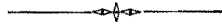


because he had frequently read the sophistries of Cicero or the fables of Vergil. . . . No one ought to relate preposterous fables or follow the wisdom of philosophers that is hateful to God. . . . This I fear to do."<sup>1</sup> Still, it is greatly to his credit that he *was* conscious of his defects, for it shows that with all his disadvantages he possessed at least a literary *taste* of a high order. We must admire him not only for what he accomplished, but for his aspirations to accomplish it better and make it more acceptable to his readers. We must not allow his own modest disclaimer to blind us to a just appreciation of his real merits. His industry and perseverance are beyond all praise when we think of the conditions amid which he searched and wrote. He has no rival; his writings are of unique value. If they were lost, nothing that we have could fill their place. His pictures may be rough in their execution, but they are true to life.

The student of the "Life and Times of Gregory" must be profoundly grateful that his directions with regard to his works were faithfully observed: "Although these books of mine are written in a somewhat unpolished style, I nevertheless adjure all the priests of the Lord who, after my unworthy self, shall be pastors of the Church of Tours . . . that they never suffer these books to be destroyed or to be copied with selections or omissions, but let them all remain with you, entire and unmutilated."<sup>2</sup>

H. J. WARNER.



ART. VI.—THE SERMON: EXPOSITORY OR TOPICAL?

"Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa  
Seminarla nel mondo, e quanto piace  
Chi umilmente con essa s' accosta.  
Per apparer ciascun s' ingegna, e face  
Sue invenzioni, e quelle son trascorse  
Dai predicanti, e il Vangelo si tace."  
*Parad.*, xxix. (91-96).

NOT very long before his death the late Bishop of London is said to have stated to a layman in his diocese that, in order to improve the modern style of sermons, he was accustomed to give two practical rules to his ordination candidates—viz.:

<sup>1</sup> "Mir. Proem."

<sup>2</sup> "Conjuro omnes sacerdotes Domini, ut nunquam libros hos abolere faciatis aut rescribi quasi quedam legentes et quasi quedam præmittentes, sed ita omnia vobiscum integra inlibataque permaneant" (Epilogue Hist. Franc.).

(1) "Always preach about a subject, not a text"; and (2) "Never talk about truths in the abstract, but apply them to the actual problems which you know are felt by those to whom you are speaking."

The only comment I would make upon the second of these rules is that no thoughtful man can have any possible doubt of its value. Preaching which does not help people to think more clearly upon the actual problems, whether personal, social, intellectual, or spiritual, with which they are faced, and which does not help them to live better, happier, and more useful lives in the actual circumstances under which they are living, entirely fails of its object. We can only trust that those preachers who read this rule will be careful to notice that it contains a very large assumption—that the preacher does know, and therefore has taken the trouble to get to know (and this kind of knowledge is only gained from long, close, and intimate personal intercourse), what are the problems and the circumstances upon which and in which his hearers are needing light and help.

But the first rule, "Always preach about a subject, and not a text," stated thus shortly, strikes one as open to misconception, if not to misconstruction, and I cannot help suspecting that, in transmission, the Bishop's words must have suffered at least some measure of mutilation. Amplified and wisely interpreted, as the rule doubtless would be when given, it certainly contains a view of preaching for which much can be said; but taken just as it stands, it might be held to depreciate expository preaching, and to assert that the so-called "topical" sermon was likely to be much more useful than the sermon which is chiefly concerned with the careful exposition of a fragment of Holy Scripture.

But can the best preaching be briefly divided under the two heads of "topical" and "expository"? Can we say of the great sermons of the great preachers, either of the past or the present, that this particular sermon could be adequately described and labelled "topical," and that particular sermon "expository"? Will not the two qualities be generally, more or less closely, combined? A merely "topical" sermon might be little more than a discussion of some particular subject, with a text prefixed as a motto. Was not this the style of sermon which in the not very distant past was stigmatized and condemned as the "mere moral essay"? It need not be hortative or even judicial, but might consist simply in the setting side by side different, and, possibly, even contradictory, views of some current topic, or of a subject of general interest at the particular time.

On the other hand, the merely expository sermon may no

doubt differ but little from an enlarged or altogether overgrown critical note, such notes as are found in the appendices of several well-known modern commentaries. It may consist in a discussion of the etymology of the words, the grammar of the sentences, and the different ways in which the language may be interpreted, without finally deciding what the writer's real meaning or intention was. (Passages in which the preacher feels he cannot arrive at such a decision are surely best not chosen as texts for sermons.)

I cannot help thinking that most readers of these pages could, if they would try to do so, recall occasions on which they have heard, "in the place of the sermon," discussions of both these kinds. Either one or the other may have been so far useful as to stimulate thought or study upon the subject or the text on the part of one or two hearers, but such discussions will never effect what a sermon is meant to effect; they will not help to bring forth the *fruits* of repentance (in the true meaning of the word); they are not likely to stimulate to action.

But the preacher who bases exhortation upon exposition of Holy Scripture can—at least, in some measure—say, "Thus saith the Lord," and more especially so if he has been interpreting, and is now applying, words of our Lord, or some message of a prophet.

One great weakness which is wont to be charged against expository preaching is that it frequently "lacks point." It has been well said that the message which "goes home," which finds entrance into and dwells in the heart and conscience of the hearer, must be shaped as a nail or a wedge: it must "grow to a point." But in the ordinary exposition of a passage quite a number of applications or lessons are discovered, all very necessary, very practical, and much needed at the present time. To omit any of these seems like robbing the passage of a part of its meaning, or its writer of a portion of his intention. Here lies one of the greatest difficulties and problems of expository preaching.

Some may recollect how the late Dr. Vaughan overcame it in such expository sermons as those upon the Epistle to the Philippians or on the Revelation. In these sermons there seem to be generally three parts—(1) A careful exposition, not of a single verse, but of several consecutive verses; (2) a brief indication of the various practical lessons contained in or suggested by them; and (3) a choice of one or, at most, two particularly outstanding applications, and a driving home of these by a fuller expansion and, it may be, by repetition of them under somewhat different aspects. Thus, while the thoughtful listener, who has carefully followed the sermon, has

gathered a rich harvest of instruction, the more careless hearer may, in the final narrowing of the application, have had one or two "nails" driven home by one who is a master at his art.

A serious danger and disadvantage which may attach to the topical sermon is that the preacher may seem to be speaking simply in his own name, giving his own reasons, using his own experiences. That to some extent he must do all these is no doubt true; indeed, unless he has personally felt the need and the value of what he is offering to others, he will do very little good. But suppose any thoughtful, humble-minded man, and especially any young man, were to realize that he was preaching in his own name, I suppose that the very revelation to him of the arrogance of his daring to occupy such a position would convince him not merely that such a position was unfit, but that it should be impossible. If he speaks in his own name, without directly or indirectly basing his reasons, arguments, exhortation, or appeal upon the spirit or words of Holy Scripture, without feeling that he can say, "Thus saith the Lord," he must know that on whatever subject—apart from the interpretation of Holy Scripture—he is speaking, there are among his hearers, probably, more than one or two who are far more fitted to speak upon that subject than himself.

Of course, there are topical sermons which are thoroughly and intensely Scriptural, whose every statement is based upon either the spirit or the words of the Bible, and whose arguments are knitted by references or by texts from the same. Look, for example, at the "Parochial and Plain Sermons" of Cardinal Newman. A very great many of these may well, from their titles, be classed as topical—*e.g.*, "Religious Emotion," "The Religion of the Day," "Unreal Words," "The World our Enemy," "The Praise of Men," "Ignorance of Evil." Yet what sermons, preached within the last hundred years, are more full of Scripture references and Scripture quotations? The footnotes to the various pages, where the references are given, are a proof of this. As a test I took a sermon at random—that upon "The Gospel Feast" in vol. vii.—and I counted at least fifty-four quotations from the Bible in its nineteen pages. The same is true of the sermons of Canon Liddon. Let anyone glance at the footnotes to the sermons upon "Growth in the Apprehension of Truth," or upon "Christ's Service and Public Opinion." Both sermons, as far as (1) unity of subject and (2) application to present thought and present needs, might be described as topical. And it is upon these two qualifications that we believe Bishop Creighton was insisting when he gave his two rules.

When we hear a sermon praised as *practical*, we shall generally find that it has fulfilled these two conditions :

1. It has possessed *unity* of subject and purpose: its purpose has been clear. This cannot be said of very many sermons that are preached. It was my lot some years ago constantly to sit in church close to a somewhat clever barrister, who was known for the clearness and force with which he could state a case or could make an appeal to the jury. At the same church one of the curates had a habit, towards the end of his sermons, which were distinguished usually by neither clearness of arrangement nor by unity of purpose, of asking the question, "What may be learnt from this?" The barrister's replies to this question (intended only for his wife's ear, but occasionally audible in the next pew), if neither reverent nor complimentary, might have been valuable to the preacher—"Bless'd if I know"; "Not much, I'm afraid"; "Precious little, as far as I can see," were among the most frequent of those replies.

2. But besides unity of subject and clearness of purpose, the sermon praised as "practical" will generally be found to have dealt with some subject upon which the appraiser (and therefore in all probability others as well) has been thinking. The definitions of the word "practical" given by the dictionaries might with advantage be remembered by the preacher—*e.g.*, "that which may be turned to use"; "reducible to use in the conduct of life"; capable of reducing knowledge to actual use"; "derived from practice or experience."

Suppose the preacher praised as "practical" shall have carefully based his teaching upon some words of our Lord, or even upon other words of Holy Scripture, or suppose that by judicious quotation of well-chosen verses he has shown that what he is trying to inculcate is in accordance with the teaching of the Bible, it will at once be seen that his hearers may feel that for what he is asserting he has the highest authority. They may feel that not only are they getting light and help, but are obtaining these from the highest possible source.

In pleading for a fuller measure of, and for a foremost place for, Holy Scripture in the pulpit, I may perhaps be met with the assertion that no doubt at one time, when Bibles were few and many could not read them, ample quotation was most necessary, but that in these days, when everyone can read and when a Bible can be bought for sixpence, such ample quotation of the words or contents of Holy Scripture is unnecessary. But of this I am firmly convinced, that the majority of preachers are apt to assume that the knowledge of the Bible possessed by the average hearer is far greater than

what it really is. Because Bibles are cheap we must not assume that they are universally bought, and if they are bought, we must not assume that they are read, much less understood. In spite of its cheapness, in spite of the almost innumerable editions—authorized and revised, with notes and without notes—which are available to-day, I really doubt if so large a proportion of the people, even of those who do “attend a place of worship,” have anything like so good a knowledge of the contents of the Bible as was possessed by their fathers and grandfathers fifty or a hundred years ago.

In those days the Bible might have five competitors on the poor man's bookshelf, now it may have fifty, whereas in the rich man's house it's competitors have increased a hundred-fold. Too often the halfpenny evening paper and the sporting paper now consume the time that was once given to the reading of the Bible by the poor, as, with richer people, it is the multitude of magazines and the never-ending supply of new novels from the circulating library which leave “absolutely no time at all” even for a few verses of Psalmist, Evangelist, or Prophet. Indeed, I assert without fear of contradiction, that at present, from the day they leave school, there are multitudes of Church-goers whose only study (save the word!) of Holy Scripture consists in hearing it read or explained once a week—during the single Sunday service which they attend—in Church.

Many are familiar with those sentences of J. R. Green—the opening words of the eighth chapter of the “Short History” : “No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was as yet the one English book which was familiar to every Englishman; it was read at Churches and read at home,” etc.

There are amongst us to-day those who fear they also see present indications of a “moral change” at work in the nation, only, unfortunately, it is in the contrary direction to that change of which Green was speaking. May not one of the causes of this change be a growing want of familiarity with those great Eternal Laws of Righteousness set forth in Holy Scripture?

There are, I know, complaints made from time to time of sermons being nothing better than “strings of texts.” But where such complaints are made it will not generally be due to their wealth of Biblical quotation or illustration: it will be due to the carelessness and irrelevancy of the manner and matter of such quotation.

Where Holy Scripture is used in the manner of Cardinal Newman's Anglican sermons, or as by Dean Church and Canon Liddon, men will not complain of, but will heartily welcome, the Bible in the sermon.

W. EDWARD CHADWICK.

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ART. VII.—TEMPERANCE "SPADE-WORK": IN THE SOUTH LONDON POLICE COURTS.

**L**ORD ROSEBERY has talked of the need of "spade-work" in politics. There is a kind of "spade-work" which is amongst the best results of the Temperance movement. It may be found elsewhere than in London—in Liverpool, for example—but I shall take my example from London, and from that part which is in the Diocese of Rochester.

Placing our trust in statistics, we congratulate ourselves on the decrease in the number of criminals in the Metropolis, but a few days spent in the South London police courts afford such unpleasant proofs of the crime, vice, and misery still existing that we are compelled to think that, after all, we have not very much cause for satisfaction. Truly, we might pass some weeks in the police courts without seeing a prisoner charged with murder or robbery with violence; but day after day there is the same depressing procession of men and women arrested for degrading offences committed, in most cases, while the prisoners were under the influence of drink.

Every morning, at about half-past nine, a number of people may be seen outside any of the South London police courts waiting for the doors to be opened. Some are standing listlessly on the curb, others are walking slowly up and down, and a few, not wishing it to be thought that they have any business at a police court, are on the other side of the road, surveying, with an assumed air of interest, the goods displayed in the shop windows. Many of these people are prisoners who were bailed out on the previous night; others have heard that a "pal" has been arrested, and are come to see how he fares; the remainder is composed of witnesses, and men and women attracted to the court by curiosity.

When the doors are opened the prisoners out on bail enter and surrender. They are not placed in the cells, but taken to a waiting-room, where they sit, in doorless boxes somewhat resembling the dressing-rooms of a swimming bath, until the time comes for them to be taken into court.

In the meanwhile "Black Maria," the familiar police-court