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essential to salvation, which separate Christians from one another; but sacerdotalism cuts at the very root of the Melchizedikian priesthood of our great High Priest, and at the root of the priesthood of all the members of His mystical body. There is no form of pride so insidious and so hateful to God as ecclesiastical pride. The priest turning his back upon the people when praying to God with them has been brought back into our Church *for doctrinal reasons, because it is essential to priestcraft*, after it had been almost unknown in her for three hundred years. Why, then, should those of us who do not hold sacerdotal doctrines adopt it, and offend the lambs of the flock by doing so? "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must need be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

ROBERT BRUCE.

(To be continued.)



ART. III.—PREACHING: IN REFERENCE TO HABITS OF THOUGHT AND LIFE.

PREACHING is an order in our Church, and, from the first establishment of Christianity it was a rule and custom. Christ Himself preached, and it is important to observe the method that He used in such ministration. The burden of His preaching was an earnest call to holiness, purity, and goodness, to conformity in spirit with Himself, and so with God. He adapted His teaching to the requirements, socially and spiritually, of those who heard Him. He denounced obvious, unquestionable sin; He was suggestive in His instruction as to ignorance and error, seeking to lead up, by the marvellous light of His parables, to a true spiritual discernment, and to conviction through confirmation from the conscience; He noted the existing conditions and tendencies of society where He lived and taught, and He touched the paralytic, leprous social life there with the hand that could heal if faith responded; He planted the roots of Divine principles, out of which true life may grow in every form and direction and association in which the life of man can be called on to manifest itself in this world. His Apostles afterwards preached on the same lines. True, their earliest teaching was chiefly a testimony to facts; but when the Christian Church was founded, and in some degree organized and consolidated, the burden of their preaching was

the repetition of Christ's call to holiness, purity, and goodness ; the evidence still stands to that effect in the Epistles, which may be regarded as written sermons. They, too, denounced obvious, unquestionable sin ; but they were tender and suggestive as to misapprehensions and mistakes, and even prejudices of a certain kind in connection with religion ; and, in pointing to Christ, they pointed to the principles which He planted, since these principles were embodied in Him, and the growth from them was made manifest in His perfect human life. The Apostles also dealt with the conditions and tendencies of society at the time ; social evils were stigmatized, certain habits of society were considered in relation to religion, rules in some conditions and associations of social life were prescribed or suggested, and right governing influences for society at large were indicated.

Conditions and customs, estimates and ways of thought and feeling existed in that age which do not mark or sway the tone of modern society ; rules and habits and ideas which move upon the surface now were not dreamt of then. The mind and voice and mien of society change with the passing generations. Social life, as to many of its conditions and influencing circumstances, is very different to-day from what it was even in a much nearer past than the beginning of the Christian era. History leads us into the gallery of the varying portraits of human society, but in every aspect of it that could be shown, or that ever will be manifest, the needful corrective might be found for stains, blemishes, and defacement, and the true tone might be given to the picture by the effectual use of those Divine principles of life which Christ and His Apostles made the roots of the matter of their preaching.

Of course, Christ is not to be regarded merely as a social reformer. The principles which He planted, and the precepts which in connection He enjoined, had ultimate reference to man as destined to live for ever in an infinitely larger sphere than that which is at present apparent in the conditions of his life on earth, and they were enforced by the fact that He was the incarnation of the Godhead in humanity. His teaching, true and pure and sublime as it was, would scarcely have permanent effect if it had not the constraining power attached to it by the awful humiliation to which He subjected Himself in order that He might exemplify it, by the descent to the circumstances of a human life—from the being born of a woman to the death on the Cross for us men and for our salvation—and the teaching and example which He gave should always, for due influence, be connected with the sacrifice which He rendered in His life and death. His whole work had ultimate reference to the condition of man in a future state of

being; but the present salvation which He provided for consists in the elevation of man now in the existing circumstances and states of his life on earth into a conformity with God, which is the essence of life eternal; so that the immediate result of Christ's work should be the establishment in men of such rules and principles to govern life in the relations of the individual to human society, as would constitute essential elements in the larger life of the better sphere beyond this world. Thus the preaching of the Gospel of Christ should necessarily involve injunctions to such present training, discipline, and conformity in the duties, relations, and associations of individual human life, in membership with human society, as would evidence kindredship and essential connection with the life eternal in its perfection, which is the ultimate prospect that Christ bids us hope for in accordance with His complete provision in our behalf.

But the Gospel of Christ is frequently preached on a different system. Prominence is not given to the present result which should be effected. The provision is not put as if its first object and consequence were individual and social sanctification and reform in association with a final and full salvation to be attained in an eternity of such glory in the future perfection; it is rather put as if it were only a means of escaping the misery and torture of hell, and obtaining the joys and glory of heaven, without an adequate estimate of the nature of such joy and glory, or of the requisites for the appreciation of the actual provision. "God has paid a price for your redemption from an everlasting punishment, and your settlement instead in some kind of happiness and ecstasy which shall be secure for ever; believe that, and you are saved." Such a way of preaching is not at all likely to have a sanctifying or reforming effect on the individual or society. It is a call upon fancy rather than faith, a demand on imagination rather than devotional service; it is, in a manner, an appeal to selfishness; it does not lead to a proper apprehension of God's whole design of love and consideration for man, and it may lead to an utterly mistaken notion of the meaning of faith. It has led to innumerable essays at death-bed repentance; for, when a man's selfishness is appealed to in that way, and the idea given that an inward act and emotion is the appointed condition by which the fires of hell may be escaped, and the golden streets of heaven entered with harps and crowns and music and singing, which constitute about all that the poor, unspiritual wretch can comprehend as to the joys of heaven, then he is apt to suppose that this inward act and emotion may be achieved at any time, that God's benevolent bargain may be closed with at the last moment; so that the miserable sinner is likely, after

such a hearing of the matter, to allow himself to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, which, in fact, are far more agreeable to him than the joys of heaven, and, at the end of his life, to drive up his degraded soul, in which he never nurtured a spark of spirituality, to God, to close the bargain at last by an inward act and emotion which he was taught to call "faith," but which is far more likely to prove an effort of imagination. We must relegate the future of such sinners to the cloud of mystery that hangs over the questions of a state of probation beyond this world, or the non-eternity of punishment. Such preaching as is likely to produce this result is not unfrequent even in our own Church, and it is worse than useless; it is not only imperfect and partial, but it is, in its imperfection, an actual misrepresentation of Divine truth, and, consequently, rather injurious than profitable; it does not embrace the whole design of God for man; it does not deal with the primary object of the Gospel, which is the sanctification of the individual man and the reformation of human society.

It is pitiable that clergy should bring that doctrinal mould into the pulpit, and deliver mutilated and distorted teaching through its narrowness. The intelligence of an educated, thinking mind is offended by such a formulation of religious doctrine, inasmuch as it seems to partake more of the nature of myth than of true religion.

With a right perception of the whole design of God for men and of where its results are meant to begin; with a proper appreciation of the special means He provided in the incarnation of Christ for the practical initiation and the ultimate accomplishment of that design, and with the innumerable occasions afforded out of the circumstances of human life and the fluctuations in human society for the application of the principles of Divine life which Christ taught and exemplified, it is strange indeed that clergy should not universally realize the vastness of their field for operation and the variety of subjects requiring their treatment, all of which come properly under the head of preaching the Gospel. It is an instrument, not of ten strings, but of ten thousand, that lies ready to our hands in the pulpit; but when clergy hammer out a monotone instead, it is scarcely wonderful that the thoughtful, educated section of society should so commonly meet the mention of sermons with a sneer. However, it may be retorted that this monotone, this partial way of putting the Gospel, is, as a rule, adopted by revivalists and lay preachers, and that they draw crowds of hearers; but there is an extraordinary attraction in anything which evidences irregularity or eccentricity in a matter of this kind, and that is the explanation of the popularity of such preachers. It is not the sermon that summons

the multitudes, but the novel machinery through which it is supplied. When athletes and pugilists and men from secular business see their way to pass from the ring and the counter to the platform and pulpit, it is the eccentricity of the exchange that attracts, and the preaching, imperfect as to narrow limits of subject, is absorbed from such fantastic instruments by many who would sleep under a similar outpour from a regularly occupied pulpit. Even bad grammar and occasional vulgarities in any of these "evangelists" are regarded by some as if "signs of an Apostle." But if such preachers could only be formally ordained for regular spheres of duty (if that would not be a doing of evil that good might come), they would speedily drop to the low level of estimate which our clergy as preachers in large part occupy.

This mutilation of the Gospel message; this pushing up to prominence on the surface, of the ransom from hell and the purchase of souls for heaven, as if that were the whole of the Gospel; this suppression of the primary object and influence and result of the design of God for man; this amputation of the evidences by which a living faith should show its progress; I say, this partial, imperfect way of putting the Divine truth, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," is not likely to have permanent effect in securing attention to pulpit teaching and respect for it, or in sanctifying individual lives and reforming human society, which is the first step in man's salvation in accordance with the provision of God and the call of Christ.

The preaching in our Church generally is held in low estimation, and it is remarkable that the few of our modern clergy who are conspicuous as exceptions in that respect apply the principles of Christianity to existing forms and aspects of human society, and to records of social conditions and manifestations in the past, and to tendencies as to development in the further progress of mankind. They try to take in hand the Master's fan and thoroughly purge the floor of human life, and that by the connection of true principles with life conduct, enforcing the principles by the fact that God came down to earth and lived there a human life from birth to death to exemplify and establish them.

Robertson's sermons illustrate this method of treatment, and there are well-known living men who proceed on similar lines. In consequence of their adoption of such rule, their preaching is attractive and their influence considerable.

It would be impossible within the limits of a paper like this to allude in detail to the numerous and varied occasions in society for such method of application. Fresh forms of challenge start up year after year of naked or disguised antagonism to the Divine principles which should govern

human life, and different sorts of opposition may have to be encountered in separately circumstanced circles of society. Habits of conduct, tones of feeling, and laws of estimate may creep into society which could never have grown up from the roots of true life which Christ planted. Such false fruits should be detected and their inconsistency with Christian truth indicated. Every form of secular business is honey-combed with degrees of deception, and though that condition is generally recognised, it is at the same time accepted as a necessary association in the matter. Modern literature is largely leavened with a suggestiveness in the direction of evil. A frivolity of tone prevails in the circle apart from the hives of workers in the world, and the atmosphere in which the pleasure-seekers flit acclimatizes them for the grosser life of viciousness into which many of them plunge from its circumambient outer air, and there is an easy toleration to no small extent of actual sojourners in the regions of vice, which is an inconsistency worse in kind and more terrible in threatening of consequence than the incongruity of a Christian's presence at feasts in idols' temples, against which St. Paul warned the Corinthians of old.

We cannot, however, enumerate the multiform growths of evil in fact and influence and tendency which a survey of modern society reveals to our view; but in regard to them it would be difficult, and probably not effectual, to handle them and deal with them separately and directly; the treatment should rather be suggestive and by judicious use of the principles of true life which Christ impressed, so that the conscience may be awakened to the perception of the inconsistency, and the acknowledgment of the sin, and the effort towards reformation with the help of Divine grace. "It is impossible but that offences will come;" but society is made more ready for their uprising and more indifferent and tolerant in regard to them by a drifting away from Christ. Morality confirms and fortifies the social fabric; religion is the parent and protector of morality. If religion be undermined, morality totters; and in proportion as such strengthening, binding influence fails, a disintegrating process permeates the structure of society and threatens its coherence and stability. The increasing laxity which pervades modern society, the developing indifference to distinctions between right and wrong, the easy toleration of certain forms of vice, I believe may be accounted for in great part by the gradual spread of unbelief in the Christian religion, which is a feature that marks this present age. That kind of defection is going on, and the beginning of its consequence is apparent in the symptoms which I have referred to.

True, we may find among modern sceptics yet awhile types of high morality, of charity, and general goodness, who think that they can preserve the robe of morals without recognition of Him who gave it to them; but it is wearing out already. Only of those who hold the hand of God and follow His guidance through this wilderness can it be said, "their raiment waxed not old." Unbelief can leave no legacy of sound morality to posterity; and if Christ could be driven to depart from our coasts at its demand, a generation not far off would stand in the midst of awful ruins through the demoralization of society. This present threatening suggests the necessity of reference occasionally from the pulpit to the growing scepticism of the present time. It may be advisable to make such reference far more frequently and more generally than is commonly supposed to be requisite; for there are, in fact, comparatively few congregations to which this spiritually deadening influence may not have in some degree reached in one form or another. Even to unlikely places such baneful seed may have been wafted in some way, and unsettlement of belief may be in progress. That state of mind and feeling may have been evolved from mistaken representations of the Bible, and the attachment to it of a kind of claim in the way of authority, which arises out of an erroneous view of its revelation—a view which drags the whole picture out of perspective, and so causes it to abound in inconsistencies. In relation to such disturbance of thought, it is well to present the whole Bible as what it is in fact—a record or revelation of God's gradual teaching of man, of His accommodations to the childhood of humanity at first and His higher spiritual instruction as the ages passed, and of man's gradual advance in religious knowledge under the Divine guidance.

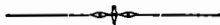
In this way what are called "moral difficulties" in the Bible may be explained, and by such a right arrangement as to perspective, incongruities and inconsistencies will be made to disappear.

Again, with regard to direct conflict against philosophic unbelief, it is important that the rule should be observed not to follow sceptical philosophers out on their shifting ground and under their hazy atmosphere to fight with them there about abstract questions. The religion we fight for is a matter of historical fact, and *the* question is whether the testimony on which belief is built can be duly accredited. So the real battle-ground is the garden in which there was the sepulchre where the dead Christ lay, and whence He came forth again alive as the risen representative of humanity.

It is but a beating of the air to argue with unbelief in a matter of this kind as to probabilities and abstractions. This

is a question of fact; so the Apostles put it in their first preaching as "witnesses" of the resurrection, and to such regard of it we should try to compel questioners now. Let the testimony to Christ's resurrection be examined as to its character and circumstance; let the reality of the conviction to which contemporaries were led be also noted; let the extraordinary results which followed conviction be observed, and let the unparalleled purity and goodness which Christ injected into humanity be taken into consideration in connection, and if prejudice be absent, the decision can hardly fail to be, "The Lord is risen indeed," "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

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Canon of Cork.



ART. IV.—SAYINGS OF JESUS.

SPIRITURAL INSIGHT.

WHEN Jesus began to teach, there was no small stir about what we should call His religious and political opinions. He Himself took no side, espoused the cause of no party. He saw beneath and above all "views," and spoke with "authority," not as the scribes, who had been the traditional guides of popular thought and interpreters of the Scripture.

Thus teachers and leaders of all sorts repeatedly pressed Him with questions, or tried to entangle Him in His words. Others watched Him closely to see how He would acquit Himself under the public cross-examination to which He was incessantly subjected.

First, these natural enemies, the Pharisees and Herodians, conspired to test Him with a burning question about the authority of the Roman Government. When they were foiled, a third section, the Sadducees, came forward with another carefully prepared test about the resurrection. And after they had been answered in their turn, a fresh inquirer, who had listened with interest, broke the silence which followed by introducing yet another momentous subject, asking, "Master, which is the first commandment of all?" To this Jesus replies by quoting a sentence from Deuteronomy (vi. 4), which follows the summary there given of the law, and saying, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great command-