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SOME VALUES IN THE NEWER PSYCHOLOGY FOR PREACHERS.*

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First Lecture—Theology and Psychology.

The preacher is a physician of souls. The physician must know the human body, its parts and the functioning of the parts, and of the whole. What boots it if the preacher knows so many things and does not know men? How is he to be a physician to men if he is ignorant of the laws of spiritual health and moral growth? How can he probe the conscience if he doesn't know where to find it? How can he prescribe for man's diseases unless he understands the causes and remedies and how they operate? *The preacher must know men.*

The preacher is a teacher. The term "preacher" defines a species of the genus "teacher." He is and should be more of a teacher than a preacher or simple proclaimer of truth. What profit is it to announce truth into the empty air? Truth is valuable only when it is learned by somebody. The preacher does good only when he enables someone to know the truth. Too frequently the preacher satisfies his conscience with the proclamation of the truth solely, feeling that he has done his duty and fulfilled his mission.

Proclamation is only a means towards teaching. The proclaiming is incomplete unless teaching has resulted. There must be at least two minds concerned in every act of teaching, the mind conceiving and expressing the truth and the mind receiving and appropriating the truth. Before there has been teaching there must be a receiving and appropriating of truth. The teacher is concerned therefore not only with the truth in his own mind and its expression but he is concerned as much with the other

* Gay Lectures, 1914-15.

mind and its impressions. The teacher is concerned not only with getting the truth out of his mind but even more with getting it into the other mind. The preacher's duty is done not when he has relieved himself of a sermon, but when he has seen the sermon go home through the intelligence to the life of the man before him. The preacher therefore must not only know Theology and know the Bible but even more, even more, I say, he must know the minds of the men in the pews before him and how to open the closed gates of the intelligence to his message. Other teachers have learned this and have for some time been making Psychology the basic study of their science and art. Preachers do not always seem to have realized that the study of Psychology should mean as much to them.

It is my purpose in these lectures to indicate to you something of the value of the study of this science to preachers. In so large a field in so limited a time I can not, of course, develop the subject systematically. I can only select a few things here and there. In this selection I shall be guided by three considerations: First, I remember that I am speaking to the young men, the students of this institution, not to scholars or those among you learned in this science. I shall therefore speak in untechnical language so far as possible. Second, my hope is to arouse an interest in the subject that will lead to further study. I shall, therefore, touch in a broad way on a number of things rather than develop anyone of them completely. Third, I shall endeavor to say those things that to my mind will be most practically helpful. I shall therefore spend as much time in bringing out the practical lessons as in the exposition of principles.

I wish today to bring you some suggestions from Psychology that have some bearing on Theology. And I pause to caution you that the newest Psychology has no new revolutionary theological doctrines to proclaim. You need anticipate nothing sensational. Psychology does,

however, shed a ray of light here and there. Psychology places an emphasis at certain points. It will sometimes indicate to us the right approach.

IN A REALM OF LAW.

In the first place I would remind you that in dealing with spiritual phenomena you are dealing with phenomena that are as orderly or as truly under law as are the phenomena of any of the physical sciences. Drummond tried to teach us this fact almost a generation ago. Since his day, however, our studies have greatly emphasized this truth. It is important for the preacher to know the laws of the phenomena with which he means to deal just as truly as it is for the teacher, for the physician, for the engineer, for the farmer, to know the laws of the phenomena with which he deals. The success or the failure of the one as much as the other will depend on this knowledge and the advantage he takes of it. This does not exclude God, nor the Holy Spirit, nor faith, nor prayer. The modern scientist believes in God in nature just as truly (and a little more truly, I think), as the ancient who knew nothing of natural law, but peopled all his world with gods. Law reveals God. Law in nature, whether physical, mental or spiritual, is nothing other than God's way of doing things. To discover law and obey it is but to do the thing in the *way* that God wants it done and, indeed, in the only way He *permits* it done. It is as foolish for a preacher to pray for God to make his efforts succeed who is content to remain in ignorance of spiritual phenomena and the laws operating in them as it would be for the workman to ask God to help him make a flying machine that would fly, who knows nothing of the nature of the air. Laws condition the workman. Laws known and taken advantage of are the guarantee of the workman's success. It is the preacher's business

to know spiritual phenomena, the nature of the soul and how to reach it; the laws of spiritual growth or how character is made.

I will record here some of these laws or general truths relating to the soul's growth: First, *The law of the physical environment*. Modern psychology mightily emphasizes the fact that mind can not be separated from its bodily organism or from the larger physical environment. All that we know we know through the physical senses. The nerves reach out from the brain to the extremities, to the sense organs for information. All life-giving knowledge flows into the soul through these channels. All of our ideas are derived in this way and necessarily have a *sense* form. The world of body and of things is to the soul what the soil is to the tree. Into it it sends the roots and tendrils and out of it it gathers that on which it lives and grows. This fact tremendously emphasizes the importance of the physical conditions of the soul. No preacher can afford to neglect or despise bodily or physical conditions. They may constitute an open highway for the gospel into the lives of men; they may be bulwarks and fortresses making the approach difficult or impossible.

Second, *The law of liberty or of growth from within*. Neither mental nor spiritual growth can be forced. You can not compel a man to be good or wise. The mind and character grow with the development of ideas. It is the idea that germinates in the mind, that grows, that produces other ideas, that expands the mind. The only way that one man can reach the mind of another is by suggestion, by planting in his mind a germinal idea, a seed of truth. The principle of political liberty is a development of the principle of spiritual liberty which is in turn an expression of a law of Psychology.

Third, *The law of self-control by attention*. Self-control, or temperance, to use the scriptural term, is surely a matter with which religion deals. It is, indeed, the

very essence of character; the central characteristic of manhood. But how is self-control attained? Not by prohibition; not by saying to ourselves or having somebody to say to us, "Thou shall not." Self-control is attained only by the inhibitive power of another idea or desire. The power of the mind that makes this possible is the power of attention. We are able to attend to something else or put ourselves in the way of attending to something else. And another may help us attain self-mastery who brings our attention to greater and better ideas. The mind is freed from its slavery to one idea by bringing it into subjection to another idea sufficiently noble and attractive to seize and hold the attention to the exclusion of the old idea. Freedom from one idea is obtained by changing our allegiance to another idea.

Fourth, *The law of self-activity.* Every idea tends to discharge in an appropriate act. An idea inhibited from action is incomplete and futile. The expression of the idea in the appropriate act is necessary for the completion of the circuit. The act tends to fix and make definite the direction in which the idea discharges. This makes more certain the connection of the idea and the act, the thought and the conduct; and it is exactly this that we mean by a strong character, this steady connection between thought and deed. Character is formed by *doing*, and by *thinking*.

Fifth, *The law of habit.* The law of habit is largely contained in the above suggestion. It is a matter of repeating an idea with an appropriate discharge until the channel has become fixed. We may be slaves to habit or be set free by habit. A bad habit enslaves; a good habit is our freedom. It is by the law of habit that we become masters in our work and of ourselves. A man's character is the bundle of habits which he has acquired. A habit once fixed can be changed only by a kind of mental and spiritual cataclysm or convulsion that breaks up

completely the soil of the soul and makes possible the cutting of new channels of connection between ideas and acts.

Sixth, *The law of the larger life*. It follows that a man's freedom, his safety, depends upon the breadth of his interests or the number of ideas to which he may attend. A man of one idea will necessarily be a slave to that idea. Breadth of interest makes it possible by shifting the attention to save one's self from the insistent temptation. A broad culture is essential to a free life.

After all this emphasis, however, on the orderliness of moral phenomena we should recognize also that it is a hopeless task to work out an exact and complete science in this field. My next word, then, is one of modesty. I shall point out the insufficiency of Theology.

THEOLOGY NOT AN EXACT SCIENCE.

Truth in itself is not relative but our conceptions of the truth (or knowledge) is relative. No two minds think the same thing precisely in the same way. In each present act of knowing there is so to speak the presence and influence of many past acts of knowing. Each one of us sees and understands the present in the light of past experiences and by acquired habits of thought. This constitutes the individuality of mind. Men differ in their understandings, their interpretations, their conceptions, of a truth in proportion to the likeness or unlikeness of experiences or habits. This is true of our knowledge of the physical world. It is even truer of our knowledge of the spiritual world which is one removed still farther from experience. Words are signs of ideas, not the ideas themselves. Words do not, so to speak, transfer ideas from one mind to another. Their power is solely that of suggestion. Words will suggest the same or similar ideas only in so far as the two minds communicating give to the sign the same content of meaning; but that is hard-

ly possible in any very exact or accurate way. For, first, as we have seen, our ideas themselves are not exact or accurate reproductions of fact or truth, and second, language is not an exact or accurate vehicle of thought. As a sign the word does not convey *my thought* but *suggests* or arouses *your thought* about the same things. In your mind growing out of your different experience there will be a different fringe of associated ideas which will lend to the central idea a certain coloring and give it a certain direction of development of its own. An idea never stands alone in the mind but in association with other ideas. This total of the mental content or the total of associated ideas gives the "meaning" of an idea to the individual.

This means that none of us can escape our environment, our inheritance of culture, the influence of the currents of thought of the times and the civilization in which we live. Thought changes with the changing life. Thought grows with growth of experience. For this reason there is a history of thought, of philosophy, a history of theology. It is impossible to bind the world down to any formulary. Creeds have their value but not as exact and scientific statements of truth or as binding formularies on the thought of after ages. No thinker can do more than express truth in its broader outlines. Jesus Himself attempts no more. A leading characteristic of His teaching is that it is broad, hence regulative but not binding or limiting, but germinal and suggestive, stimulating and fructifying. The teaching of Jesus is not a dead weight on the intellect of the Christian but a lifting force in the mind. The race may outgrow all creeds and confessions but never the simple, universal teaching of Jesus, because He insists not on the *form of words* but on the *living truth* beneath the words. To sum up: Theology can not be exact or final: First, because ideas are not exact copies of things or truths. Second, because language is not an exact instrument for the con-

veying of ideas. Third, all ideas and all words have a material or sense origin and base and can only indirectly, by a sort of metaphor, suggest spiritual phenomena. Therefore the expression of spiritual ideas is always involved in effort and struggle and always more or less unsatisfactory.

Our attitude toward doctrinal and credal statements should be, therefore: First, to read them in the light of history. No credal or theological statement can be understood apart from the history of its formulation. Second, to accept them not as fixed limits to our thinking but as aids and guides to the formulation of our own inner experiences; to take them not as blocks on our heads but as steps under our feet. Third, this attitude undoubtedly will militate against strong convictions so far as *forms of statement* go, and as to the fringes of truth, so to speak, but will intensify conviction for the deep, abiding, universal, experiences of truth. This leads me to the discussion of my next topic.

RELIGION AS BEHAVIOR.

The emphasis of the thinking of today is on the practical in life and in religion. This tendency is supported by Psychology which defines all processes in terms of life and action. The body is made for action; the circulation of the blood, the nervous system, the muscles, the entire bodily organization, is organized for the end of action and can be understood only from this point of view. This is as distinctly true for all mind functions. Consciousness itself, feeling, knowledge, thought or reason, all function in conduct. "Human Behavior" is the title of a recent popular text on Psychology. The point of the treatise is that the whole mental life is organized for and by behavior. Every fact of consciousness, sensation, feeling, idea, has in it an impulse to an appropriate act; in other words the mental

life is not in and for itself but for the end of conduct or behavior. The validity of the mental life, then, is not tested abstractly but concretely; by the act in which it results. All processes of reasoning must be tested at every step by experience. Scientists work out many ingenious theories and hypotheses but they are not accepted by science as laws of the science until they have met every possible test of experience. No hypothesis, however beautiful or plausible, is accepted until it works. That same test, will it work? must be put to every theory, every rational process or result. My theology must meet the same test. What effect does it have on conduct and behavior? The strict hard and fast logician who works principles out to all their logical implications is the most unreliable of theologians. The poets are better guides. In fact it takes three qualifications to make a good theologian; keen logical or analytical faculties, a regal imagination, and good common sense. Conduct is the end, thought processes are a means. The thought is only important as a means, as it looks to, and results in, conduct. The final definition of religion then must be in terms of life, not in abstractions but in the concrete. From the standpoint of the Newer Psychology and Philosophy it would be difficult to improve on James' definition of religion (James, the apostle, not the philosopher), "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." The emphasis of orthodoxy should be on conduct rather than creed. This I believe to be more apostolic and scriptural as well as better philosophy and sounder psychology.

FAITH AND REASON.

There necessarily comes up another question: The question of the relation of faith and reason and the

place of reason in theology. Theology is an endeavor to rationalize Christian belief. The spirit of rationalism is behind all theologies however irrational they may be. From the earliest times theology has resulted from the effort of thoughtful men to harmonize religious belief with the thought of the times or to make religious belief acceptable to thoughtful men; to discover a broad basis of truth on which the mind could rest satisfied. Theology tends, however, to become fixed and traditional. From the very nature of the case it has then lost its usefulness, it has failed in its mission. Theology must necessarily change with the changing current of things. With every new philosophy of life there must arise a new theology. Not that the content of theology changes but the form and expression of it must. For if the Christian thinker makes Christian belief acceptable to the thought of his day he must deal with the thought that is current and not with the thought of some preceding age. Whether the Christian thinker accepts or rejects the current philosophy, the form that his own thought takes is largely moulded by it. Theology is necessarily a growing science, changing with the growth of knowledge and science and philosophy.

Reason is both undervalued and overvalued. The preacher sometimes sets up faith as hostile to reason; the philosopher sometimes sets up reason as the only method of knowledge. The one is as much in error as the other. The best that we can say of reason at any time is that it is a practical guide to truth. Reason assimilates the new to the old; reason interprets the new in the light of the old. We have no other way of understanding the new. The new is meaningless to us except as the mind assimilates it to the known. That is all that we mean by *knowing*, or *understanding*. By very slow degrees we have built up a system of associated experiences each and all of which have come to have a certain meaning to us. The new thing presented comes to have meaning and is known to us when it finds its place in this circle of experience.

No truth has meaning to the individual mind until it is thus assimilated. Truth must have this meaning to me to be truth to me. It is by reasoning or thinking about it that I make it so. It is therefore one of the first duties of the preacher to make matters of faith reasonable; to justify the ways of God to men. On the other hand deductive reasoning is never an infallible guide in itself to truth. Reason, as already indicated, must be corrected constantly by experience. The mind is constantly running ahead of experience in theories and hypotheses, but these must then be tested and proved by experience. The philosopher who follows his reason in this sense of an absolute guide to truth is as irrational as the preacher who would have no reason at all.

It is the business of the theologian then to test and correct reason by his new facts as well as to make them appear reasonable. The facts of religious experience are as truly tests of our rational processes as are any other facts of experience. Theology arises out of the necessity of solving the intellectual difficulties caused by bringing together of truths or ideas more or less disparate. One's individual ideas or the current thought is found to be out of harmony with Christian ideas. Disparate ideas can not be held thus. The mental life is compelled by an inner impulse to unify itself. This may be accomplished in one of several ways: By the rejection of one or the other idea or system *in toto*; by the modification of one or both; or by the discovery of some third, or medium, idea, or experience through which the two may be compared and brought together.

This constitutes the problem of the thinkers of every age and this is the task of theology and the test of a vital theology.

MAN A UNITY.

We must be careful not to emphasize any one mental function, whether faith or reason or feeling or will to the

obscurations of any other. The unity of the mind is one of the most characteristic things about the teaching of the Newer Psychology. With a few remarks on this point I shall conclude.

The old psychologists divided the mind into separate faculties and neglected the body and the physical as something with which they had no concern at all. The Newer Psychology has done away almost entirely with this hard and fast division and analysis. The mind is one. The will is not a faculty distinct from thought, nor thought from feeling. The mind is not an assemblage of faculties or powers nor the separate qualities of an unknown "Mind-stuff" or "Mind-substance." Even more strikingly perhaps has modern psychology emphasized the unity of mind and body and physical environment. The mind is not the brain but we can not separate it from brain and nerve system. Man is not three, mental, moral, physical, but one; the mental moral, physical, blending into one so intimately, in so complex a fashion, that it is impossible to separate the one from the other. Man is a unity, not a trinity.

There are two important conclusions from this doctrine that I wish to emphasize. The first important lesson for the minister from this fact is that he can not limit his interests and activities solely to the so called *spiritual interests* of men. These spiritual interests are so intimately involved in man's physical condition and environment, in his social life and in his intellectual interests and entertainments that the satisfactory solution of the problems of his spiritual welfare can not be reached apart from the solution of his physical, economic and social problems. No one should be more interested than the preacher in all social welfare movements. Physical and social conditions limit the activities of the church and act as a counter-agent to the spiritual message of the minister, dissipating or destroying it. That this is true so far as the saloon is concerned, for example, has long

been understood. It has not been so well understood that the same principle applies to every other part of the environment.

The country church problem for instance is very largely a rural economic, social and educational problem. Both country and city churches are caught in the current of social and economic change. It is necessary that the church everywhere adapt its methods to this changing order, but most essentially of all must the church Christianize the social order or perish with it. The leaven of Christianity must leaven the lump or be thrown away with the soured dough.

In the second place, the preacher must do more than concern himself with the salvation of the souls of men. Modern evangelism has over emphasized conversion, and Christianity is suffering from under development. The Newer Psychology in emphasizing this point of unity of life is in exact accord with Jesus who was concerned for the salvation of the whole man to the largest life. That must be very much more the aim of the preaching of today if there is to be developed a virile, effective and efficient Christianity.

There is need in the ministry today for strong men, broad men, men who live a large life in a large world, men of profound sympathies and a wide knowledge of the problems of life, men who preach a full gospel to the complete salvation of the whole of human life.