fall together. Patience is a spiritual thing, as are love, hope, faith; but they rest on a physical basis, and are largely determined by physical facts and conditions. Good temper

is a spiritual thing; but good temper is somewhat determined by good digestion. The soft answer that turneth away wrath is a spiritual thing; but the soft answer that turneth away wrath is not so easily spoken when we are weak and tired, and the nerve force is exhausted, and all the nerves seem to be out on the surface scintillating sparks, as when we are strong and well. Spiritual forces are closely correlated with physical forces. If we are to pray only for spiritual things, how shall we know what to pray for and what not to pray for? If we are to pray only for spiritual things and not physical, which are so mixed up with them, how can we pray at all? And yet is it not, after all, futile to pray for physical things? A shower of rain, for instance, is the product of certain atmospheric agencies, which make a shower of rain inevitable. Or the death of an individual, again, is the consequence of certain pathological and physiological conditions which render his decease as sure as the rising or setting of the sun. And can we hope by prayer to change the whole course and constitution of the world of physical nature? I do not know; all

I know is this, and this I do know, that it would be to change the whole course and constitution of the world of human nature if we did not pray. And upon that world of human nature, which is said to have come out of all the rest of nature, to be its blossomed outgrowth, — upon that world of human nature, with the instinct in it of prayer, we take our stand and pray, and leave results to Him who is greater and wiser than we, and who has made it a law of our being, a law of nature, to pray.

Now, I have said all this, young gentlemen, because I want you to feel how right, how reasonable, is prayer; and that you are not turning away from the light of nature as modern knowledge reveals it to you when you turn towards the light of Christ. And because, further, I would deepen in you the conviction which I am sure you already have, that it is only by the opening up of your heart and soul, not only towards the human, but towards the divine environment of your lives, that you can reach the full stature of your personal development and make the most of yourselves. Let God make you strong, and

then you are strong with a strength that will prove itself so often to be an invincible strength, and which opposition and difficulty will only more fully bring out. Do you remember the story that Browning tells of the tyrant who tried to crush one of his weak and apparently defenceless subjects?

"So I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake.
Overhead did my thunders combine
With my underground mine,
Till I looked from my labors content
To enjoy the event,
When suddenly, how think ye the end?
. . . . . .
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts and prayed,
So I was afraid."

Ah, yes, it is then that the man springs to his feet and stands erect and strong in the full stature of his manhood, when prayer becomes, not merely a form or phrase, but a living reality to him, and when, through prayer, he reaches out and touches the skirts of God, and God becomes a living reality to him.

How, then, in trying to tell you something about the preparation of yourselves for that great work to which you have devoted yourselves could I dare, even at the risk of seeming to preach to you a little, leave unsaid that which I have said, and which, although I have said it last, is in importance first? Never let your work come between you and God. You will be tempted to do so at times; but do not yield to the temptation. Let nothing come between you and God; for it is as men of God that you go. Men of God! Think how much that means, or how much it ought to mean. It is as men of God that you go out into the world among your fellow-men, with fixed and steadfast purpose to serve your fellow-men. Thus, and only thus, laying hold on God, will you become in a measure the incarnation of God, His quickening power and life flowing into your souls. Thus, and only thus, with a fixed and steadfast purpose to serve your fellow-men, will you become the embodiment of your fellow-men, and what is highest and best in them will be expressed in you. And becoming thus in yourselves the most that you can become,

and having a personality strengthened and enriched both by man and God, by the whole environment of your lives, the human and the divine, will you most effectively do what He, who was on earth both Son of Man and God, has sent you forth to do.

THE END.