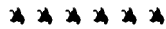


thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And what will follow? The obtaining of all these things? No, not necessarily, but something far grander. "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." Those who have ever prayed earnestly have experienced that peace—not a mere reflex action, though there is this also, but a peace resulting from sure confidence that God hears and answers prayer, and that "to them that love God all things work together for good."



Expository Preaching.

BY THE REV. W. EDWARD CHADWICK, M.A.

SERMONS are usually divided into two classes — the "expository" and the "topical." I have no wish to exalt either class to the depreciation of the other. Both kinds of sermons have their place, and both may be of the highest usefulness. Both have long been employed in the Christian Church, though probably the expository form is the older. The sermons or speeches of the Apostles preserved for us in the Acts make much use of the Old Testament, and explain and apply passages from it. Hence these may be called expository. Still the topical, or "thematic" method is of great antiquity. As Professor Christlieb says, "the first beginnings of the thematic mode of preaching reach back to the time when homiletics was in its bloom in the early Greek Church, and to Augustine, when, instead of expounding a book of Scripture continuously in homilies in the older method of Origen, they undertook to speak on a definite doctrinal or ethical point." Again, the same author states "Melanchthon is usually regarded as the originator of the now prevalent form of sermon, and it is certainly true that he contributed largely to bring it into force. But the roots of this plant reach much further back. Whereas

Origen's mode of preaching expounds the text verse by verse, the leading orators of the early Greek Church—Basil, the two Gregorys, Ephraem the Syrian, and Chrysostom—began, in consequence of the demands of special occasions (induction and farewell sermons, funeral addresses, eulogies, etc.), to treat of a definite doctrinal or ethical subject."

But my purpose now is not to treat of the history of different kinds of preaching or of the different varieties of the sermon; it is rather to ask (1) if there is not a need to-day for more expository preaching? (2) Why, especially in the English Church, there seems to be comparatively little expository preaching of the highest order? and (3) how our younger clergy may be encouraged to equip themselves for the discharge of this most important, indeed necessary, duty?

To my first question I fear that but one answer is possible. There is very great need for more expository preaching. Those who will try to discern "the signs of this time" must be convinced, first, that never were the materials and the aids for a better understanding of Holy Scripture more abundant; secondly, that among the mass of the people—not in one class, but, alas, in all—there is far less Bible reading now than there was in the past.

Only quite recently I was told by the head-mistress of a large school for girls of the upper middle-class, that the ignorance of the majority of her pupils of what might be regarded as the most familiar narratives, not only of the Old Testament, but of the New, was extraordinary; that she had set to work to tell them some of the Old Testament stories; and that to many of the girls these stories came with the same novelty as would a new book of tales. Those who year by year take large classes of Confirmation candidates, drawn from different grades of society, can amply corroborate her experience. I fear that the great majority of preachers assume that their hearers know far more about the contents of the Bible than is actually the case. On the other hand, they frequently under-estimate the critical and reasoning powers of their hearers. If to-day many people have not

much *knowledge* of the *contents* of the Bible, they have better trained minds than the majority of men and women had in the past ; they are better able to judge whether or not a certain lesson may be legitimately deduced from a particular passage of Holy Scripture ; they are more able to follow an argument, and to detect the weak points in what is, sometimes rashly, called " a proof." Thus, while there is to-day undoubted need of more expository preaching, we must remember that owing to the general improvement and wider diffusion of education, there is need that such preaching be of the best and highest type.

I would now seek an answer to my second question: Why, and apparently, especially in the Church of England, is there so little expository preaching of a really high order? The majority of the great masters in the art of popular, yet scholarly exposition, who are alive to-day, or who have within the last few years passed to their rest, are not, or have not been, members of the English Church. One proof of this statement may be found in a glance at the list of contributors to the " Expositor's Bible." I do not say that all the contributors are, or were, expository preachers of the first rank, but many of them may certainly claim to be so.

Of the forty-eight volumes, I believe that only thirteen are by clergymen of the English Church, and without much fear of contradiction, it could be said that the majority of these thirteen volumes are hardly among the most scholarly, or the most helpful in the series. Few of them could be placed beside Dr. Maclaren's volumes on Colossians and the Psalms, or beside Professor G. A. Smith's upon Isaiah and the Minor Prophets, or Dr. Marcus Dods' upon Genesis and 1st Corinthians. And, apart from these contributors, few preachers of the English Church, except the Bishop of Birmingham in his three small volumes upon the Romans and the Ephesians, have given us of late years expositions which can be compared with the late Dr. Dale's books upon Ephesians, St. James, and the Hebrews, or with some of Mr. Jowett's recently published works. Yet we have only to think of Professor Maurice's " Prophets and Kings

of the Old Testament," of Dr. Vaughan's "Lectures on Philip-
pians," and other books of the New Testament, or of the crowds
who used to listen to the expository preaching of Dr. Hook in
the great churches at Coventry and in Leeds, to remember that
there have been great expository teachers in the English Church
in the past.

But to return to my question : Why are first-rate expository
preachers apparently so few in the Church at the present time ?
Let us remember that no kind of preaching demands more careful
and more prolonged study. Thus it demands time for pre-
paration ; it demands also very full knowledge in two great fields
—that of Holy Scripture, and that of human nature. The
expository preacher must have time and energy to devote to the
study of both. He must therefore be prepared to sacrifice other
things in order to obtain this. How many clergy are so pre-
pared ? If we ask them about the matter, they will tell us that
this sacrifice is impossible ; the *demands* upon their time and
their energies *for other things* are already too many and too
great. Here we come to that difficult question of the relative
importance of various activities.

Another difficulty with regard to expository preaching is
frequently urged at the present time. What attitude, men ask,
are we to adopt towards the "Higher Criticism" ? The best
answer is, I believe, given in the published expositions of the
great masters. Let us take Dr. Maclaren for an example. He
has published hundreds of sermons. Into how many do we
find that "critical" questions enter ? And if they do not, it is
not because he is ignorant of these questions. I fancy that in
comparison with his knowledge of what the critics have done
and are still doing, the knowledge of some of those who not only
find difficulties, but perhaps are only too ready to air these, would
be discovered to be small indeed. Do we suppose that Dr. Dale
and Bishop Westcott were ignorant of these questions ? Yet
how often do they find a place in their expository sermons ?

The pulpit is not the place for the discussion of such
questions. Is it a place for any kind of "discussion" ? In

the pulpit we deal with the contents, with the message of Holy Scripture. The spiritual and moral truths and exhortations contained in, and to be drawn from, the Book of Isaiah are not altered in their applicability to ourselves, to our own needs, if they did not all proceed *through* one speaker. And, as far as I know, the most advanced of higher critics does not profess to deal with their *ultimate source*. To us they are the message of a voice which God is employing, of a personality which was sanctified by Him to make *His* message known.

I now turn to my third question : What means can be taken, what methods can be suggested, which will help the younger clergy to become more capable expository preachers ?

The foundation of all expository preaching must lie in an adequate knowledge of that portion of Holy Scripture which we are trying to explain and apply. But knowledge implies study, and study implies self-discipline and self-sacrifice. As Dr. Hort once said, "A life devoted to truth is a life of vanities abased and of ambitions foresworn."

Quite recently I heard of an attempt being made to get the younger clergy of a large town to join a reading circle for the purpose of serious study. Man after man was suggested for invitation, but as soon as his name was mentioned, one or other of the two men who were making the effort stated : "I am sure it will be no use asking him, for he does not read," or "he takes no interest in study."

But there is a second difficulty. For, besides a knowledge of books, there is needed for really helpful expository preaching a deep knowledge of the true nature, and of the true needs of men and women. But surely the clergy to-day have this! They are not idle ; and one reason why they do not study is, we are told, that they are constantly "in and out" among their people. This is undoubtedly true, and we have often heard men boast of the number of visits they pay in a day or a week. But do they give themselves time to know the *deeper* needs of men ? It has been said that we ought to beware of the man of a few books. If he studies at all, he will know them so

thoroughly. It may be the same in our studies of men and women. For a deep insight into human nature should we go to those who are always living in a whirl of excitement? Do we find that those who have the largest acquaintance have the most knowledge of "humanity," or that they have the clearest insight into the secrets of the human heart?

But expository preaching demands yet something more. We may have known men who were deep students both of the Bible and of human nature, and who still could hardly be called successful preachers. St. Paul's words, "take heed to thyself and to the doctrine," may be applied to the preacher himself. We must take great pains with the distinctly personal part of our work. A preacher may be full of matter, he may have much knowledge, he may also know what he wishes to prove or to enforce, but he may not have trained *himself* to do his work effectively.

There is an *art* in expository preaching; but we do not become artistically perfect by merely doing the same thing over and over again. "Practice," if it means a merely mechanical repetition of the same action, does not always "make perfect." There are many men to-day who have been preaching ineffectively for twenty years, and they preach ineffectively still. Practice has not made them perfect; it has probably only confirmed them in ineffectiveness. They have not submitted themselves to that self-discipline which says, "examine yourself and your methods most carefully, find out and correct the causes of your failure." There may be a want of mental orderliness, of that clearness of thought which comes from *hard* thinking, and of that self-sacrifice which ruthlessly excises everything irrelevant, however attractive or ornamental in itself. The successful "story-teller" knows that every detail which does not heighten or advance the plot, or does not make the mental picture of the reader more vivid, is out of place, it must be cut away; to retain it is bad art.

For the sake of force and clearness both the fully-written and the entirely extempore, expository sermon is *generally* a failure.

The entirely written sermon lacks that direct power of appeal, that ease and force of application to the particular audience to which it is being addressed. It rarely makes the "appeal" which extemporary words (not thoughts) have the power of making. On the other hand, a clear and strong "skeleton" or outline, which may be clothed at the time of delivery, is almost a necessity for the majority of men, if their sequence of thought is to be orderly, and if they are to give due consideration to each "leading idea" of the verse or passage.

I lay stress upon the necessity for clearness of arrangement because I believe that here, far more commonly than is supposed, lies the chief cause of success or failure. And this clearness of arrangement is surely a matter of taking pains? Too many men are content to express their thoughts simply in the order in which they first come to them, without taking the trouble to see whether this is really the best order, and whether it is the order in which their hearers will most readily grasp the lesson which it is wished to convey.

Expository preaching is *explanatory* preaching, and the end of explanation is to make clear. If people go away from a sermon saying, "I dare say it was very good" (they may even add "and very clever"), "but I am not quite sure what the preacher meant," then that preacher's effort has been a failure.

When the material helpful to the man who wishes to improve himself as an expository preacher is so abundant as it is at present, it is difficult to recommend particular books either as aids or as models.

I think that as an example of clear, practical, and especially ethical teaching drawn directly from the words of Holy Scripture, Dr. Dale's Ephesians is probably as perfect a model as anything which we possess; while, as specimens of outline sermons, those in Mr. Jowett's "Brooks by the Traveller's Way" are excellent, as are many of the outlines in Dr. Maclaren's "Leaves from the Tree of Life." Mr. Jowett is particularly skilful in the breaking up of a saying or a passage into its constituent parts, and then in considering these (1) separately,

and (2) in their relation to the whole. He shows how a careful *analysis* must precede a perfect *synthesis*: yet very rarely do we feel that his method is either forced or artificial. In the volume just mentioned, his outline sermons upon "The Shepherd and the Sheep" (John x. 27, 28), "The Secret of Hope" (Rom. xv. 13), and upon "Things Concealed" (Prov. xxv. 2) are excellent examples of the advantage of a clear and natural division of a subject.

For depth of spiritual insight, for wealth of thought, and for striking, yet felicitous, expression, probably Dr. Maclaren stands unrivalled. Such outlines as those upon "Dying Lamps" (Matt. xxv. 8, R.V.), "The Christian's Witnesses to Character" (3 John 12), or upon "Two Deposits and Two Guardings" (2 Tim. i. 12, 14, R.V.) reveal to us the real nature of helpful teaching.

In short, the three great requisites for expository preaching are (1) adequate knowledge of the material upon which we work, (2) deep insight into the needs of those for whom we work, and (3) the most careful and skilful use of the tools (*i.e.*, thoughts) with which we work. All these three requisites demand hard labour and much time profitably employed. The giving of these, without stint or grudging, is the self-sacrifice—the ultimate and final condition of success—of the preacher.



"Christianity as a Natural Religion."

BY THE REV. I. GREGORY SMITH, M.A., HON. LL.D.

THE *Nineteenth Century and After* (No. 343) contains a deeply interesting essay by Mr. W. H. Mallock on "Christianity as a Natural Religion." The title of the essay is susceptible, obviously, of more than one interpretation, and I venture to offer a few comments on the sense in which it is taken in this essay. But before doing so, it is worth while to