

Preachers' Pages.

HOMILETICAL HINTS AND OUTLINES.

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Trinity Sunday,

Text : " Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost : and these three are one."—I *John* v. 7.

The circle of teaching concerning (a) The creature and his Creator, (b) The sinner and his Saviour, (c) The saint and his Sanctifier,—the great body of revealed truth,—is now complete. It remains to deal with that revelation which sets forth the Three Persons and their relationship in the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity.

The preacher will have to judge for himself how far it may be well for him to explain the sense in which the word " person " is used, for want of a better one. He will be guided by the capacity of his hearers. So far as illustrations are concerned—they are bound to fail adequately to exemplify or elucidate so great a mystery. We may, however, take one. We are familiar with the wonderful tri-colour process which has revolutionized modern colour printing, and by which a variety of tones and tints are obtained by superimposition. They are all produced by the association and blending of three colours—they co-operate to produce these results. So the persons of the Trinity have been associated in great enterprises from the creation of the world to the redemption, and they still co-operate with one another in the application of the benefits of redemption to the soul of the sinner. [Examples of this are given by Harold Browne in his work on the Thirty-nine Articles.]

Or the preacher may elect to show how the doctrine of the Trinity has, like other mysteries, been gradually unfolded—that there has been progress in revelation according to the capacity of man (cf. *John* xvi. 12).

1. God above us—the omnipotent, omniscient and majestic Jehovah.

2. God with us—Emmanuel, partaker of flesh and blood, essentially Divine but yet intensely human.

3. God in us—the Holy Spirit possessing, renewing and empowering the life and revealing the purposes of God. Jesus enabling us to look into the heart of God and the Holy Spirit “taking of the things of Jesus and showing them to us.”

So far as the text is concerned it is undoubtedly true that the words that follow “bear record,” up to the word “spirit” in verse 8, are an interpolation, most likely inserted in the first instance as a marginal note or explanation at a time when the Trinitarian controversy was raging. Early Christian writers understood the passage, as it originally stood, to refer to the Trinity.

First Sunday After Trinity.

Text: “The love was manifested.”—I *John* iv. 9 (Epistle).

In this letter St. John, who being on terms of privileged intimacy with his Lord and perceiving the Divine character as it was set forth by the Eternal Son, discourses upon the subject of love, showing how it has been manifested in The Life of lives and how it may be displayed by man. Let us gather together a few obvious thoughts about the love of God.

I. THE FACT OF IT. (a) *This is a matter of common experience.* The unthankful and evil as well as the Godly are the recipients of the Divine bounty (Matt. v. 45). Day by day His creatures look up to Him and are fed. (b) *This is the subject of Divine Revelation.* The inspired volume has really but one object—to reveal the heart of God, and His purposes for man.

II. THE MARVEL OF IT. This appears when we consider the might and majesty of God and the rebellion of which man has been guilty from the very first. The Divine love has *persisted* even when deliberately slighted.

III. THE EVIDENCES OF IT. These are on every side. They include—(a) *The bounties of His providence.* “He filleth all things living with plenteousness.” (b) *His wonderful forbearance.* “His mercy endureth for ever.” Why are apparently useless lives spared? Is it not to give them another chance? He will not cut down the fruitless tree but leaves it awhile. In this we see the optimism of the love that “hopeth all things” and despairs of none. (c) *The redemption of the Cross.* This is the supreme manifestation of the love of God which finds expression in so many forms and spheres.

IV. THE OUTCOME OF IT. (a) "*That we might live through Him*" (chap. iv. 9). Deliverance from the power as well as the penalty of sin. (b) "*That we should love one another*. The redeemed life is to be lived in the power of the "new commandment."

Second Sunday After Trinity.

Text: "A certain man made a great supper and bade many."—*Luke* xiv. 16.

On more than one occasion our Lord was hospitably entertained by prosperous persons. This reminds us that except at times, for purposes of meditation and prayer, He did not leave the ordinary path of human life and neglect social duty. The preceding paragraphs show that He was a keen observer and He gives some practical council on behaviour under such circumstances. Now in this parable He proceeds to set forth the Gospel—its origin, its nature, its scope, and the treatment it receives even to-day. Let us take—

I. THE INVITATION ; OR, HOW GOD HAS DEALT WITH MAN. "A certain man made a great supper." This implies—(a) *That the Gospel is the result of the Divine thought and preparation*. The idea originated in the mind of God. Revelation and the events of human history have together been making preparation under His guidance. (b) *That religion has a social side*. There is partnership in worship and effort. This fellowship finds its highest expression in our Eucharistic worship. (c) *That the spiritual hunger of man can be satisfied by the provisions of the Gospel*. "All things are now ready." The table of Grace is laden with satisfying viands. "Bade many." Probably the primary reference is to the Jew and his advantages. Those first invited would be the more favoured among the friends of the kindly host.

II. THE REJECTION ; OR, HOW MAN HAS TREATED GOD. (a) *With disrespect*. The excuses are the product of a self-satisfaction which has no sense of need. The claims of (1) property, (2) business, and (3) home are insistent and have their proper place, but they must not be allowed to usurp that which God claims for Himself. (b) *This disregard is too general*. There seems to be a terrible conspiracy among men to decline the Gospel invitation. "They all *with one consent*," etc. These are they to whom the things of this life appear to matter most. "What shall it profit a man if

he . . . lose his soul?" Men by their own volition determine their destiny and then God fixes the decree—"None of those men . . . shall taste of My supper."

III. A LARGER SCHEME : AMPLE ACCOMMODATION. From the highways and hedges of the country-side as well as from the streets and lanes of the city they pass in, having but one qualification—*need*. When the Jew refused to recognize Christ, the larger scheme unfolded itself and the Gospel was seen in its fine Catholicity, there was "room" for Gentiles. This scheme affords—(a) *A task Angels would be glad to undertake*. Nevertheless it is one assigned to men and not to angels—"Go out." It entails activity and self-sacrifice. (b) *A task by no means free from difficulty*. This is implied in the words—"compel them to come in." (c) *A task not without its reward*. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

Third Sunday After Trinity.

Text: "All of you be subject one to another."—I *Peter* v. 5 (Epistle).

Much controversy has raged round the question of the position assigned by our Lord to St. Peter. However as to the precise nature of his task there can be no doubt—he was to "strengthen the brethren." In this letter we see him fulfilling this ministry. The message of this section may be summed up thus: (1) Subjection, (2) Sobriety, (3) Steadfastness.

I. BE SUBJECT. St. Peter would have them "all" learn to esteem others better than themselves. He bids them "Gird on humility." The *ἐγκομβωμα* was a kind of apron, usually worn by slaves to keep the *ἐξωμὴς*, or vest, clean. Our cincture is thus a token of servitude and an acknowledgment of our obligation. But this sweet grace is none too common in our day. The saying, "Jack is as good as his master," is expressive of the spirit that is very prevalent. The man who is boisterously self-assertive and pushing is the man who is credited with gumption. Yes, but this is not the grace of a modesty which looks *out* rather than *in*. And after all, when we remember what tiny atoms we are in all the vast creation, it ought not to be difficult for us to cultivate the fine art of walking humbly before our God, Who recognizes and rewards

such a spirit (Mic. vi. 8). Do we crave to be in the limelight? The true Christian always is in the light of God.

Violet, violet—blue and sweet,
Nestling down at the old oak's feet—
Can it be you are glad to grow,
Nobody near your grace to know?
Whispered the violet, soft as air,
"GOD can look at me anywhere."

The Christian can afford to wait with patience for the "due time" (v. 6) in which God will "exalt" him.

II. BE SOBER. Though we need not interpret this in an exclusively literal sense, it should be noted that in classical Greek the word is frequently used to denote what we call total abstinence. Over-indulgence of any kind blunts our moral sensibility. We may take the word in a figurative sense as expressive of a general steadiness and self-control which fits us for carrying out the order—"Be on the alert." We need "to have our wits about us," self-indulgence may throw us off our guard. As an incentive we are reminded of the "alertness" of the Devil—alias our "adversary"—"who goeth about," etc. (Job i. 7; ii. 2). Refer to 1 Peter iv. 7 and Luke xxi. 34-6.

III. BE STEADFAST. There is to be firm attachment to the great body of revealed truth—"the faith." Possibly it had already begun to be crystallized in a "form of sound words" (see 2 Tim. i. 13 and iii. 14). Already the adversary was attacking not only the individual but the truths embodied in the creed. Men steadfast in the faith are needed to-day as much as ever. If a man cannot define his faith he is hardly likely to be able to defend it very effectively.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

[Contributed by the Rev. J. W. W. MOERAN.]

During the advance of the Russian Army in the
Forward. summer of 1916 in the Buchatch-Dniester section of
 the front, this watchword was given to the attacking
 infantry, "Ever forward, not a step backward." In the strength
 of these words they went out against the lines of the enemy and
 drove them from their entrenched positions. Would it not be a
 fine thing if we all acted in the spirit of this watchword? So long
 as life lasts we shall all have spiritual foes to encounter—doubts,

unbelief, selfish ease, sins of the flesh or temper, temptations too numerous to be recounted. How are we dealing with them? Weak natures yield and are overcome. Others seem satisfied if they can just hold their ground, neither advancing nor retreating. This is virtual defeat. All hearts that are true to themselves and loyal to "the Captain of their salvation" will be content with nothing short of victory. They long to overcome the enemies of their own and the world's salvation. They know that without such victories they cannot win the world for Christ. And in each encounter with the foe, open or insidious, their hearts are fired by the ambition to gain ground and never betray their Lord by yielding in a moment of weakness. "Ever forward, not a step backward" will be their watchword.

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In the reply of the Allies (December 30, 1916)

False Peace. to the German Peace Note, their reasons for rejecting the overtures of the enemy were clearly stated. The Allied Governments said that "the putting forward by the Imperial Government (i.e. Germany) of a sham proposal . . . appeared to be less an offer of peace than a war manœuvre." There is a striking parallel between this sentence and some words spoken about a hundred years ago by Henry Grattan, one of Ireland's greatest orators. Napoleon was then seeking to cajole Great Britain into accepting his proposals for peace. He claimed to be acting in the interests of humane principles; he was really masking his designs for a continuance of tyrannical power under professions of the love of liberty. Grattan tore the flimsy device to shreds, and in a burst of eloquence exclaimed, "Such offers of peace are nothing more than one of the arts of war"; and he warned our fathers that "if they listened they would be deceived—and not only deceived, but beaten." The Great Enemy of our salvation is always endeavouring to make a compact of peace between the world and the Church. "Why should not the Church meet the world on more friendly terms? Why uphold the dogmas of faith and practice which condemn the easy-going, pleasure-loving, sensual man of the world? Why contend for a creed which excludes so many other excellent religious systems? Let there be an end to this Pharisaic spirit. If the Church will enter into a closer alliance with the world, her influence for good will be far greater and Chris-

tian people will begin to enjoy themselves." By this kind of argument the Arch-enemy is continually trying to entangle believers. It is but a "sham proposal," "one of the arts of war," intended to deceive. Had the Allied nations accepted the German Peace Note they would (in the words of the Prime Minister) have "put their heads into a noose, of which Germany held the rope-end." They would have risked losing all for which they had been contending. They would have exchanged freedom for slavery.

In the spiritual conflict in which we are engaged, hard though it may seem at times to say it, yet the words of the Bible remain true—"the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (St. Jas. iv. 4). To yield weakly to the spirit of the times is not really to find peace. Too often it means losing the true peace of mind and conscience which can only be enjoyed by those whose loyalty and love for Christ constrain them to say "No" to the world.

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Sitting one afternoon in the lounge-hall of the Strand Palace Hotel, my eyes were drawn to a notice hung up on the wall, printed large so as to be easily seen. It was this: "No Austrian, German, Turk, or Bulgarian, whether naturalized or not, is employed in this place." This meant that all who belonged to any nationality at war with Great Britain had been turned out. There was no room in that place for the enemy who had disturbed the peace of Europe and done such hideous wrong to the cause of humanity. How does it stand with you? What have you done to those enemies to the peace of your soul? those deadly foes to righteousness and heart-purity and holiness of character which work such havoc in the lives of men and women? I mean the temptations and allurements to sin which come in many a form and are known by different names. There are great and grievous sins, monstrous crimes, glaring vices, corresponding to the super-man among the nations. And there are "little sins" as they are called, of lesser magnitude, like Turks or Bulgarians. Do any of them find employment in your life? Some perhaps may be called "naturalized." In early life they became part of your very nature. Whatever be their name and character, let there be no place in your heart and life for the deadly habits of any form of wrong-doing. Cast them all out in the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Shut the

Sin—To be
Cast Out.

door of your heart against them, and guard with jealousy every avenue of thought along which they might come back and steal an entrance into your soul's citadel.

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In his first speech in Parliament as Prime Minister, Peace—What is it? Mr. Lloyd George gave a clear forecast of the reply which the Allies would make to the German Peace Note, just received. "There must be no mistake," he said, "about our position in a matter of such vital importance to millions. Complete Restitution, Full Reparation, Effectual Guarantees—these are the only terms on which peace is possible." "Complete Restitution." The people who have been driven out by the enemy must be restored to their homes. "Full Reparation." As far as possible, recompense must be made for past wrongs, and justice must be satisfied. "Effectual Guarantees." The mere words that lured Belgium to her destruction would not satisfy the Allies any more than a written bond which could be torn up as a "scrap of paper" when "the law of necessity" is invoked by Teutonic aims and ambitions. Something better than Germany's word must be given as security for the future. The Prime Minister's words are very suggestive of something else—far greater and grander and more far-reaching than any peace which may be established by nations among themselves. I mean our "peace with God." By our sins we are estranged from Him. But through the Atonement of our Lord we are reconciled; and the peace He made for us through the Blood of the Cross carries with it a full security of these three conditions—"Complete Restitution, Full Reparation, Effectual Guarantees." "Complete Restitution"—to all the privileges and blessings which God intended for us when He created man in His own image, but which were forfeited by the sin of our first parents. "Full Reparation"—for the outrages done by the sins of countless generations to the Eternal Law of Righteousness. This has been accomplished for us by the sinless Life and perfect sacrifice of that Life offered by our Redeemer on the Cross. "Effectual Guarantees." These are set forth in parabolic language in the Epistle to the Hebrews (vi. 16-20). There are the two immutable things. First the promise, the simple word of the living God; and then that promise confirmed by an oath—the word of honour and the bond of a sacred compact on the part of God Himself "with

Whom it is (unlike man) impossible to lie." The German Peace Note (so called) illustrates the nature of the offers and promises which the world holds out—all is vague and illusory. Like the apples of Sodom, said to be found on the shores of the Dead Sea, they would prove to be full of ashes within. Those who accept God's Guarantee of peace in Jesus Christ His Son are never disappointed. It is a peace which passeth human understanding, because it is so divinely perfect in its assured security.

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Boastful
Claims
Refuted.

The battle of Jutland, of which the first anniversary has just taken place, was at once acclaimed by Germany as a great victory for her High Sea Fleet. German newspapers issued extravagant statements about the comparative losses of ships on both sides, greatly in favour of Germany; subsequently adding that the British Grand Fleet had been utterly routed and put to flight. In the course of a few days the real truth became known. The much-vaunted victory of the German Navy had consisted in sinking a certain number of British ships and losing more of their own. The battle ended in the German ships being put to flight and taking shelter behind their mine-fields and in their protected harbours. The victors had fled, leaving the "vanquished" in possession of the field! Since then England's naval supremacy has probably been stronger than it was before. Sometimes in the conflict between Christianity and unbelief a battle is fought—in the realm of science perhaps—and the anti-religious press of the day boastfully asserts that the claims of Christ have been overthrown in argument. The world is given to understand that the books of the Bible have been annihilated as the vehicles of Divine inspiration and authority, that the downfall of Christianity as a Divine Revelation is now assured. Christian Apologists (like the British Admiralty) are at first afraid to claim all that has been won, and simple-minded believers are apt to give way to panic and to become faint-hearted, until the real truth is made clear. Then it is known that the forces of infidelity have been utterly discredited. Their attacks have only left the truth stronger than before, and "the impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture" stands above the waves and billows, supreme as ever.

