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IMPORTANCE
OF
DOCTRINAL AND INSTRUCTIVE
PREACHING.

BY THE

REV. S. G. WINCHESTER.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

WILLIAM S. MARTIEN, PUBLISHING AGENT.

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DOCTRINAL AND INSTRUCTIVE PREACHING.

"TRUTH is in order to godliness," and public preaching is an appointed mode of presenting truth to the human mind.

The chief end of the Gospel Ministry is, to glorify God in the conversion and salvation of men. It is an instrumentality eminently fitted to produce this result, being wisely adapted to the nature of man, as a moral and intelligent creature.

Although it possesses no inherent efficacy, but derives all from the blessing and agency of the Holy Ghost, nevertheless, much depends upon the manner in which it is employed. Agreeably to God's plan of dealing, unless this instrumentality be wisely and rightly used, we may not hope for great success.

Whatever, therefore, tends to secure for it efficiency, in making it the power of God unto salvation, claims the prayerful consideration of all, both preachers and hearers. For this subject is one of great interest, both to clergymen and laymen. On both rests a weighty responsibility, in regard to the character of the ministrations of the sanctuary. It is the office of the minister to dispense the word, but it is the duty of laymen to select and call such as will dispense it in an edifying manner. It is to be feared that churches generally, do not fully appreciate their responsibility in this particular. In a matter so important as the salvation of sinners, and the up-building of the faith of the saints, dependent, as it is to a great degree, upon the character of the ministrations employed for this purpose, a congregation cannot be too careful and discreet. Their own comfort in religion—their own growth in grace and knowledge, as well as the future welfare of their children, are deeply concerned in the choice they may make. The weal or woe of many souls may be made to turn upon it.

The sources of danger in this respect, are not always obvious to a congregation, and consequently, they are not, at all times, sufficiently guarded against. The requisite forms of Presbyterial action, cannot, in all cases, be relied on as adequate security. The best and wisest men may be deceived and imposed on, or counteracted in their efforts to prevent evil. The sources of danger are commonly two:

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unsoundness in the faith, and the want of ability and adequate mental endowments. One effect of these evils is, to perpetuate themselves; for where a people have never been properly instructed, they are, to a great extent, unable to detect these disqualifications in a candidate for the pastoral office; and hence are more easily imposed on by weak or designing men. An errorist, particularly when he has an end to answer by it, will carefully conceal his real sentiments, where he knows they would be unacceptable and unpopular. By the use of equivocal language, and of words and phrases, to which he attaches a meaning different from that which he has reason to believe, is attached to them by his hearers, he may succeed in deceiving them. No positive defection is discoverable; and if any thing at all is amiss, it is either of so negative a character, as to excite no suspicion, or such only as may be easily allayed by adroit explanations.

If the stratagem succeed, and the candidate becomes the pastor, one of two things will most likely ensue. Either he will cautiously inculcate his real sentiments, and gradually avow them as plainly as he safely may, and thus ultimately become the disseminator and advocate of unscriptural and pernicious dogmas; or, should he discover that this would be inexpedient and unsafe, he will, in order to retain his situation, either avoid altogether those topics on which he differs from the received creed, or handle them deceitfully, in so vague and general a way, as to convey no definite ideas of the subject he professes to treat, and thus become a tame, empty, and unedifying preacher.

Indeed this may serve to account for the seemingly impossible fact, that the ministrations of some preachers are of this very character, notwithstanding their admitted talents and learning.

In regard to those who lack ability and mental capacity, their success in obtaining the suffrages and ultimate call of a people, may be accounted for thus. With great pains and labour, they exhaust their minds on a few discourses. On these they rely as passports to the favourable opinion and confidence of the people. But after they have served this purpose, and have inducted their author (or copyist, as the case may be,) into office, they are laid aside, and the like is never heard again. It has indeed, happened, that in order to maintain their standing and reputation, such preachers have availed themselves of the labours of others, in a way not very creditable to their moral honesty, nor altogether secure against detection by the more intelligent of their hearers.

Such are the dangers of deception and imposition, to which congregations are exposed, in the selection of pastors and teachers. Sound instruction, and a thorough indoctrination, constitute their surest safeguard. Thus shielded, a congregation may as readily detect an errorist by what he *omits to say*, as by what he inculcates. If, for example, in the exposition of the proof texts of a doctrine, he should fail to discover the doctrine itself, though he may not formally reject it, yet a well instructed hearer could discover the character of the expositor.

With the conviction, therefore, that this is a subject of no small moment to the members, as well as ministers of our Church, we shall proceed in our endeavours to show the importance of doctrinal and instructive preaching.

Paul's solemn charge to Timothy, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, was, "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." 2 Tim. iv. 2. The same apostle exhorts Titus to "hold fast the faithful word as he had been taught, that he might be able by **SOUND DOCTRINE**, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Titus i. 9.

While we lay great stress upon the necessity of imparting to our congregations, solid instruction out of God's word, we by no means detract from the importance of pungent exhortation and reproof. On the contrary, we believe that the efficiency of the latter depends, under God, upon a due regard to the former. Instruction is the basis of persuasive exhortation.

Wilks, in his prize essay on the signs of conversion and unconversion, states the relation of doctrine to practice thus: "After the experience of nearly two thousand years, it might, without danger of mistake, be admitted as a demonstrated fact, that morality has always advanced or declined, in proportion as the Gospel has been preached in its genuine simplicity, or in a garbled form; and, consequently, that nothing but the undisguised doctrines of Christianity can accomplish even that object, which the worldling considers as the only end of the clerical establishment. But this object, great as it is, is far from being the utmost that a pious minister proposes to himself. His preaching is founded on the supposition, that a man, though outwardly moral, may fail of being a true Christian, and in consequence, fail of the rewards of Christianity. Internal religion, a religion of motives and intentions, a religion corresponding to that which our Saviour taught in his sermon on the Mount, he esteems necessary to

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make the most brilliant or useful action acceptable to that Being, whom ‘without faith it is impossible to please.’ He conceives, therefore, that the doctrinal parts of Christianity are essentially necessary in his preaching. Whether he argues from the practice of the inspired writers, or from the nature of the thing itself, he arrives at the same conclusion, that an exhibition of the moral precepts of the Gospel, without the doctrines on which they depend, is as contrary to the intention of its Author, as the opposite error of inculcating its doctrines, and forgetting its commands.”

Our object, in this tract, is to inculcate the duty and importance of sound doctrinal and instructive preaching, as opposed to an empty, vapid declamation, which may excite the gaze of the vulgar, and the admiration of the weak and uninformed; and also as opposed to unintelligible speculations about the useless refinements of metaphysics, and philosophy, falsely so called, which the apostle denominates “vain babblings,” a “doting about questions and strifes of words.” Thus they “turn aside unto vain jangling—understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.”

The office of a Gospel minister is to instruct the people out of God’s word. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations,” is the Saviour’s last command. Another form of this commission is, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” To preach the Gospel, is to teach the people. The word translated *to teach*, in the first quoted form of the commission, literally signifies *to make disciples*. And because disciples can only be made by instruction, the word is properly translated *to teach*.

The object of preaching is the restoration of the divine image to the souls of men, which image consists in knowledge, as well as holiness. This has been lost, and consequently ignorance and blindness of mind, now characterize the race. Herein lies the necessity for teaching the people; that the eyes of their understanding may be opened through the word, and the light of the glorious Gospel of the Son of God shine in upon their hearts. All men, at some time of life, need to be taught the first principles of religion, and while babes in Christian knowledge, they must be fed with the pure milk of the word, and with strong meat, as they are able to bear it. By strong meat, we understand those doctrines of grace which are so repulsive to the carnal heart. The doctrines of the Bible must be explained and recommended to the people, by him who would assume the office of a public teacher in the Church. For this reason, minis-

ters are denominated *teachers*. This was the business of the great Teacher and Prophet of the Church, Jesus Christ; and all who believed on Him, were called *disciples* or *learners*.

This method of securing the reformation of mankind, is in strict accordance with, and wisely adapted to, the nature of man. We are so constituted, that the mind is the avenue to the heart. We seek to affect the one by enlightening the other. The heart can never be properly influenced by truth, while the judgment remains unconvinced. On the contrary, if the mind be fully persuaded of a truth, the heart and conscience seldom remain totally unaffected by it.

The Westminster divines evidently regarded doctrinal instruction as an essential part of public preaching. In setting forth the Directory for public worship, they take for granted that the doctrines of the Gospel will be faithfully inculcated, and strongly enforced by arguments and Scripture texts. This will appear from the following extracts from that part of the Directory which relates to public preaching. "In raising doctrines from the text, his (the preacher's) care ought to be, first, that the matter be the truth of God. Secondly, that it be a truth contained in, or grounded on that text, that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence. Thirdly, that he chiefly insist upon those doctrines which are principally intended, and make most for the edification of the hearers. The doctrine is to be expressed in plain terms; or, if in any thing it need explication, it is to be opened, and the consequence also from the text cleared. The parallel places of Scripture confirming the doctrine, are rather to be plain, and pertinent, than many, and (if need be) somewhat insisted upon, and applied to the purpose in hand."

"The arguments or reasons are to be solid, and as much as may be, convincing. The illustrations, of what kind soever, ought to be full of light, and such as may convey the truth into the hearer's heart with spiritual delight."

"In the use of instruction or information in the knowledge of some truth, which is a consequence from his doctrine, he may, (when convenient,) confirm it by a few firm arguments from the text in hand, and other places of scripture, or from the nature of that common-place in divinity, whereof that truth is a branch."

The published sermons and other writings of the Westminster Divines, show that they acted agreeably to the direction which they gave to others.

The writings of the Puritans, doubtless, constitute a fair criterion by which to judge of the character of their preaching. Hence we may infer that the veneration in which they

were held by the pious, and the influence which they possessed with the intelligent and well-disposed, are attributable not merely to their private worth, as godly and consistent Christians, but, perhaps, chiefly to that pure stream of sound doctrinal instruction which issued from their pulpits. And when, by a misguided and cruel policy, the pulpits of England were closed against them, that stream continued to flow from their consecrated pens, spreading itself over countless minds, and carrying down through successive generations, the blessings of wholesome instruction: affording light to those in darkness, knowledge to the ignorant, comfort to the distressed, stability to the wavering, and edification to all. Thus hath the overruling providence of God brought good out of evil, and made the wrath of man to praise Him. The wickedness of their rulers, withheld their instruction from a few of their cotemporaries, but the providence of God has extended it to unnumbered multitudes, through all subsequent time. God has thus put the seal of his approbation upon that kind of preaching and writing; and the Holy Ghost has put honour upon it, by making it the power of God to the salvation of sinners, and to the sanctification of believers.

Dr. John Edwards, in his work called "The Preacher," says, "Knowledge is a necessary ingredient or part of Christianity, and consequently, unless divine principles and truths be taught us, which are the true matter of our knowledge, our Christianity is imperfect. There wants a main and essential part of it, such a part is absolutely requisite to make the other parts useful. For this is certain, that the practical parts of Christianity will be wholly insignificant, if they be separated from this. The reason is plain, because fearing and loving God, and keeping his commandments are duties that cannot be practised aright without a due knowledge. Therefore, a preacher must make his people knowing in religion. This is not his trade, as some reproachfully term it, but it is that which the nature of his high calling and office requires of him. For truth is a talent committed to us, and we are the trustees of this precious deposite. All our hearers have a right to share in this sacred treasure, and we must with faithfulness impart it to them. We must beware of imaginary draughts of Christianity, of false schemes of the Gospel, of which there are sundry extant at this day. These we must carefully avoid, and be very frequent in insisting on the fundamental articles of our faith, because our religion consists in true principles, as well as right practice."

"We ought to be very solicitous and careful in this matter, because if our knowledge and our principles be corrupted, our practice will be so too. It cannot be otherwise, because the former have so great and so immediate an influence on the latter. Knowledge and belief are the foundations of Christianity; a Christian life is the superstructure that is erected on them: whence it follows that he who supplants the Christian truth, undermines the life of religion, and effectually subverts its morals. By overturning the faith, he destroys the practical part of Christianity."

"In brief, we must instruct the people in the sacred truths of the Gospel, and the whole body of its principles, or else we cannot lay claim to that character of being good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, that is well acquainted with, and imparting unto others the knowledge of the principles of Christianity."

Vol. i. p. 51.

The mind, even under the most favourable circumstances, is slow to comprehend the great truths of the Gospel, and the unrenewed heart universally disposed to reject them. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Hence the necessity of line upon line and precept upon precept. What minister has not observed, and been both surprised and mortified at the ignorance of men in regard to religious doctrines, who were otherwise intelligent and well informed, and who for years have sat under the preaching of an enlightened ministry?

Indifference to religion, that withering and blighting curse, which rests, with an incubus weight, upon the hearts of the great mass of every community, is traceable to an ignorance of Divine things. The god of this world has blinded their eyes, and they know not God, and therefore obey not the Gospel of his Son. It is an impenetrable shield which wards off the arrows of Gospel truth. Wrapt in ignorance, they slumber on in the region and shadow of death. Had they been properly and habitually instructed from the pulpit, although they might have remained at enmity with God, yet they could not be indifferent under the pungent appeals of the Gospel to their consciences. For indifference is not to be confounded with a seared conscience. The one is the consequence of ignorance, the other is the judicial result of having abused and rejected both light and mercy.

Instructive preaching must sometimes be argumentative, as well as merely didactic, according to the nature of the subject

discussed. This is highly important and profitable in its place. And it is necessary, not only for the purpose of convincing the understanding, but because it operates upon the heart, by deepening the impression already made by the assent of the mind. This is effected by so engaging and engrossing the mind in an argumentative investigation, as to cause the hearer to look steadily and for a considerable time at the subject; and thus a longer and less interrupted communication is kept up between the heart and the mind, in regard to the subject in hand, than can possibly be effected by the mere statement of a truth, even where the mind yields a ready assent to it.

For example: if it be announced from the pulpit as an undeniable truth, that a sinner, remaining such, must inevitably perish, the mind of a hearer may assent to it as a doctrine of the Bible, and yet his heart and life remain unaffected by it. But if the minister undertake to prove this point in an argument, based upon the great principles of the divine character and government, and thus lead that mind through the entire argumentation, enabling it distinctly to see each link of the chain of reasoning which brings him irresistibly to the awful conclusion, that remaining as he is, he must perish, and that there is no hope, nor remedy for his case, but repentance and faith in Christ, is it not likely that his heart will be more influenced, than it was by the simple statement of the truth in question? Is it not probable that that state of mental contact with truth, is the one which the Holy Ghost ordinarily blesses to the renovation of the heart?

The apostles, particularly the great Apostle to the Gentiles, often resorted to the argumentative style of imparting instruction. His epistle to the Hebrews is a close, connected, and logical argument, proving the superiority of the Christian, over the Aaronic priesthood. He reasoned before Felix on righteousness, temperance and the judgment, and even that proud and hard heart, trembled beneath the power of his argument.

"When we would effectually exhort and stir up our auditors to a faithful discharge of the great duties of our religion," says Dr. John Edwards, in his Preacher, "we must endeavour it by true and substantial reasons and motives, such as the commands and injunctions of Him who is our Sovereign Lord; the free grace and bounty of God discovered in the Gospel; the evils that attend a vicious life; the inward deformity of sin, and its contrariety to the divine nature; the innate excellency and beauty of religion; the pleasures and advantages of holiness; the easiness of Christ's yoke; the re-

wards that attend it both here and hereafter. And there are some arguments proper to the Gospel, which we must be continually urging upon our flock, to confirm them in the belief of the Christian religion, and the practice of it, as the authority of the Holy Scriptures; the accomplishment of the prophecies contained in them; the miracles wrought to convince us of the divinity of Christ's mission, and of the truth of his doctrines, the various ways of revelation whereby Christianity is confirmed;" &c.

"Thus the public instructors of the Church are to work upon men's judgments, and to argue them into religion and piety. And there is good reason for this, for it is not sufficient that the things we deliver be true, but we must prove them to be such by strong and convincing arguments. We are not to presume that men will admit what we say, whether it be proved or not; for as they are men, they are rational beings, and, therefore, must be dealt with accordingly. And this is certain, that we can come at their minds only by reason and discourse. We read indeed, in the Roman legends, that St. Francis preached to beasts and birds, and we are told he made a great reformation among them; but we do not pretend to deal with such creatures, but with those only that are reasonable, and we know no other way of dealing with these but that which I am speaking of. Our auditors are not insensible machines, and clock-work, and therefore must be handled accordingly: they must be wound up only by reason. If we put them off without this, we undervalue them, and sink them below their species. Wherefore, there is a necessity of a preacher's making use of his logic, and his acquired literature, that he may know how to fetch the best convictions, and clearest evidences from the best topics, whether with respect to principles or actions; whether he refutes a growing error, or establishes a known truth, or maintains the lawfulness and necessity of any religious practice, still, reason and argument must be made use of, and the more of these the better. The closer this powder is rammed, the greater execution it will do.

"The sum of this head is this, that a preacher is to take care that he always speaks good sense, and argues closely. Nothing that comes from him is to be raw and undigested, but all must be well ripened by judgment; which cannot be done without studying, reading, meditating, and industrious searching into divine matters. For we do not preach now by inspiration, and, therefore, there is a necessity of these."

Vol. 1. p. 215.

We are aware that some hearers strongly object to doctri-

nal and argumentative preaching. But if doctrines are not to be preached, the office of a public Christian teacher is at an end. What is left for pulpit exhibition, and instruction? Surely those who make the objection are living witnesses to the necessity of such preaching. They furnish in their own persons, the strongest proof that such instructive preaching is greatly needed. For it may, with great confidence, be laid down as a general rule, that such objectors are either ignorant of Gospel truths, and of the design of the Christian ministry, or that they are opposed to the doctrines inculcated. The carnal heart rebels against the humbling doctrines of grace, and is of course uneasy and restless under the faithful exhibition of them. But this objection is not made by men of the world only, but is sometimes heard from the lips of professed learners at the feet of Jesus. How unseemly is such an objection from such a source!

It ought, however, to be observed, that perhaps an injudicious mode of doctrinal preaching may have given rise to this objection in some instances. A controversial and criminating style, is by no means the happiest or most profitable. This may be offensive even to the most intelligent and pious hearers. Even the didactic style becomes uninteresting, and but slightly edifying, if it be cold and dry, to the neglect of animated exhortation, earnest reproof, and faithful warning. A wise discretion must here be exercised. But it is idle to assert that the doctrines of the Gospel ought not to be preached. If truth be in order to godliness, there is a connexion between faith and practice, too intimate to be unobserved, and too important to be overlooked.

T. Erskine, Esq. in his remarks on the internal evidence of the truth of revealed religion, thus states this connexion between doctrines and practice, or the influence of doctrines on the hearts of men. "In the Bible we uniformly find the doctrines, even those that are generally considered most abstruse, pressed upon us as demonstrations or evidences of some important feature of the Divine mind, and as motives tending to produce in us some corresponding disposition, in relation to God or man. This is perfectly reasonable. Our characters cannot but be, in some degree, affected by what we believe to be the conduct and the will of the Almighty towards ourselves, and the rest of our species. The history of this conduct and this will, constitutes what are called Christian doctrines: if then the disposition or character which we are urged to acquire, recommend itself to our reason and consciences, as right and agreeable to the will of God, we cannot but approve that precept as morally

true: and if the doctrine by which it is enforced, carries in it a distinct and natural tendency to produce this disposition in character, then we feel ourselves compelled to admit that there is at least *a moral truth* in this doctrine. And if we find that the doctrine has not only this purely moral tendency, but that it is also most singularly adapted to assert and acquire a powerful influence over those principles in our nature to which it directs its appeal, then we must also pronounce that there is a natural truth in the doctrine—or, in other words, that however contradictory it may be to human practice, it has however a natural consistency with the regulating principles of the human mind. And further, if the doctrine be not only true in morals, and in its natural adaptation to the mind of man, but if the fact which it records coincides also, and harmonizes with that general idea of the Divine character, which reason forms from the suggestions of conscience, and from an observation of the works and ways of God in the external world, then we are bound to acknowledge that this doctrine appears to be true in its relation to God.

In the Bible, the Christian doctrines are always stated in this connexion: they stand as indications of the character of God, and as the exciting motives to a corresponding character in man. Forming thus the connecting link between the character of the Creator and the creature, they possess a majesty which it is impossible to despise, and exhibit a form of consistency and truth which it is difficult not to believe. Such is Christianity in the Bible."

Mr. Erskine illustrates his position by a reference to the doctrine of the atonement, thus:

"The common sense system of a religion consists in two connexions:—First, the connexion between the doctrines and character of God which they exhibit; and, secondly, the connexion between these same doctrines and the character which they are intended to impress on the mind of man. When, therefore, we are considering a religious doctrine, our questions ought to be, what view does this doctrine give of the character of God? And what influence will it have on the mind of man? Now, the Bible tells us, that God so loved the world as to give his Son for it. He tells us also that he did this, that he might show himself just, even when justifying the ungodly; and that he might magnify the law and make it honourable. The mercy and holiness of the Divine character, therefore, are the qualities which are exhibited by this doctrine. The effect upon the character of man, produced by the belief of it, will be to love Him who

first loved us, and to put the fullest confidence in his goodness and willingness to forgive—to associate sin with the ideas both of the deepest misery and the basest ingratitude—to admire the unsearchable wisdom, and the high principle which have combined the fullest mercy with the most uncompromising justice—and to love all our fellow-creatures from the consideration that our common Father has taken such an interest in their welfare, and from the thought, that as we have been all ship-wrecked in the same sea, by the same wide-wasting tempest, so we are all invited by the same gracious voice to take refuge in the same haven of eternal rest."

The doctrines of the gospel must be faithfully preached, if we desire the duties of religion to be effectually inculcated. Without this, a minister need not be surprised that his ministrations are attended with but little or no success.

Those who object to doctrinal preaching, do in fact object to instructive preaching, for doctrine is instruction: it is something taught. And the objection is, in effect, saying that we know enough, we are sufficiently well informed, and we only need to be excited to the practice of what we know. Vain and deluded mortals! We have read of those, who professing themselves to be wise, became fools.

Some of these objectors plead the feigned ground of benevolence towards their fellow hearers. They profess great anxiety that all should be benefitted by the preaching of the gospel, and, therefore, object to doctrinal discourses, on the ground that the mass of hearers cannot give that attention which is necessary, in order to understand them. Perhaps this want of attention is confined to the objectors themselves. But are ministers to hold back the truth of God, because men will not give to it that attention which it claims and deserves? They *must* preach the word, whether men will hear or forbear. They *must not* shun to declare the *whole counsel of God*. They must do their duty, and throw their hearers upon the responsibility of doing or neglecting theirs.

Some object to doctrinal preaching on the ground, that although they can give sufficient attention to understand it, yet they do not find themselves profited by it. This may be true, and verily, the fault may be their own, and not the preacher's. For this, two reasons may be assigned. 1. The first is, they may have adopted erroneous doctrines, and consequently reject those views of divine truth to which they listen from Sabbath to Sabbath. They may not believe, but cordially dislike them. "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did

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not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Here unprofitableness is attributed to the want of faith, and not to the manner in which the word was preached. A repugnance to particular doctrines is easily, and sometimes almost insensibly, transferred to those who hold and teach them. When this becomes the case, the objector need be at no loss to account for his not being profited. 2. But another reason why the class of persons here spoken of, are not profited by doctrinal preaching may be, that their religion consists in frames of mind, and in animal excitement, and where these are not kept up by artificial means, there is a great dearth in the soul; and all preaching which does not minister to this end, is regarded as unprofitable. Solid instruction in divine things affords no aid to their piety, but rather chills the ardour of their volatile and blind affection, dissipates the hallucination in which they joyfully revel, and chastens into sobriety the wild emotions which feed their delusive hopes. Their piety is periodical, and as transitory as the hour during which it is enjoyed; for they depend, for this excited state of animal feeling, upon an empty and boisterous declamation. We do not wonder that such persons object to doctrinal preaching as unprofitable. But it is one thing to fan a flame, and quite another to feed it with appropriate fuel. To fan, without feeding it, is soon to extinguish it. It is well by exhortation, by encouragement, and by pungent appeal, to fan the flame of piety in the Christian's heart; but unless it be supplied with appropriate and solid instruction, it cannot grow in vigorous health. The Christian pastor must feed the flock of God, over which he is made an overseer. Feed my lambs, was the repeated injunction of our Lord to the confident, but penitent Peter.

The duty and manner of preaching Christ crucified, are thus stated by the Rev. David Bostwick, in a sermon preached before the Synod of New York, in May, 1758:

"This includes," says he, "the whole of the doctrines of the gospel, relating to man's salvation by Jesus Christ, through his blood and Spirit: the fall of man, and his consequent guilt and misery; the original purposes of God's love and grace issuing in the gift of his dear Son; the glory of Christ's person; his mysterious incarnation; his holy life; his cruel death; his resurrection, ascension, and perpetual intercession; the complete atonement he hath made; the everlasting righteousness he hath brought in; the various offices he hath sustained, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation; the methods of divine operation; the nature and use of faith; the blessings consequent upon it, as justifica-

tion, adoption, sanctification, perfection of holiness at death, and the complete happiness of soul and body in the enjoyment of God to all eternity. Christ is to be exhibited as the Messiah, the Anointed of God, the Mediator; the Saviour of men, who saves his people from their sins—from the guilt, the power, and the punishment of them; the Lord, the Head and King of his church, to whom all power is given, and to whom all obedience is due, and to whom is committed the grand and final judgment. Christ is to be preached, not only as the *giver* of a law, who is to be obeyed; but as having fulfilled the law, and who, therefore, is to be believed in, and relied on, for pardon, righteousness, and eternal life. He is to be held forth to sinners as a surety, who has undertaken to pay their debt, to atone for their guilt, and to work out for them a perfect righteousness. However honourably we may speak of him as a ruler to be obeyed, and a pattern to be imitated, yet if we exhibit him not in this view, we do not properly preach Christ. The ground of all our hopes is, that Christ hath suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; that he not only died for our good, but that he died in our room and stead, and “was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

To preach Christ is to display the fulness and freeness of his grace, his power to save, and his willingness to save; to show that in him is to be found every thing that a poor, guilty, helpless, condemned sinner can want, and that all the blessings of his purchase are freely offered without money and without price. He must also be made the centre of every subject. The nature and perfections of the Deity must be considered as they appear “in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The strictness and spirituality of the divine law must lead to Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness. The threatenings of the law must be employed to bring men to Christ, that they may be justified by faith. The promises and blessings of the gospel must be held forth as the purchase of Christ’s blood, and the gift of his grace. Of faith, Christ must be viewed as the author and the object. Repentance must be treated of as his gift. Obedience must be considered as the fruit of faith in him, and union to him, springing from love to Christ, and performed in his strength and grace. In a word, Christ must be regarded as the fountain from which all is derived, the centre in which all must terminate, as the beginning and the end, as the “all in all.”

To a neglect of doctrinal instruction, we apprehend, may

be traced some of the evils, over which, as a church, we have been called to mourn.

1. The first we mention is the prevalence and boldness of doctrinal error. Man is naturally ignorant of the truth as it is in Jesus, and inclined to error, and when left without instruction, will follow that inclination. His heart is opposed to the humbling doctrines of grace, and strongly leans to those which foster pride, cherish self-esteem, and minister to self-confidence and exaltation.

Even with the most faithful indoctrination, it is difficult to stem the current of these popular and self-flattering errors. It is a mournful reflection that so many of our people have been ignorant of the distinctive doctrines of our venerable and truly apostolical church. This is a chief reason why errors have abounded in our midst. The hedges of our vineyard were neglected, and the enemy came in like a flood, and for a time, threatened to lay waste our heritage. But the Lord, we trust, hath lifted up a standard against him. Had we been faithful to "fill the bushel with wheat, we might, in God's name, have defied the devil to fill it with tares." Had we thoroughly pre-occupied the minds of the past and present generations with sound doctrine, we might now have been rejoicing in the unclouded prospects of the church.

Errors have ever abounded in the church of Christ, just in proportion as doctrinal and instructive preaching has been neglected. Public teaching is the ordained means of building up and extending the church; and as God is pleased to work by means, it is idle to expect that the end may be reached, while the appointed means are neglected. The church will decline, unless her cause be advanced in God's approved way. This has ever been the case; and the pages of her history abound with proof on this point, and afford humbling but instructive lessons to all who are set for her defence. The thick moral darkness which had for ages, prior to the reformation, covered, as with a funeral pall, the bosom of the church, was the result of gross neglect on the part of those who bore the office of Christian pastors. A false philosophy, with its useless refinements, seldom appealing to the Bible, because deriving no real countenance from it, gradually displaced the more simple and scriptural ministrations of the pulpit. This prepared the way for the influence of neighbouring heathenism to operate in blending mythological sentiments and rites with the Christian religion. This, together with metropolitan influence, an occasional alliance with the civil authority, and the growing

worldliness and corruption of the clergy, soon excluded from most of the Christian pulpits, that style of doctrinal and instructive preaching, which so eminently characterized the preachers of the primitive church.

In most places where the Romish faith exclusively prevails, no preaching at all is heard at the present day. The mere ceremonies of the church occupy exclusively the religious attention of both priests and people.

During the dark ages, those pastors who professed to preach, taught for doctrines, the commandments of men, until ignorance became the mother of devotion.

The voice of wisdom was no longer heard in the streets. The harps of holy praise were hung upon the willows, and the remnant of Israel sat down and wept, or fled before the sword of relentless persecution. And it was not until the reformed pulpits of Germany, and the neighbouring states, in defiance of priestly domination, thundered forth the doctrines of the cross into the ears of the people, that the light of the Gospel shone into their hearts, delivering them from the power of Satan. It then seemed as if the spark of Christianity, which still lingered and languished in the breasts of a few, had been rekindled at the altar of God, and shed forth its light and heat, until other kingdoms caught the flame, which has since spread over nearly every civilized nation, carrying with it peace, and joy, and eternal life.

Under the doctrinal preaching of her reformers, the church arose from the long, dark night of spiritual death, like the giant from his slumbers, and shook from her a cumbersome mass of excrescent dogmas and rites, and stood forth redeemed, disenthralled, and renovated; and in the name and strength of her Lord and Head, marched onward conquering and to conquer.

The history of the reformed church in England, teaches the same lesson. The reformed doctrines were held and preached by her clergy, with but few exceptions, till the time of James I. He was a vain-glorious and arbitrary prince; and although he advocated, in the character of an author, the doctrines of the reformation, yet he sacrificed his religion at the shrine of ambition. His interests were in conflict with his principles, and from political motives, he favoured the false teachers of his day. The politico-ecclesiastical game was well played. He favoured the religious views of those who favoured his pretensions to undue authority and power in the kingdom.

"Soon after the accession of King James, the canons of

the church were confirmed by the king and convocation. Things were in this state, when a great turn happened in the doctrines of the church. The Arminian, or remonstrant tenets, which had been condemned by the Synod at Dort, began to spread in England. The Calvinistical sense of the (XXXIX) articles was discouraged; and injunctions were published against preaching upon predestination, election, efficacy of grace, &c. while the Arminians were suffered to inculcate their doctrines" without control.*

These injunctions were drawn up through the instrumentality of Bishop Laud, and were entitled, Directions concerning preachers. The third article of these directions enjoined, "that no preacher of what title soever, under the degree of a bishop, or dean at the least, do, from henceforth, presume to preach, in any popular auditory, the deep points of predestination, election, reprobation, or the universality, efficacy, resistibility, or irresistibility of God's grace; but leave those themes rather to be handled by the learned men (in the two universities :) and that moderately and modestly, by way of use and application, rather than by way of positive doctrines; being fitter for the schools, than for simple auditories." "This," says Toplady," was the first blow, given by royal authority, to the doctrinal Calvinism of the established church, since the death of Mary the bloody. For, though it *prima facie*, seemed to muzzle the Arminians, no less than the Calvinistic clergy, yet its design was to bridle the latter, and leave the former at liberty to spread their new principles without restraint. The above paper of directions was dated from Windsor, 4th August, 1622."

Charles I., son of James I., followed in the footsteps, and laboured to carry out the principles, of his father.

"All the emotions of his zeal," says Mosheim, "and the whole tenor of his administration, were directed towards the three following objects:

1. 'The extending the royal prerogative, and raising the power of the crown above the authority of law.'
2. 'The reduction of all the churches in Great Britain and Ireland, under the jurisdiction of bishops.'
3. 'The suppression of the opinions and institutions peculiar to Calvinism.'

The person whom the king chiefly intrusted with the execution of this arduous plan, was William Laud, Bishop of London. This haughty prelate executed the plans of his royal master, and fulfilled the views of his own ambition,

* Tindal's Cont. of Rapin, Vol. III. p. 279, 280, 8vo.

without using those mild and moderate methods, which prudence employs, to make unpopular schemes go down. He carried matters with a high hand. When he found the laws opposing his views, he treated them with contempt, and violated them without hesitation. He loaded the Puritans with injuries and vexations, and aimed at nothing less than their total extinction. He rejected the Calvinistical doctrine of predestination publicly, in the year 1625, (viz. in the first year of Charles' reign;) and notwithstanding the opposition and remonstrances of (Archbishop) Abbot, substituted the Arminian system in its place.”*

Thus it appears that one of the three objects which Charles I. proposed to himself, on his ascension to the throne, was the extermination of Calvinism from the English church. This determination was formed from political and selfish motives, rather than from any conviction that Calvinism was unscriptural. The Calvinists, both in England and on the continent, were, and ever have been, the most formidable and uncompromising foes to political tyranny and despotism. They composed the liberal party in the politics of England, and had opposed the teachings of James I. after unlimited and arbitrary power, and were no less obnoxious to his son, on account of their firm stand against his high pretensions.

William Laud, as we have already seen, was the man whom Charles selected as a fit agent to carry into effect his selfish and wicked purposes. And by his elevation to the See of Canterbury, the king attempted virtually to close the pulpits of England against the advocates of sound doctrine, and threw them wide open to those errorists who had played the part of sycophants at his and his father's feet.

“The directions concerning preachers,” says Toplady, “issued by James I. (as already noted,) in the year 1622, forbade every clergyman, under the degree of a bishop, or of a dean, to preach, in public, either for or against such of the doctrines of grace as were specified in those directions. But as this prohibition was very displeasing to the public in general, so was it far from producing universal obedience. The king, perceiving how much offence his directions had given to the nation, thought proper to publish a subsequent apology for his conduct in that matter: which discreet step, conducted both to calm the minds of the people, and to blunt the force of the directions themselves. This was not the first time that James had been drawn into a scrape by Laud;

* Mosheim’s Ecc. Hist. Vol. IV. p. 518.

nor the first time of his majesty's receding from the imprudent measures into which he had been hurried by that warm and forward ecclesiastic.

But Charles had very little of his father's 'King-craft.' In June, 1626, (i. e. hardly more than four months after his coronation,) Laud got him to revive the unpopular directions concerning preachers; of which a new edition appeared, in the form of a proclamation, extending the prohibition to bishops and deans themselves; who were by this ill-judged stretch of royal supremacy, commanded to forbear from treating of predestination in their sermons and writings.*

* Some considerable time, says Toplady, after the said proclamation, or 'royal edict,' had been issued, Dr. Davenant, bishop of Salisbury, preached before the king at Whitehall. His text, as he himself acquaints us, was Rom. vi. 23.—"The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Here," says his lordship, "I expounded the three-fold happiness of the godly:

"1. Happy in the Lord, whom they serve; God, or Jesus Christ.

"2. Happy in the reward of their service: eternal life.

"3. Happy in the manner of their reward: *χαρισμα* or *gratuitum donum in Christo*, (i. e. the reward is God's free, unmerited gift in Christ.)

"The two former points were not excepted against.

"In the third and last, I considered eternal life in three divers instances.

"(1.) In the eternal destination thereunto, which we call election.

"(2.) In our conversion, regeneration, or manifestive justification: which I termed the embryo of eternal life.

"(3.) And, last of all, in our coronation, when full possession of eternal life is given us.

"In all these I showed it to be *χαρισμα*, or the free gift of God, through Christ; and not procured, or pre-merited by any special acts depending upon the free will of men.

"The last point, wherein I opposed the popish doctrine of merit, was not disliked. The second, wherein I showed that effectual vocation, or regeneration, whereby we have eternal life inchoated and begun in us, is a free gift; was not expressly taxed. Only the first was it which bred the offence: not in regard of the doctrine itself, but because, as my lord's grace, (i. e. Harsenet, archbishop of York said,) the king had prohibited the debating thereof." (*Bishop Davenant's Letter to Dr. Ward, extant in Fuller's Ch. Hist. Book xi. p. 140.*)

What was the consequence of the excellent bishop's presuming to assert predestination to the face of the Arminian king, and his whole court? "Presently," continues the bishop, "after my sermon was ended, it was signified unto me, by my lord of York, my lord of Winchester, and my lord Chamberlain, that his majesty was much displeased that I had stirred this question, which he had forbidden to be meddled withal, one way or the other. My answer was, that I had delivered nothing but the received doctrine of our church, established in the seventeenth article: and that I was ready to justify

The professed object of this proclamation was the promotion of peace in the church. Peace with errorists often

the truth of what I had then taught. Their answer was, that the doctrine was not gainsayed; but his highness had given command, that these questions should not be debated: and therefore he took it more offensively, that any should be so bold, as, in his own hearing, to break his royal commands. My reply was only this: that I never understood his majesty had forbid the handling of any doctrine comprised in the articles of our church; but only the raising of new questions, or adding of new sense thereunto: which I had not done, nor ever should do. This was all that passed betwixt us on Sunday night, after my sermon.

"The matter thus rested, and I heard no more of it, until coming to the Tuesday sermon, one of the clerks of the council told me, that I was to attend at the council table, the next day, at two of the clock. I told him, I would wait upon their lordships at the hour appointed.

"When I came thither, my lord of York made a speech of well nigh half an hour long, aggravating the boldness of my offence, and showing the many inconveniences which it was likely to draw after it. When his grace had finished, I desired the lords, that since I was called thither as an offender, I might not be put to answer a long speech on the sudden; but that my lord's grace would be pleased to charge me, point by point, and so to receive my answer: for I did not yet understand wherein I had broken any commandment of his majesty's, which my lord, in his whole discourse, took for granted. Having made this motion, I made no farther answer: and all the lords were silent for a while.

"At length, my lord's grace said, I knew, well enough, the point which was urged against me: namely, the breach of the king's declaration. Then I stood upon this defence: that the doctrine of predestination, which I taught, was not forbidden by the declaration. (1.) Because in the declaration, all the (thirty-nine) articles are established: amongst which, the article of predestination is one. (2.) Because all ministers are urged to subscribe unto the truth of the article, (viz. of the seventeenth article, which concerns predestination,) and all subjects to continue in the profession of that, as well as of the rest.

"Upon these and such like grounds, I gathered, it (i. e. predestination,) could not be esteemed among forbidden, curious, or needless doctrines.

"And here, I desired that out of any clause in the declaration, it might be showed me, that keeping myself within the bounds of the article, I had transgressed his majesty's command. But the declaration was not produced, nor any particular words in it. Only this was urged, that the king's will was, that for the peace of the church, these high questions should be forbore." (*Fuller's Ch. Hist. Book xi. pp. 139, 140.*) His lordship, after discreetly promising a general conformity to his majesty's pleasure, saluted the council and withdrew.

Fuller observes, that the bishop, at his first coming into the council chamber, presented himself, before the board, on his knees. A circumstance of mortifying indignity, which the spiteful Laud was,

means an unmolested toleration of their sentiments. It was designed to compose the apprehensions of the Calvinists, by seeming to sanction their views. "The literal tenor of this proclamation," says Dr. Maclaine in a note on Mosheim, "was in truth more favourable to the Calvinists than to the Arminians, though by the manner in which it was interpreted and executed by Laud, it was turned to the advantage of the latter. In this proclamation it was said expressly, 'that his majesty would admit no innovations in the doctrine, discipline, or government of the church, and therefore charges all his subjects, and especially the clergy, not to publish or maintain, in preaching or writing, any new inventions or opinions, contrary to the said doctrine and discipline established by law,'" &c. It was certainly a very singular instance of Laud's indecent partiality, that this proclamation was employed to suppress the books that were expressly written in defence of the thirty-nine articles, while the writings of the Arminians, who certainly opposed these articles, were publicly licensed." Laud farther advised the king to have these articles reprinted, with an ambiguous declaration prefixed to them, which might be construed in favour of either party, and which should teach nothing with clearness or precision. "In the tenor of this declaration, precision was sacrificed to prudence and ambiguity; and even contradictions were preferred to consistent, clear, and positive decisions."

This expedient was resorted to, instead of an attempt to alter the articles themselves; which would have met with great opposition from the house of commons, and from a considerable portion of the clergy and laity, who were still warmly attached to Calvinism.

in all probability, the procurer of. A very strange sight, to behold a bishop of Salisbury, one of the most respectable peers of the realm, constrained to that humiliating posture, only for preaching a doctrine to which he had solemnly subscribed; and which was confessed to be a true doctrine, by the very persons themselves who were the inflicters of the disgrace, and at the very time when the disgrace was inflicted! This we learn from the bishop's own narrative: "Though it grieved me," says Davenant, "that the established doctrine of our church should be distasted, yet, it grieved me less, because the truth of what I delivered was acknowledged even by those who thought fit to have me questioned for the delivery of it."

With what face could Charles' Arminian bishops reprimand so great a prelate as Davenant, for inculcating a scriptural tenet, to which the reprimanders themselves had set their own hands, and even then admitted to be a truth of the Bible and of the church?

Toplady's History of Calvinism under Charles I.

The consequence of all this was that doctrinal and instructive preaching was almost wholly neglected, except by the sound clergy, whom Laud could not safely displace. And as the doctrines of this new school in England, were such as please the carnal heart, and therefore did not require for their prevalence, a laboured and industrious inculcation, the result has been that the English establishment is characteristically unsound, though blessed with an orthodox creed, and a remnant of sound and evangelical ministers.

The defection in the kirk of Scotland, (although of late years she has been growing wiser and better,) is attributable to the same cause. In consequence of her connexion with the state, she has admitted to her altars, others besides those who are called of God, and as they know not, neither do they teach the doctrines of the cross. Moral essays, with sentimental episodes, have in many instances superseded sound doctrinal and instructive discourses. In the absence of these, Antinomianism, Arianism, and Arminianism, have gained ground, and greatly defaced that venerable establishment. The orthodoxy of the seceding churches is owing to an opposite mode of preaching. And the contrast is too striking not to start inquiry as to the cause.

The rage for speculation and philosophical refinements, which pervaded the pulpits of New England, especially of Boston, excluded from them that solid and wholesome instruction which flowed from the lips of the pilgrim fathers. Does any one ask what are the consequences? Inquire at the schools of Cambridge and New Haven. Ask our own suffering church, and her sighs will give no equivocal response.

This evil, of which we now speak, has been recognised by the wisest and best of men, as attributable to the neglect of sound doctrinal preaching. Archbishop Secker, in one of his charges to the clergy, says, in language which admits of a ready adaptation to our own church: “To improve the people effectually, you must be assiduous in teaching the principles not only of virtue and natural religion, but of *the gospel*; and of the gospel, not as *almost explained away* by modern refiners, but as the truth is in Jesus; as it is taught by the church of which you are members; as you have engaged, by your subscriptions and declarations, that you will teach it yourselves. You must preach to them faith in the everlasting Trinity; you must set forth the original corruption of our nature; our redemption according to God’s eternal purpose in Christ, by the sacrifice of the cross; our sanctification by the influences of the Divine Spirit; the in-

sufficiency of good works, and the efficacy of faith to salvation.

"The truth, I fear, is, that *many, if not most of us*, have dwelt too little on these doctrines in our sermons, . . . partly from not having studied theology deep enough to treat of them ably and beneficially. God grant it may never have been for want of inwardly experiencing their importance. But, whatever be the cause, *the effect has been lamentable*. Our people have grown less and less mindful, first of the distinguishing articles of their creed, then, as will always be the case, of that one which they hold in common with the heathen; flattering themselves, that what they are pleased to call a moral and harmless life, though far from being either, is the one thing needful. Reflections have been made upon us, on account of these things, by deists, papists, brethren of our own church, &c."

2. Another evil, in a great degree attributable to a neglect of instructive preaching, is the existence of weak, sickly, ignorant, and unstable Christians in our midst. The piety of the present day is more noisy and public in its works, than that of former times, but it is not on that account more elevated and enlightened. The circumstances in which we are placed, and the state of the church in these latter days, perhaps call for a more active and public development of piety, but this very circumstance exposes us to injury. We may be deceived, by substituting outward zeal and great activity in the public operations of the church, for genuine godliness. The heart being deceitful above all things, there is danger in mistaking the one for the other. The performance of these public duties may be too much relied on as an evidence of grace in the heart, instead of a genuine scriptural evidence.

But, in addition to this, even where vital piety really exists, the multitude and pressing nature of these public calls to duty and benevolence, leave but little room for secret prayer, reading, and meditation. Not that we would retard, or in the least degree obstruct, the onward movement of the church in the discharge of her solemn and long neglected duty to the heathen, and to the world around her; on the contrary, let the proper means for the conversion of the world be multiplied ten-fold; but let Christians be on their guard against the dangers to which they are exposed, while discharging this great duty. The more actively and efficiently the church is engaged for Christ, the more busy and subtle will be the efforts of Satan to weaken and destroy the piety of Christians. We say, then, there is reason to fear,

that in consequence of the religion of the present day being (necessarily, if you please,) so much from home, the private concerns of the heart may be neglected.

Eminent personal holiness is the glory of a church, but this cannot be attained ordinarily, without a prayerful study of the Bible. Religion is not a matter of mere feeling. Piety, in order to be efficient, must be enlightened. To be enjoyed by its possessor, and useful to others, it must be guided into the ways of knowledge, and become a principle of the soul, based upon a familiar and right understanding of God's word. Christians must be built up in the most holy faith. They must be rooted and grounded in the truth, by careful and faithful teaching; otherwise they will be as unstable as the waves of the sea, and be driven about by every wind of doctrine. They should be able to give intelligently a reason of the hope that is in them, and to hold fast to the words of eternal life.

3. The last evil we shall mention as flowing from the neglect of doctrinal preaching, is the danger of mistaking mere animal excitement for true religion; and the consequent admission of hypocrites and deceived persons into the communion of the church. Duties arise out of doctrines; and ignorance of the latter, will hinder a right discharge of the former.

The practice of calling on men to repent, without ever explaining to them the source, nature, and evidences of repentance; of calling on men to believe in Christ, without teaching them the doctrine of faith, or instructing them in the nature of Christ's finished work, as the object of faith; of exhorting men to submit, without informing them what is meant by submission, and also to whom and to what they must submit, is manifestly fraught with the dangers of hypocrisy and deception. It is no secret, but known to all who will read or hear, that numbers have been introduced into our churches, under the auspices of such empty exhorters; some of whom remained in the church no longer than the time which discipline required to turn them out; and others continue in it only because discipline has become ineffectual, or fallen entirely into disuse. Excitement, produced by such means, and by a superadded, corresponding, artificial machinery, is termed conversion, and so gazetted to the world, in praise of him who has effected it.

Under such preaching, if preaching it may be called, how many have doubtless mistaken a legal for an evangelical repentance, and fondly hoped that a few tears had wiped away

their sins! How many have mistaken submission to an arbitrary requirement of the preacher, for submission to the righteousness of Christ! How many, in coming forward to a designated seat, because it was done at some sacrifice of feeling, have supposed they were coming to Christ for salvation! What astounding disclosures will the judgment of the great day make, in regard to this subject!

Another form of this evil, to which we shall barely allude, is the difficulty of directing the inquiries, and obviating the difficulties of those awakened and anxious sinners, who have never been properly instructed, nor faithfully indoctrinated. It requires more time and labour to correct their erroneous views in regard to the nature of the evil which they dread, of the obstacles which beset them, of the exercises they should experience, and of the blessing which they seek, and to impart scriptural views on all these subjects, than if they had been carefully taught, as well as earnestly exhorted and alarmed. Such anxious inquirers are commonly longer in obtaining well-grounded comfort, and grasp with a feebler and more distrustful hand, the hope set before them in the gospel, than those who, from children, have known the Scriptures, and been well instructed in its doctrines.

Such are some of the evils consequent on the neglect of doctrinal and instructive preaching: and the same results will follow in due proportion, if preaching be confined to a limited number of doctrines, while others are omitted. Ministers are commissioned to "declare the whole counsel of God." And what God has seen fit to reveal, they should feel it to be their duty to expound and enforce.

There is too much reason to fear that some doctrines are omitted, or slightly passed over, in the public ministrations of the sanctuary, through the fear of man. A self seeking and time-serving minister will shun to declare those doctrines which are known to be unpopular, and offensive to the carnal heart; especially where there is danger, by preaching them, of forfeiting the favour of the wealthy and influential in society. But He that has said, "do not steal," hath also said, "do not kill."

The same blessed Spirit hath indited one and all of the truths in the Bible. The same authority which binds a minister to preach one, binds him to preach all these truths. The commission is, "Go ye, and preach the Gospel;" and not a part of it, not so much of it only as human wisdom might suggest as suitable or profitable. What a short-sighted and erring mortal might deem expediency, can never justify the palpable violation of a plain rule of duty. It is always

expedient and safe to do the will of God, and faithfully adhere to his written word. Christ did not avoid offences, by avoiding the truth.

This is a connivance at error, and a tacit sanction to the rejection of unwelcome truths. It mars the symmetry of the Gospel scheme, and leaves on the minds of the people imperfect, if not incorrect impressions, relative to the plan of salvation.

A sensible writer in the London Christian Observer, after enumerating the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel, asks, “Can any clergyman preach these doctrines to one class of people, and not to another, without violating his duty, and wounding his conscience? Is he to be deterred on the one hand, by the erudition or fastidiousness of his hearers, or on the other, by their ignorance? Is he to be silent upon these topics before a vulgar congregation, lest they should turn the grace of God into lasciviousness; lest they should continue in sin, that grace may abound? Or ought he to forbear dwelling upon them before persons more elevated in point of station and ability, because, forsooth, it might be more gratifying to learned pride, merely to see the rays of evidence concentrated into a focus, or to have some elaborate criticism presented to them; or more fascinating to ‘ears polite,’ to listen to a smooth and flowery eloquence, which has no tendency to make men tremble? Have not the learned, as well as the unlearned, an interest in our Saviour’s atonement? Ought they not both to be equally reminded, that without Him they can do nothing? The mathematician of old informed the king, that there was no royal way to geometry. And we may boldly aver, that the former description of persons can enter heaven only by the appointed way; even by Him, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Did Paul, who sat at the feet of Gamaliel, rest his hopes of eternal life on any other creed than that professed by Peter, a poor fisherman, who exclaimed, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life?’” Lon. Ch. Ob. An. 1805, p. 405.

The evil effects we have stated will follow, moreover, if the doctrines of the Gospel be vaguely taught, and exhibited in a very general or summary manner. Hearers will receive very indefinite and crude views of the Gospel, by no means satisfactory or profitable. Thus, if it be merely stated that we are saved through the death of Christ, no definite idea of the plan of salvation is conveyed to the mind; and unless the connexion-between our salvation and the death of Christ be explained, and the intermediate links exhibited to view, the Gospel cannot be said to be fully preached.

So, also, if it be merely stated that man's estate of sin and misery is in some way connected with the fall of our first parents, no definite idea of our depravity or guilt is conveyed to the mind. The mere use of terms and phrases, however appropriate or suitable they may be, in themselves considered, if their meaning and force be not explained, will not afford distinct nor accurate views to a mind not taught nor trained to the apprehension of divine truth. Indeed, terms and phrases, when not explained, may convey to the minds of hearers a meaning opposite to that entertained by the preacher himself, and thus mislead them. For example: the term *substitution*, when used in reference to Christ's dying for sinners, may be understood by hearers, especially such as have been properly indoctrinated, to mean that Christ suffered the penalty of the law, in the room of sinners, as their substitute; while the preacher may mean nothing more than that the sufferings of Christ were a substitute for the penalty itself. Here the two meanings are diametrically opposite to each other.

This is true, also, of the term *vicarious*. Hearers may attach one meaning to it, and the preacher quite another. Hence it is unsafe to infer a preacher's real sentiments merely from his use of unexplained terms.

When the preacher, therefore, from any of these causes, fails to convey his own impressions to the minds of his hearers, his ministrations must be, in a due proportion, unprofitable. The fear of divulging his own sentiments, or of crossing those of his hearers, may lead a preacher to deal in vague generalities, from which no distinct impressions of truth can be derived.

A desire to avoid or suppress controversy, may induce a preacher to withhold the peculiar doctrines of grace, and content himself with mere exhortation, warning, and reproof, irrespective of those great truths from which alone practical preaching can derive pungency and power, through the agency of the Holy Ghost. Such preaching must be unedifying, and unproductive of much permanent utility.

In conclusion, it may be well to draw three brief, practical inferences from this subject.

1. We infer that a minister of Christ should be apt to teach. Not only should he possess good natural talents, but he should be thoroughly furnished for his calling,—a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,—rightly dividing the word of truth. Paul exhorts Timothy thus: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

A great responsibility, in this respect, rests upon our Presbyteries, who constitute the door of admission into our ministry. We have excellent rules on this subject, worthy to be written in letters of gold, as a quaint author observes on another subject, but far more worthy to be faithfully observed.

An unqualified ministry presents the mournful spectacle of the blind leading the blind; and if they are saved, even as by fire, their works are likely to be burned up.

The great obscurity in the preaching of some men, is owing to the imperfect and erroneous views of truth which they themselves entertain: and what they do not understand, they cannot make their people see. A speculative and metaphysical style of discussion, shooting over the heads of the people, and perhaps not fully intelligible to the preacher himself, is equally unavailing to the accomplishment of the great ends of the Gospel ministry. "He that winneth souls is wise."

2. Another inference is, that if ministers would be faithful in the discharge of their appropriate duties, they must give themselves wholly to the work. If they would bring things new and old, out of the treasury of knowledge, they must be diligent in keeping it well supplied. If they would give solid instruction to the people, they must be thoroughly taught themselves, and give faithful attention to reading and meditation. Let them not offer unto the Lord a vain oblation, which costs them nothing, and which is probably worth nothing. It is true that God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. But who is not weak before God, and in the view of the high calling of the ministry? And shall the servants of God diminish, by indolence and neglect, the strength which they have? Did Paul rely upon his talents or acquirements, when he exclaimed, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Ye who minister in holy things, suffer a word of exhortation. Gird up the loins of your strength. Bend your whole mind to the work of teaching transgressors the ways of God. Bury not your talent in the earth, but employ those you have, in multiplying their number. If you would be counted worthy of double honour, labour in the word and doctrine, and rest not in past attainments, either in piety or knowledge: and the lamentation will no longer be heard, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hosea iv. 6.

Above all, seek a revival of religion in your own souls. This will prepare you for duty, and cause you to delight in

the discharge of it. David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.—Take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Ps. li. 10-13.

3. The remaining inference is, that in order to be edified, Christians should take heed both how they hear, and what they hear. The word preached will not profit, unless it be mixed with faith in them that hear it. A message from God demands and deserves a close and prayerful attention from those to whom it is delivered. It is to be received not as the word of man, but as the truth of God. Hearers should search the Scriptures, to see if the things preached be so or not. So did the Bereans, in the days of the apostles, and "therefore many of them believed."

The unprofitableness of preaching is not always the fault of the preacher. It is far more frequently the fault of the people. The parable of the sower was designed to exhibit this fact in a striking light. Besides those causes of unprofitableness mentioned in the parable, as chargeable upon hearers, we may add, that a criticising or captious spirit, will hinder the word from entering the heart. The medium through which the word is dispensed, is both imperfect and to a great extent impure, and doubtless its power and beauty are often diminished on this account. But if the Gospel be faithfully and clearly preached, we should, in a measure, forget the messenger, and have our minds and hearts occupied with the message itself, and with Him who sends it.

Again: A want of preparation on the part of hearers, will prevent them from being edified by preaching. Before waiting on God in the services of the sanctuary, we should seek communion with Him by prayer and devout meditation. The world should be turned out of our hearts and minds, that we may go to the house of worship with hungerings and thirstings after God. We should feel the need of instruction, and desire to know more of Christ and his salvation. While engaged in the house of God, our whole attention must be given to the service, and our hearts be lifted up in prayerful devotion. We must receive the truth in the love of it, that it may be as manna to the hungry soul, and as a cordial to the languishing spirit. When we retire from the sanctuary, it should be to our closets, that the words we have heard may sink deep into our hearts, and that the instruction we have received may be sealed upon our minds.

Again: Irregularity in our attendance upon the means of grace, will go far to render them unprofitable. Unless hindered by Providence, be always found in your proper places on the Sabbath day, otherwise "thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty." 1 Samuel xx. 18. God may punish a neglect of his ordinances, by withholding the influences of his Spirit from you, even when attending outwardly upon them. Besides this, you will lose much instruction, and thereby be less profited by what you do receive. The word of God may prove a savour of death unto death, to those who hear it, in consequence of the manner in which they receive it.

But you should take heed what you hear. Tamper not with error. If you play with a serpent, you may expect to be bitten. Do not gratify an idle curiosity by listening to the preacher of heresy. It is making sport of God's holy ordinances. Seek the pure streams of Gospel truth, that your souls may be refreshed and strengthened.

Much depends upon the people, in elevating the standard of good preaching. They have great influence in creating a proper taste for pulpit services. Let them require doctrinal and instructive preaching, and discountenance an opposite style. Be not blinded to the real character of a discourse, by beauty of language, melody of voice, fervour and grace of manner, nor by any of the mere circumstances of preaching. Seek for the kernel, and if this cannot be found, cast away the shell, even though it be gilded and highly ornamented. The soul cannot thrive nor live upon chaff.

When a preacher presumes that all his hearers are babes, and feeds them only with milk, and even that sometimes diluted, he is guilty of a sad mistake. But when he labours to keep them babes, by never strengthening the food he gives them, he is chargeable with what is more criminal than a mere mistake.

Be no longer babes: but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. Go on from one degree of attainment to another. Make advances in the divine life. Press onward in the path of wisdom; and desire the strong meat of the Gospel, that you may be strengthened and nourished, till you arrive at the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. Be diligent. Be sober, and watch unto the end. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

DESIGN AND MANNER OF PREACHING.

From Baxter's Reformed Pastor.

The grand design of preaching is, to show men their truest happiness, and to direct them how to attain it. It is the great work of Christian ministers, to acquaint men with God, and that glory which all his chosen people shall enjoy in his presence; to show them the certainty and excellence of the promised felicity in the life to come, compared with the vanities of the present world, that so we may turn the stream of their thoughts and affections, bring them to a due contempt of this world, and put them upon seeking that durable treasure. This is the work about which we are to treat with men, day after day; for could we once bring them to propose a right *end*, and set their hearts unfeignedly on God and heaven, the greatest part of our business would be done. Having shown them the right end, our next work is to acquaint them with the right means of attaining it. We must first teach them the evil and danger of sin; then we must open to them the great mysteries of redemption; the person, natures, incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and dominion of the blessed Son of God. As also, the conditions imposed on us; the duties he has commanded us; the everlasting torments he has threatened to the finally impenitent; the rich treasury of his blessings and grace; the tenor of his promises, and all the privileges of the saints. We must recommend to them a life of holiness and communion with God. We must excite them to, and direct them in all the spiritual duties, which the Gospel requires. At the same time we must discover to them the deceitfulness of their own hearts; the many difficulties and dangers they will meet with; especially we must show them the depth of Satan's temptations, and assist them against all these. We must reveal and recommend to them the great and gracious designs of God, in his works of creation, providence, redemption, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. In a word, we must teach them as much as

we can, of the whole works and word of God. And what two volumes are here for a minister to preach upon ! how great, how excellent, how wonderful ! All Christians are the disciples or scholars of Christ: the Church is his school: we are his ushers : the Bible is his grammar: this it is we must be daily teaching them. The *Papists* would teach them without book, lest they should learn heresies from the word of truth ; but our business is not to teach them without book, but to help them to understand the book of God.

Preaching is a work which requires greater skill, and especially greater life, and greater zeal, than any of us commonly bring to it. It is no trifling matter, to stand up in the face of a congregation, and deliver a message of salvation or damnation, as from the living God, in the name of the Redeemer. It is no easy thing to speak so plainly, that the most ignorant may understand us; so seriously, that the dearest heart may feel, and so convincingly, that contradicting cavillers may be silenced. Certainly, if our hearts were set upon the work of the Lord, as they ought to be, it would be done more vigorously than by the most of us it is. Alas ! how few ministers preach with all their might, or preach about everlasting joys and torments in such a manner as may make men believe that they are in earnest ! It would make a man's heart ache to see a number of dead and drowsy sinners sit under a minister, without having a word that is likely to quicken or awaken them. The blow often falls so light, that hard-hearted persons cannot feel. Few ministers will so much as exert their voice and stir themselves up to an earnest delivery. Or if they speak loud and earnestly, often times they do not answer it with earnestness of matter; and then the voice does but little good. The people will esteem it but mere bawling, if the matter does not correspond. On the other hand, it would grieve one to hear what excellent subjects some ministers treat upon, who yet let them die in their hands for want of a close and lively application; what fit matter they have for convincing sinners, and yet how little they make of it. O sirs ! how plain, how close, how serious should we be, in delivering a message of such importance as ours, when the everlasting life or death of men are concerned in it ! Methinks we are no where so much wanting, as in seriousness; yet nothing is more unsuitable to our business, than to be slight and dull. What ! speak coldly for God, and for the salvation of men ! Can we believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet can we speak to them in a drowsy tone ?

In the name of God, brethren, awaken your hearts before you come into the pulpit; that when you are there, you may be fit to waken the hearts of sinners. Remember, that they must be awakened, or damned; but surely a sleepy preacher is not likely to awaken them. Though you give the holy things of God, the highest praises in words; if you do it coldly, you will unsay by your manner, all that you have said. It is a kind of contempt of great things (especially so great as these) to speak of them without great affection and fervency. "Whatsoever our hand findeth to do," (certainly then in such a work as preaching for men's salvation) we should "do it with all our might." Though I do not recommend a constant loudness in your delivery, (for that will make your fervency contemptible) yet see to it, that you have a constant seriousness; and when the matter requires it, (as it should do in the application, at least) then "lift up your voice and spare not" your spirits. Speak to your hearers as to men that must be awakened either here or in hell. Look upon your congregation with seriousness and compassion; and think in what a state of joy or torment they must be forever; and that surely will make you in earnest, and melt your hearts for them. Whatever you do, let the people *see* that you are in good earnest. You cannot soften men's hearts by jesting with them, or telling them a smooth tale, or patching up a gaudy oration. They will not cast away their dearest pleasures, at the drowsy request of one who seems not to mean as he speaks, or to care much whether his request be granted or not.

Let us then rouse up ourselves to the work of the Lord. Let us speak to our people as for their lives, and "save them as by violence, pulling them out of the fire." Satan will not be charmed out of his possessions; we must lay siege to the souls of sinners, which are his chief garrison; must play the battery of God's ordnance against it, and play it close, till a breach is made, not suffering them to make it up again. As we have reasonable creatures to deal with, we must see to it that our sermons be all convincing; and that we make the light of scripture and reason, shine so bright in the face of the ungodly, that unless they wilfully shut their eyes, it may even force them to see. A sermon full of mere words, while it wants the light of evidence, and the zeal of life, is but an image, or a well dressed carcase. In preaching, there is intended a communion of souls between us and our people; or a communication of somewhat from ours to theirs. We must endeavour to communicate

the fullest light of evidence from our understanding to theirs ; and to warm their hearts, by enkindling in them holy affections from our own. The great things we are to commend to our hearers, have reason enough on their side, and lie plain before them in the word of God : We should therefore be so furnished with a proper store of evidence, as to come as with a torrent upon their understanding, and bear all down before us. With our dilemmas and expostulations, we should endeavour to bring them to a nonplus, that they may be forced to yield to the power of truth ; to see that it is great and will prevail.

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