

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW

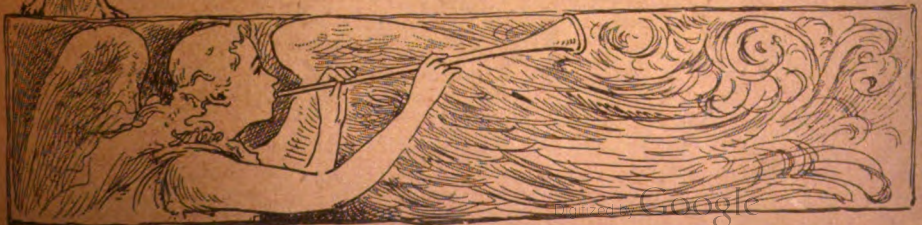
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of
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Sermonic Literature and
Discussion of Practical Issues.

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THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—CHARLES H. SPURGEON.

By JOSEPH PARKER, D.D., MINISTER OF THE CITY TEMPLE,
LONDON, ENGLAND.

CHARLES H. SPURGEON was a man whom everybody wanted to account for. What is the secret of his power? How do you explain his unparalleled fame?—these were the atheistic questions that past from mouth to mouth. People who ask wrong questions are likely to get wrong answers. They wanted to find the reason on earth, whereas it was only to be found in heaven. It has been the way of God to puzzle and perplex an atheistic Christianity. There need be no scruple in using the word atheistic in this connection, for even Christian people of undoubted standing seem to be prying into odd earthly corners for answers or explanations which could never be found there. "There was a man sent from God whose name was" Spurgeon. That is the answer to the riddle. Why do we not recognize God in any and every form in which He may choose to appear? But this is a common crime even of the church: the church will have explanation; it will have geometrical form; it insists upon genealogical or official pedigree. Instead of taking Spurgeon as a special creation and election of God, people sought to extrude—certainly to ignore—the divine element from his personality and ministry. For example, they exclaimed, "He is so young!" as who should say, How can one so young be an apostle chosen of God? Thus men daily turn the common course of Providence into a miracle, a surprise, or a contradiction. So young? Certainly. This is a young man's world. For the old there is nothing in it but a grave; honored indeed, and choicely beflowered, but a grave notwithstanding. When did God ever choose an old man to work for Him? Name one. It is impossible. In the Old Testament a man was an infant at forty; Methuselah would hardly account him a man.

NOTE.—This periodical adopts the Orthography of the following Rule, recommended by the joint action of the American Philological Association and the Philological Society of England:—Change d or ed final to t when so pronounced, except when the e affects a preceding sound.—PUBLISHERS.

ation of twelve western princes, prominent among whom were Ahab of Israel and Benhadad of Damascus. A close examination of the Scripture narrative makes it most probable that this battle took place in the year before the death of Ahab, which would thus be placed in 858. Using the Biblical numbers, we may now reckon backward and forward from this date, and thus rectify the current tables for the whole long period between David's accession and the fall of Samaria. Moreover, the notation thus adopted may be checked every here and there by further points of contact with events recorded in the cuneiform records.

I can not further particularize. But a few suggestions on other important questions may be added. A remark is made in 645 B. C. by Assurbanipal, the last great king of Assyria, to the effect that a statue of the goddess Ishtar had been carried off from Erech in Babylonia by invading Elamites sixteen hundred and thirty-five years before. This information, combined with Gen. xiv., where the Elamites are represented as leading a confederation of Eastern princes in a campaign against Southern Palestine, gives us the approximate date of Abraham, who routed the same combination. A notice by Nahonidus, the last king of Babylon, of 550 B. C. tells us that the foundation-stone of the temple of the sun in the city of Akkad had been laid thirty-two hundred years before. This astounding story is continually being confirmed by new discoveries of earlier and later rulers and of lists of kings which fill up the interval between these remote ages and times already known. There seems, indeed, to be practically no limit to the monumental remains of all sorts which are brought to light for fuller illustration of the long-distant past.

It thus appears that late Oriental discoveries reveal to us a vast chronological system, which involves and interpenetrates the Biblical history, and which times the occurrence of Biblical events in some such way as a great railroad time-table indicates the connections with branches and associated lines. It is the privilege of the present-day expounder of the Bible to avail himself of these finger-marks of Providence.

SERMONIC SECTION.

REPRESENTATIVE SERMONS.

COMING SERMONS.

BY REV. T. DEWITT TALMAGE, D.D.,
[PRESBYTERIAN], WASHINGTON, D.C.

Go thou and preach the Kingdom of God.—Luke ix. 60.

THE Gospel is to be regnant over all hearts, all circles, all governments, and all lands. The Kingdom of God spoken of in the text is to be a universal kingdom, and just as wide as that will be the realm sermonic. "Go thou, and preach the Kingdom of God." We hear a great deal in these days about the coming man, and the coming woman, and the coming time. Some one ought to tell us of the coming sermon. It is a simple fact that everybody knows that most of the ser-

mons of to-day do not reach the world. The vast majority of the people of our great cities never enter church.

The sermon of to-day carries along with it the dead wood of all ages. Hundreds of years ago it was decided what a sermon ought to be, and it is the attempt of many theological seminaries and doctors of divinity to hew the modern pulpit utterances into the same old-style proportions. Booksellers will tell you they dispose of a hundred histories, a hundred novels, a hundred poems, to one book of sermons. What is the matter? Some say the age is the worst of all ages. It is better. Some say religion is wearing out, when it is wearing in. Some say there are so many who despise the

Christian religion. I answer, there never was an age when there were so many Christians, or so many friends of Christianity as this age has—our age: as to others, a hundred to one. What is the matter then? It is simply because our sermon of to-day is not suited to the age. It is the canal-boat in an age of locomotive and electric telegraph.

Before the world is converted, the sermon will have to be converted. You might as well go into a modern Sedan or Gettysburg with bows and arrows instead of rifles and bombshells and parks of artillery as to expect to conquer this world for God by the old styles of sermonology. Jonathan Edwards preacht the sermons best adapted to the age in which he lived, but if those sermons were preacht now they would divide an audience into two classes: those sound asleep and those wanting to go home.

But there is a coming sermon—who will preach it, I have no idea; in what part of the earth it will be born, I have no idea; in which denomination of Christians it will be delivered, I can not guess. That coming sermon may be born in the country meeting-house on the banks of the St. Lawrence, or the Oregon, or the Ohio, or the Tombigbee, or the Alabama. The person who shall deliver it may this moment lie in a cradle under the shadow of the Sierra Nevadas, or in a New England farmhouse, or amid the rice-fields of Southern savannas. Or this moment there may be some young man in some of our theological seminaries, in the junior, or middle, or senior class, shaping that weapon of power. Or there may be coming some new baptism of the Holy Ghost on the churches, so that some of us who now stand in the watch-towers of Zion, waking to the realization of our present inefficiency, may preach it ourselves. That coming sermon may not be twenty years off. And let us pray God that its arrival may be hastened, while I announce to you what I think will be

the chief characteristics of that sermon when it does arrive.

I. First of all, I remark that that coming sermon will be full of a living Christ, in contradistinction to didactic technicalities. A sermon may be full of Christ tho hardly mentioning His name, and a sermon may be empty of Christ while every sentence is repetitious of His titles. The world wants a living Christ: not a Christ standing at the head of a formal system of theology, but a Christ who means pardon and sympathy and condolence and brotherhood and life and heaven. A poor man's Christ. An overworkt man's Christ. An invalid's Christ. A farmer's Christ. A merchant's Christ. An artisan's Christ. An every man's Christ.

A symmetrical and finely worded system of theology is well enough for theological classes, but it has no more business in a pulpit than have the technical phrases of an anatomist, or a physician, in the sick-room of a patient. The world wants help, immediate and world-uplifting, and it will come through a sermon in which Christ shall walk right down into the immortal soul and take everlasting possession of it, filling it as full of light as is the noonday firmament. That sermon of the future will not deal with men in the threadbare illustrations of Jesus Christ. In that coming sermon there will be instances of vicarious sacrifice taken right out of every-day life, for there is not a day somebody is not dying for others:—as the physician, saving his diptheritic patient by sacrificing his own life; as the ship-captain, going down with his vessel while he is getting his passengers into the lifeboat; as the fireman, consuming in the burning building while he is taking a child out of a fourth-story window; as last summer the strong swimmer at Long Branch, or Cape May, or Lake George himself perisht trying to rescue the drowning; as the newspaper boy not long ago, supporting his mother for some years, his in-

valid mother, when offered by a gentleman fifty cents to get some especial paper, and he got it and rushed up in his anxiety to deliver it, and was crushed under the wheels of the train, and lay on the grass with only strength enough to say: "Oh, what will become of my poor sick mother now!"

Vicarious suffering? The world is full of it. An engineer said to me on a locomotive in Dakota: "We men seem to be coming to better appreciation than we used to. Did you see that account the other day of an engineer who, to save his passengers, stuck to his place, and when he was found dead in the locomotive, which was found upside down, he was found still smiling, his hand on the air-brake?" And as the engineer said it to me, he put his hand on the air-brake to illustrate his meaning, and I lookt at him and thought: "You would be just as much of a hero in the same crisis."

Oh, in that coming sermon of the Christian Church there will be living illustrations taken from every-day life of vicarious suffering—illustrations that will bring to mind the ghastlier sacrifice of Him who, in the high places of the field and on the cross, fought our battle and wept our griefs and endured our struggles and died our death.

A German sculptor made an image of Christ, and he asked his little child, two years old, who it was, and she said: "That must be some very great man." The sculptor was displeased with the criticism, so he got another block of marble and chiseled away on it two or three years, and then he brought in his little child, four or five years of age, and he said to her: "Who do you think that is?" She said: "That must be the One who took little children in His arms and blest them." Then the sculptor was satisfied. Oh, my friends, what the word wants is not a cold Christ, not an intellectual Christ, not a severely magisterial Christ, but a loving Christ, spreading out His arms of sympathy

to press the whole world to His loving heart.

II. But I remark again, that the coming sermon of the Christian church will be a short sermon. Condensation is demanded by the age in which we live. No more need of long introductions and long applications and so many divisions to a discourse that it may be said to be hydra-headed. In other days men got all their information from the pulpit. There were few books and there were no newspapers, and there was little travel from place to place, and people would sit and listen two and a half hours to a religious discourse, and "seventeenthly" would find them fresh and chipper. In those times there was enough room for a man to take an hour to warm himself up to the subject and an hour to cool off. But what was a necessity then is a superfluity now. Congregations are full of knowledge from books, from newspapers, from rapid and continuous intercommunication; and long disquisitions of what they know already will not be abided. If a religious teacher can not compress what he wishes to say to the people in the space of forty-five minutes, better adjourn it to some other day.

The trouble is, we preach audiences into a Christian frame and then we preach them out of it. We forget that every auditor has so much capacity of attention, and when that is exhausted he is restless. That accident on the Long Island Railroad came from the fact that the brakes were out of order, and when they wanted to stop the train they could not stop; hence the casualty was terrific. In all religious discourse we want locomotive power and propulsion; we want at the same time stout brakes to let down at the right instant. It is a dismal thing, after a hearer has comprehended the whole subject, to hear a man say, "Now, to recapitulate," and "a few words by way of application," and "once more," and "finally," and "now to conclude."

Paul preached until midnight, and

Eutychus got sound asleep, and fell out of a window and broke his neck. Some would say, "Good for him." I would rather be sympathetic like Paul, and resuscitate him. That accident is often quoted now in religious circles as a warning against somnolence in church. It is just as much a warning to ministers against prolixity. Eutychus was wrong in his somnolence, but Paul made a mistake when he kept on until midnight. He ought to have stopped at eleven o'clock, and there would have been no accident. If Paul might have gone on to too great length, let all those of us who are now preaching the Gospel remember that there is a limit to religious discourse, or ought to be, and that in our time we have no apostolic power or miracles. Napoleon, in an address of seven minutes, thrilled his army and thrilled Europe. Christ's Sermon on the Mount—the model sermon—was less than eighteen minutes long at ordinary mode of delivery. It is not electricity scattered all over the sky that strikes, but electricity gathered into a thunderbolt and hurled; and it is not religious truth scattered over, spread out over a vast reach of time, but religious truth projected in compact form, that flashes light upon the soul and rives its indifference.

When the coming sermon arrives in this land and in the Christian church—the sermon which is to arouse the world and startle the nations and usher in the Kingdom—it will be a brief sermon. Hear it, all theological students, all ye just entering upon religious work, all ye men and women who in Sabbath-schools and other departments are toiling for Christ and the salvation of immortals. Brevity! Brevity!

III. But I remark also that the coming sermon of which I speak will be a popular sermon. There are those in these times who speak of a popular sermon as tho there must be something wrong about it. As these critics are dull themselves, the world gets the impression that a sermon is good in pro-

portion as it is stupid. Christ was the most popular preacher the world ever saw, and, considering the small number of the world's population, had the largest audiences ever gathered. He never preached anywhere without making a great sensation. People rushed out in the wilderness to hear Him, reckless of their physical necessities. So great was their anxiety to hear Christ, that, taking no food with them, they would have fainted and starved had not Christ performed a miracle and fed them. Why did so many people take the truth at Christ's hands? Because they all understood it. He illustrated His subject by a hen and her chickens, by a bushel measure, by a handful of salt, by a bird's flight, and by a lily's aroma. All the people knew what He meant, and they flocked to Him. And when the coming sermon of the Christian Church appears, it will not be Princetonian, not Rochesterian, not Andoverian, not Middletonian, but Olivetian—plain, practical, unique, earnest, comprehensive of all the woes, wants, sins, sorrows, and necessities of an auditory.

But when that sermon does come, there will be a thousand gleaming scimitars to charge on it. There are in so many theological seminaries professors telling young men how to preach, themselves not knowing how; and I am told if a young man in some of our theological seminaries says anything quaint or thrilling or unique, faculty and students fly at him, and set him right, and straighten him out, and smooth him down, and chop him off until he says everything just as everybody else says it. Oh, when the coming sermon of the Christian church arrives, all the churches of Christ in our great cities will be thronged. The world wants spiritual help. All who have buried their dead want comfort. All know themselves to be mortal and to be immortal, and they want to hear about the great future. I tell you, my friends, if the people of these great cities who have had trouble only

thought they could get practical and sympathetic help in the Christian church, there would not be a street in Washington or New York or Boston which would be passable on the Sabbath day, if there were a church on it; for all the people would press to that asylum of mercy, that great house of comfort and consolation.

A mother with a dead babe in her arms came to the god Veda, and askt to have her child restored to life. The god Veda said to her: "You go and get a handful of mustard-seed from a house in which there has been no sorrow and in which there has been no death, and I will restore your child to life." So the mother went out, and she went from house to house, and from home to home, looking for a place where there had been no sorrow and where there had been no death, but she found none. She went back to the god Veda, and said: "My mission is a failure; you see I haven't brought the mustard-seed; I can't find a place where there has been no sorrow and no death." "Oh," says the god Veda, "understand, your sorrows are no worse than the sorrows of others; we all have our griefs and all have our heartbreaks."

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone;
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own."

We hear a great deal of discussion now all over the land about why people do not go to church. Some say it is because Christianity is dying out, and because people do not believe in the truth of God's Word, and all that. They are false reasons. The reason is because our sermons are not interesting and practical, and sympathetic and helpful. Some one might as well tell the whole truth on this subject, and so I will tell it. The sermon of the future—the Gospel sermon to come forth and shake the nations and lift people out of darkness—will be a popular sermon just for the simple reason that it will meet the woes and the wants and

the anxieties of the people. There are in all our denominations ecclesiastical mummies sitting around to frown upon the fresh young pulpits of America, to try to awe them down, to cry out, "Tut, tut, tut! sensational!" They stand to-day, preaching in churches that hold a thousand people, and there are a hundred persons present, and if they can not have the world saved in their way it seems as if they do not want it saved at all. I do not know but the old way of making ministers of the Gospel is better: a collegiate education and an apprenticeship under the care and home attention of some earnest aged Christian minister, the young man getting the patriarch's spirit and assisting him in his religious service. Young lawyers study with old lawyers, young physicians study with old physicians, and I believe it would be a great help if every young man studying for the Gospel ministry could put himself in the home and heart and sympathy and under the benediction and perpetual presence of a Christian minister.

IV. But, I remark again, the sermon of the future will be an awakening sermon. From altar-rail to the front doorstep, under that sermon an audience will get up and start for heaven. There will be in it many a staccato passage. It will not be a lullaby: it will be a battle-charge. Men will drop their sins, for they feel the hot breath of pursuing retribution on the back of their necks. It will be a sermon sympathetic with all the physical distresses as well as the spiritual distresses of the world. Christ not only preacht, but He healed paralysis, and He healed epilepsy, and He healed the dumb and the blind and the ten lepers.

V. That sermon of the future will be an every-day sermon, going right down into every man's life, and it will teach him how to vote, how to bargain, how to plow, how to do any work he is called to, how to wield trowel and pen and pencil and yard-stick and plane.

And it will teach women how to preside over their households, and how to educate their children, and how to imitate Miriam and Esther and Vashti, and Eunice, the mother of Timothy; and Mary, the mother of Christ; and those women who on Northern and Southern battlefields were mistaken by the wounded for angels of mercy fresh from the throne of God.

VI. Yes, I have to tell you the sermon of the future will be a reported sermon. If you have any idea that printing was invented simply to print secular books, and stenography and phonography contrived merely to set forth secular ideas, you are mistaken. The printing-press is to be the great agency of Gospel proclamation. It is high time that good men, instead of denouncing the press, employ it to scatter forth the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The vast majority of people in our cities do not come to church, and nothing but the printed sermon can reach them and call them to pardon and life and peace and heaven.

So I can not understand the nervousness of some of my brethren of the ministry. When they see a newspaper man coming in, they say: "Alas! there is a reporter." Every added reporter is a thousand, or fifty thousand, or two hundred thousand immortal souls added to the auditory. The time will come when all the village, town, and city newspapers will reproduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and sermons preached on the Sabbath will reverberate all around the world; and, some by type and some by voice, all nations will be evangelized.

The practical bearing of this is upon those who are engaged in Christian work; not only upon theological students and young ministers, but upon all who preach the Gospel—and that is all of you, if you are doing your duty.

Do you exhort in prayer-meeting? Be short and be spirited. Do you teach in Bible class? Tho you have to study every night, be interesting. Do you accost people on the subject of

religion in their homes or in public places? Study adroitness and use common sense. The most graceful, the most beautiful thing on earth is the religion of Jesus Christ, and if you awkwardly present it, it is defamation.

We must do our work rapidly, and we must do it effectively. Soon our time for good will be gone. A dying Christian took out his watch and gave it to a friend, and said: "Take that watch, I have no more use for it; time is ended for me and eternity begins." O my friends, when our watch has tickt away for us for the last moment, and our clock has struck for us the last hour, may it be found we did our work well, that we did it in the very best way: and whether we preached the Gospel in pulpits, or taught Sabbath classes, or administered to the sick as physicians, or bargained as merchants, or pleaded the law as attorneys, or were busy as artisans, or as husbandmen, or as mechanics, or were, like Martha, called to give a meal to a hungry Christ, or, like Hannah, to make a coat for a prophet, or, like Deborah, to rouse the courage of some timid Barak in the Lord's conflict, we did our work in such a way that it will stand the test of the judgment. And in the long procession of the redeemed that march round the throne, may it be found there are many there brought to God through our instrumentality and in whose rescue we are exultant.

But, O you unsaved! wait not for that coming sermon. It may come after your obsequies. It may come after the stonecutter has chiseled our name on the slab fifty years before. Do not wait for a great steamer of the Cunard or White Star Line to take you off the wreck, but hail the first craft with however low a mast, and however small a hulk, and however poor a rudder, and however weak a captain. Better a disabled schooner that comes up in time than a full-rigged brig that comes up after you have sunken. Instead of waiting for that coming sermon—it may be

twenty, fifty years off—take this plain invitation of a man who, to have given you spiritual eyesight, would be glad to be called the spittle by the hand of Christ put on the eyes of a blind man, and who would consider the highest compliment of this service, if at the close five hundred men should start from these doors, saying: “Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not. This one thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” Swifter than shadows over the plain, quicker than birds in their autumnal flight, hastier than eagles to their prey, hie you to a sympathetic Christ. The orchestras of heaven have already strung their instruments to celebrate your rescue.

“And many were the voices around the throne:

Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own.”

THE NATURALNESS OF PRAYER.

By T. HARWOOD PATTISON [BAPTIST],
D.D., PROFESSOR OF HOMILETICS,
ETC., THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.—Matt. vi. 6 (R. V.).

HAVE you ever remarkt how little Christ said about the obligation to pray? Whether men ought to pray or not—a subject about which fierce battles have been constantly waged since He came—was not a subject that He made at all prominent in His teachings. For this there may have been two reasons. If prayer be a natural instinct, one which can never be completely crushed out of our nature, then it is wasted breath which argues about it. As well argue about the warmth of the sun or the freshness of the mountain air. Then, again, it may be that men can not be reasoned into praying. The formal spirit, which in loveless obedience to command “says its prayers,” is the spirit of a slave, not of a son; and

the key-note of all true prayer Jesus Himself struck when He said, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father.”

The authority for prayer is found in two laws: the ordinance of God and the constitution of man. God commands it, and we are prompted to it. We might almost say that these two are one, as law is one whether it be written in the statute-books or whether it be lived out in the conduct. Law finds its utterances in life, as the soul of song leaps to expression in the voice of the bird, and as the hidden beauty of the flower is made manifest in its form and color and fragrance.

We will start this morning, then, where Christ Himself touches upon this great subject. The obligation of prayer is taken for granted, “men ought always to pray.” Our present purpose is to show that prayer is in line with our constitution, and our theme is the Naturalness of Prayer.

There are three essential elements in human nature to which religion ministers. These are Dependence, Fellowship, Purpose. We are not supreme, but subordinate. No man is his own master. We are not solitary, but created to find communion in the highest intercourse. We are not aimless, “dumb, driven cattle,” but are in this world for a distinct and noble purpose. These three essential elements in human nature are each in its turn dealt with in the text; and the naturalness of prayer is found in this fact. Prayer is the voice of human dependence; prayer is the craving for the most glorious fellowship; prayer is the onward sweep of the wave rolling shoreward toward the highest accomplishment. That it is all this, makes prayer as true to man as it is true to God.

I. We will speak first of Prayer and *dependence*. “Thou, when thou prayest.”

No definition of prayer is accurate, nor is any conception of prayer correct, which leaves out of sight the fact that it is not, nor can it ever be, the lan-