

# THE Union Seminary Magazine

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VOL. XVI

FEBRUARY—MARCH, 1905

No. 3

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## THE CORE OF THE PENTATEUCH.

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OUR position in these papers is simply to give the outcome of our studies carried on for our own mental satisfaction. We do not seek to reconcile things, but only to reach a *modus vivendi*, so that we may be able both to study science and to use our Bible. We treat them both, and students on both sides, with due respect, only desiring to avoid conflicting theories that might bar the way. On some points, both about the Bible and about science, we are not at all confident; but we do not regard the difficulties as insurmountable, or as greater than one might expect to encounter under the circumstances. We do not think ourselves justified in subordinating science to the apparent statement of Scripture, nor on the other hand in condemning the Scripture because we have failed to see how it can be paralleled with our notions of science. Whenever we fail to recognize their harmony we prefer not immediately to adjudicate the matter, but to await further light if it shall ever arrive. This course is in our opinion warranted by considering the outcome of older controversies, in most of which there were bilateral errors. We should add that from converse with men of science and clergymen, we have found that as a general rule they are very much alike, both sides wanting to find and to accept what is right, though apt at times on both sides to misunderstand the aims and attitude of the other side. It is usually a gross injustice, and also injurious to our own side, when we impute wrong motives to others because we do not like their arguments and conclusions.

Of the Pentateuch, as of every other book, and of many other objects, we may specify two categories of characters, the internal

## THE RIGHT EMPHASIS FOR THE PREACHING OF TO-DAY.

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THE meaning of a spoken sentence is determined by the place of emphasis. Exact truth may be written with the right words, in proper construction, only to be perverted by the wrong stress of voice. The meaning of our ministry will be determined not only by what we exclude and include, but by what we emphasize. First things must have first place; the primary must come before the secondary; the subordinate must make way for the supreme. Last summer I heard a famous English preacher discourse with great earnestness on what he called "the malignance of a false perspective." He spoke of the insignificant things which naturally ought to have their place in the background, but which, when brought to the front, not only assume unnatural proportions, but obscure what is more important. You have no doubt seen some of the effects produced by an ill-adjusted camera when the right focus has not been secured. I saw recently an amateur photograph of a horse, and the head was twice the size of the body, a veritable monstrosity. And if the angels in heaven could see some of the pictures which even ministers take of life, it would occasion a great deal of celestial merriment if it were not so sad. A small coin held close to the camera of the mind is large enough to obscure the whole field of a man's vision. A subordinate purpose may so engage the attention as to hide all the great and worthy aims of life; and a comparatively unimportant truth may be so magnified in preaching as to destroy the whole proportion of faith.

The life of the modern preacher is so complex, he is related to so many enterprises, his work is so diversified, and the truth which he is to proclaim is so many sided, that it is no easy matter to get the right perspective; and yet he must have it if he is to present a complete and satisfactory gospel. One great

purpose of theological training is to teach the student what things are of most importance and should have first place. This was the kind of training the apostles received. They were taught what to seek first; what the central truths are, around which all else revolves; what is indispensable and supreme. I have often heard my father describe the course of seminary instruction which he received some sixty years ago. At that time, there were only three departments of instruction, and the training for the ministry was very simple, but effective. Since that time, by a natural process of evolution, theological study has developed into a complex system, often bewildering to the youthful mind not yet able to see things in their right proportions. A few years ago a young man told me that he had been a seminary student in the East for two years, but, said he, the instruction imparted, although intensely interesting, was so confusing and unsettling in its character that he and several of his class-mates, whom he named, decided that there was really nothing which they could preach with emphasis, and that they would better turn from the ministry to the law; which they did. Perhaps if they had completed their theological course the diverging streams of thought would have been brought together into one clearly defined channel. This is the task of systematic theology—to gather up the results of analytic study in other departments and relate them properly into a body of truth, complete and self-consistent, a living organism which will grow and may change, but which will preserve its identity. While our seminaries are expected to teach a great many things, there are a few things needful which cannot be ignored without loss to the preacher's effectiveness. Coming forth from a complex training, the young minister enters the maze of a complex life. Work initiates more work; the demands on time and energy increase; engagements multiply; there are social functions to be enjoyed or endured, visits to be made, meetings and conventions to be attended, sermons and addresses to be prepared—to say nothing of the time which should be given to independent study and private devotion—and even the most energetic and ambitious minister finds that he cannot do everything. "Mastery," we are told, "is resolved limitation." Canon Liddon once said that at the outset of his career when, as he expressed it, he was in danger of becoming a popular preacher, he had received from Dr. Pusey the

advice which had been to him of the utmost value. It was this, "Limit your work." To know how to do this, and confine one's endeavor only to the things which are worth while, requires a clear, practical judgment, which is one of the first elements in a strong character. Limit your themes, is a piece of advice which the preacher of to-day would do well to heed. Complaint is made that there is a great deal of preaching in the present day on what may be called the suburban interests of religion, the outlying districts between Christianity and, say, art, or literature, or sociology. And some who wish to be sensational, go beyond the suburbs into a far country and spend their substance in riotous preaching. One clear advantage of the ecclesiastical year, and of the custom of the Dutch Reformed Church to teach the Heidelberg Catechism from the pulpit, is that it calls the preachers' attention to the great themes of redemption which might otherwise be overlooked.

But we are told that our preaching must be adapted to the age in which we live; that the gospel is many sided, and has been given for many days and for many races; that in its revolution upon its axis, it must turn to this age another face than that which was beheld in the past. Hence we are told that the emphasis in the present day message must be determined by the spirit of scientific investigation and criticism, of social combination, of economic enterprise and of a new philanthropy. These are certainly characteristic tendencies which the preacher must take into account, and his sermons will have a tone and coloring which differentiate them from the sermons of, say, fifty years ago. Yet human nature, which needs spiritual renewal, is the same in all ages, and the specific of the gospel, when properly applied, has always produced such wonderful results that no new remedy need be sought for. To remake the gospel, in the desire to find a place for it in the modern age, is to forfeit that which gives it place in all ages. I once heard an eminent preacher assign as one secret of his great success the determination not to preach anything which had not been verified in his own experience—a rather hard rule for the young preacher. The best sermons I have preached on the right training of children were prepared in my ante-parental days. Every minister will find it difficult to enlarge his own experience so as to cover the multiform and variegated experiences of all his people.

Some have difficulties which he has never known, probably never will know. Some have trials and sorrows altogether foreign to his own heart life, and he needs constantly to pray for enlargement of sympathy. And yet so far as the great central principles of the gospel are concerned, they must be realized in the preacher's own experience before he can speak with authority, and emphasize what sinful men need for their soul's salvation; and he must keep in constant contact with the things of the Spirit if he is to be a demonstration that the things spoken of in church are realities.

We believe that the right emphasis in preaching is to be determined by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever, which Word even of itself, without the aid of the preacher, by the power of the Spirit, teaches men the things they must believe first of all. When one of our missionaries went about a year or two ago to Palmeiras, in Central Brazil, a region in which no missionary work had been done, except that a few Bibles had been distributed, he found a number of people who were eager to see him. To his astonishment, he soon learned that they understood the plan of salvation, and were even ready to make a public profession of faith in Christ and receive Christian baptism. One of the converts was a man who had enjoyed the reputation of being the greatest murderer for miles around. And yet his life was so changed by the power of the gospel that his only desire was to tell others of his newly found joy. Another was an old man who first examined Mr. Waddell to ascertain whether his preaching accorded with what he had learned to believe. When asked how much he knew of the Bible, he replied that being an old man, his memory was not what it once was, but he could repeat the whole of the New Testament and all of the Psalms. These people, without any further instruction, were ready to be received into the church. Where did they get the authoritative message which convinced them of the very things they needed to know, and were essential to their salvation? It was from reading the Word of God; that of itself emphasized what was of supreme importance. And it is the positive teaching of the Scriptures with the Bible's own perspective that men and women want to-day.

The late Dr. Davidson, of Scotland, once made this statement, "The old philosopher said, 'Give me a place to stand, and

I will move the world.' Scripture gives us a place to stand." And the preacher of to-day must stand secure on the impregnable rock of Scripture if he is to make the clear and emphatic assertions necessary to convince and move the world. What is the central truth in which these positive assertions converge? What is the unifying idea of the whole Scriptures which must always and everywhere be kept in mind if preaching is to put first things first? According to Dr. Denney, in his recent book, *The Death of Christ*, the burden of the Bible, the one fundamental omnipresent truth to which the Holy Spirit bears witness by and with the Word in our hearts, is the doctrine of the Atonement. All the Scriptures testify of Christ as the bearer of sin, the Redeemer who gave his life a ransom for us. There are those who assert that the centre of gravity in the gospel, the truth which gives significance to all revelation, and in which lies already hidden, the hope, the glory, the transfigured future of man, is the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. But great as this truth is, it must not be taken from its primary revealed occasion and purpose for the race. It is so taken when Christian thought treats it as a gospel in and by itself; when we attempt to present to any race, in any stage of development, in any tract of time, an Evangel which does not put in the foreground man's sin in its guilt as well as in its power, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who is the propitiation for our sins and without whose blood-shedding there is no remission. Here is where Paul, whom Beecher considered the greatest of preachers, put the emphasis. He remind the Corinthians, "I delivered unto you *first of all* that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." First and foremost in his preaching was the death of Christ in its relation to sin. He determined to limit his themes to one only: Christ and him crucified. But some one will say, Jesus rather than Paul is to be the preacher's pattern, and the gospel of Jesus is to be distinguished from and preferred to the apostolic gospel. Back to Christ is the watchword of much modern preaching, and we are urged to believe that in his teaching there is scant allusion to the doctrine of the Atonement, and hence that he could not have regarded it as important. But if the gospel of the epistles be true, how could Jesus have fully and clearly proclaimed it beforehand. It was a gospel brought to completeness by the death

and resurrection of Christ, and such a gospel could not have been preached in its fulness before the facts which constituted it had taken place. Believe, if you will, that Jesus put the emphasis on the idea of a kingdom—according to his own view, his death followed by his rising again was not a mere illustration of a general law of sacrifice, nor a proof of fidelity in his vocation, but a decisive turning point in the history of his kingdom and in the spiritual history of the world; and not until that event had taken place and the Spirit was given, could the kingdom be constituted. And after the resurrection he enjoined his disciples to make the remission of sins, which in the institution of the Supper he had connected with the shedding of his blood, a fundamental article in their preaching. In this way the kingdom of Christ was extended in the apostolic age, and it is only such preaching that will evangelize the world. Many of our churches have, of late, been stimulated to special effort for the winning of souls, and the necessity for an earnest, aggressive evangelistic movement is everywhere recognized. The supreme need of mankind is the gospel and it is the main business of the church to carry the gospel to every creature, that each may have an intelligent opportunity to know Christ as personal Saviour. But what gospel has the power to convince men of sin, woo them to Christ and build them up in character? Only the gospel of a sin-bearing, sin-expiating love which pleads for acceptance and takes the whole responsibility of the sinner if he abandon himself to it. This is the preaching which has been productive of revivals in the past. And an eminent English writer, in discussing the coming revival, declares that it will make Christ and him crucified shine before the souls of men as the Sin-bearer.

The church is being constantly condemned for the low standard of Christian living that obtains among many of the Lord's professed disciples. We are told that the coldness and estrangement with which many view the church is to be found in the ethical defects of the Christian society, and that in some respects the ethical standard of the church is lower than that which prevails outside, where there is a higher estimate of honor, courage and chivalry than is to be found in the church. Even the pulpit is assaulted for inconsistency that those outside the church cannot tolerate. We need to preach ethics, and practice accordingly. Right character and right conduct the church must ever

stand for and aim to produce. Say if you will that Christianity is a life, that its purpose is to make men good and pure—the basis of it all must be the reconciling work of Christ. Just as the great Apostle declares the ultimate purpose of God in the work of Christ to be “to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him.” How is this to be realized? “Continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, whereof, I, Paul, was made a minister.” The atoning death of Christ, according to the Scriptures, is the inspiring and controlling force in Christian life, and the presupposition of Christian ethics. When David Brainerd preached to the Indians he tells us that he gave no time to training in the arts of civilization, or to the inculcation of ethical precepts, but proclaimed only the saving truths of the cross. And to use his own words, “When these truths were felt at heart, there was no vice unreformed, no external duty neglected. The reformation was general, and all springing from the internal influence of divine truth on the heart, and not from any external restraint or because they had heard these vices particularly exposed or repeatedly spoken against.” The history of revivals of religion proves clearly that in proportion as men get into the heart of the gospel, or the heart of the gospel gets into them, will they walk on the high-ways of holiness.

But some one may object to my plea, and say that the Scriptural teaching of the Atonement is being adequately preached to-day, not perhaps in the familiar forms or philosophical expositions in which it has been expressed, but in its substance and simplicity. Granting that this truth of the gospel is many sided, and that the whole significance of Christ's death cannot be fully absorbed into the human mind and heart, and that no single theory can exhaust its entire meaning, it certainly is a fact that in modern preaching the death of Christ does not have the place corresponding to that which it has in the New Testament, and as a result there has been a weakening of pulpit power. Think of some of the most influential pulpits in recent times. What has been the basis of their success? In England the most conspicuous preachers since the days of Wesley and Whitefield have been Charles Spurgeon and Joseph Parker. The secret of their influence was the message they delivered. It embraced the



great catholic truths of the gospel centering in the atonement for sin made by Christ's sacrificial death upon the cross. One of the ablest, most interesting and instructive of non-conformist preachers in England to-day is Alexander Maclaren of Manchester. The great secret of his substantial and long continued success is that his preaching is firmly based upon and is a careful exposition of the revelation God has given to us in the Scriptures, and the very core of his teaching is that Christ's cross is the propitiation for our sins. So sure is he that the atoning death of Christ effected something real and permanent for the salvation of the world, that, according to his oft-repeated declaration, if any preacher leaves this out of his message his ministry will be futile and fruitless. As he has expressed it, "A Christianity without a dying Christ is a dying Christianity." Or, as the best known bishop in the Anglican Church has put it, "Without Christ, who died for our sins, and having died, is risen again, faith has no foothold, and conscience no rest, and hope no eastern window, and man knows neither himself nor God."

In the recent book which Dr. G. Campbell Morgan has written, *Evangelism*, you will note this significant testimony, "When I take the New Testament and see what Christ says about his own death, and what the inspired writers of the New Testament say, and when there comes, superadded to the Christ's estimate and the estimate of the apostles, the answer of my heart to the inner meaning of the cross, then I know that the cross is the heart and centre of the great evangel. We are to tell men we fail, but the One who never failed takes our place. You cannot get away from the words, Vicarious Atonement. The cross is supremely the heart and centre of our great evangel."

You will pardon a reference to the pulpit which I have the honor to fill. The Fifth Avenue Church stands at the heart of the great metropolis, and is frequented by people of large means. During nearly one hundred years of history, the type of preaching under which the church has flourished may be illustrated by a statement which the late Dr. George T. Purves, my predecessor, made, "Of all the truths which men need to hear, the Atonement is the most essential. If in our age, religion is not to become identical with ethics, or superficial in its treatment of human needs, it must proclaim, as of old, the saving power of

the blood that was shed on Calvary." I pray God that this may be the dominant note in my own unworthy ministry. Ought it not to be in yours also, young brethren? To put the emphasis here is the admonition of the past in which all the heroes of the faith join; is the injunction of God's Word which God's messenger must ever obey; is the requirement of the church which ordains us ministers of a New Testament which presupposes the death of a testator for the saving of transgressors; is the demand of the age which must have a gospel for a world of sin and doubt; is the hope of every creature looking forward to the one far-off divine event, the redemption of the world.