

## How to Advance our Evangelical Principles.<sup>1</sup>

BY THE VERY REV. THE DEAN OF ST. DAVID'S.

**I**T is, of course, assumed that we have come to the honest and unshaken belief that Evangelical principles approach nearest to our ideas of the truth as it is in Jesus, and as revealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit Himself, and we have come to this belief because those principles are most nearly in accord with what we find to be the plain and undoubted teaching of God's Word.

A further assumption is that we do sincerely and earnestly desire to promote these principles, so that others may join our ranks, and may be led to accept our belief as to the plain teaching of Holy Scripture. Surely this desire must be inherent in every Evangelical Churchman, from the principles he holds.

His principles have taken hold of his heart. His belief is no bare, dry, barren creed, or intellectual theory, but an active, energizing, growing principle, attaching him more and more firmly, and more and more closely to the Person of his Divine Lord and Master, because in that Person he finds all he wants—true rest for his restless heart, and true peace in the midst of all life's anxieties and difficulties, its perplexities and mysteries. Then, these principles enlarge his heart and expand his sympathies—they kill the natural selfishness which reigns supreme in every human heart—and so he longs that others should enjoy what so intensely and absolutely satisfies him. Notwithstanding all the varieties of temperament and character, of intellectual ability and of social rank, in face of innumerable influences from heredity, environment, creed, race, and age, the Evangelical man is convinced that no other faith than his own can meet the need, or satisfy the cravings of every human soul. I say, then, it is inherent in his creed that every Evangelical man should fervently desire to advance his principles by every means in his power.

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the Midland Counties' Evangelical Union, June, 1906.

One more assumption must be that it surely is superfluous to define what those principles are. It will be sufficient to say : (1) They include three R's—ruin by the Fall ; redemption by the Cross ; regeneration by the Spirit. (2) They enforce the absolute necessity of living faith in Christ for incorporation into His one Holy Catholic Church, and they determinately avow the supremacy of Holy Scripture in all matters of faith.

And as all intelligent men must allow that Evangelical principles are held firmly by those outside our own pale, our business now is with those principles as enunciated and promoted in the Church of England.

Now, it surely goes without saying that Evangelical principles are not popular, in the ordinary sense of that word. That they are approved and appreciated by the people generally, where they are understood, I firmly believe. But popular they never were, they never are, they never will be, and they never can be. And why so? Because Evangelical principles run counter to the stream of the world, because they oppose what man in his natural heart loves and follows, because they touch the conscience, and because they involve the offence of the Cross.

With all the spread of Christianity in the present day and admiration for His holy, beautiful character, our Great Master Jesus, were He to come on earth now, would no more be popular than He was nineteen centuries ago in Palestine. And surely one great reason why other and so-called High Church views are popular, as against Evangelical principles, is that they can be held and practised without any appeal to the conscience. For instance, attendance at an early celebration on Sunday morning is thought sufficient worship for the day, and no bar to the most self-indulgent gaiety during the remainder of Sunday.

Another cause of unpopularity is, I am convinced, in ourselves as Evangelical men, so that the words may not be untruthfully applied : " The fault is in thine own people."

Here I know I am treading on tender, delicate ground, and

very possibly I may give offence. God knows I do not wish to offend. I know I am myself to blame, and certainly I have no intention of casting a stone at others. I am only stating what I have noticed among Evangelical men as a body. But I say fearlessly I would rather give offence and wound some than mince matters here, where I believe vital truths and God's glory are at stake.

Remember that from our principles a higher standard is necessarily expected from Evangelical than from other Churchmen. We stand for more practical godliness and saintliness of life, and the truth we hold so dear plainly demands separation from the world and more entire consecration to God. A worldly High Churchman does not seem so incongruous as a pleasure-loving, pleasure-seeking Evangelical.

But I am not referring to unpopularity from the necessary strictness of a consecrated life. With all the dangerous defects of our time one feature is very hopeful—men will have the real thing. Shams and hypocrisies are universally scouted, and nothing is really more valued to-day than sincerity and consistency—living out what a man professes.

Some Evangelical men are often unpopular from taking a too narrow, rigid, unbending line, condemning everyone and everything which fails to come up to their standard, and branding as dangerous, perhaps almost sinful, practices and utterances which conflict with their own ideas.

I know this opens up no easy subject. I am well aware how the best intentions fail, and how faithfulness to the truth often demands a very firm and strict line. I do not forget such and kindred passages as "To whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour," and, "If any come unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." But also I remember, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," and, "He that is not against us is on our part."

This is pre-eminently a tolerant age. Men readily overlook

extravagances and eccentricities, while they turn with disgust from what they regard as narrow-minded; and they quickly imbibe prejudices, which live on a long time, perhaps all through life, against what they consider to be uncharitable and illiberal.

And I am not forgetting how easy it is to advocate wide toleration when no difficulties are pressing; and then, when some emergency arises, say, in the congregation or parish, how often it is exceedingly hard in our consciences to square Christian charity with fidelity to the truth.

But surely in such emergencies, after earnest prayer, we may rely on wisdom to guide us to a right decision. One text imprinted on my mind by the late Canon Cadman, with whom I was privileged to begin my ministry, has proved often of immense value: "Wisdom is profitable to direct."

Surely our Lord's words, "The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light," were never intended, as I believe they are often taken, to be an excuse for unwisdom in God's servants, but they are clearly designed as a solid warning and a much-needed incentive to be at least as wise in our action as "the children of this world" are in their worldly concerns.

No doubt it is true, up to a certain point, that we cannot always be responsible for the results of our action, and that we must sometimes take a course which we know may provoke opposition, possibly contempt, leaving the consequences in God's hands. But for such action, surely, we need very great caution, carefully sifting our motives, for fear, as is so easy, we may mistake for a matter of plain duty desire to assert our own authority, or to press our own views.

I believe certainly it is our wisdom to take into consideration the probable consequences of what we do, to reflect what unfavourable interpretation may be put on our actions, and by every possible means to try and avoid even the appearance of an intolerant spirit. Where for any decision it is possible to defer an answer till we have carefully weighed the matter, very

often immense advantage results. The cause of truth, which is God's cause, is often directly, if not vitally, at stake, and Evangelical principles are continually being tested and weighed by our individual action. "Every society suffers from the extravagances of its smaller men," and I am sure if we all watched carefully for fear our action might be detrimental to the truth, Evangelical principles would extend and develop far more widely.

Difficulties under such circumstances, however serious or complicated, can surely be solved by His example, who, while He fearlessly proclaimed "strait is the gate and narrow is the way," never laid Himself open in the smallest degree to a true charge of narrowness or bigotry. Is it not possible and important for the humblest of us in the most secluded out-of-the-way parish always to cultivate unflinching firmness with a generous and outspoken toleration?

While we cannot but believe that the Evangelical standpoint is the most scriptural, yet we know heredity, temperament, and upbringing do largely affect a man's view of truth. Truth is like a mountain—many-sided—and those who belong to other schools of thought in our Church are, many of them, as devoted and loyal sons of God as we claim to be.

If we put Protestantism before Christ; if we are more particular to oppose some harmless practices than to show the true spirit of Christ; if we make men offenders for some small matters, as the surplice in the pulpit, a surpliced choir, a moderate musical service, and such minor matters, can it be said that we are doing our best to advance Evangelical principles?

Then, no little unpopularity to our principles arises from bitter and censorious judgment upon other men's motives and action. I am afraid I need not elaborate proof that such bitterness may at times be charged to Evangelical men. Certainly other schools of thought are by no means free, but here again from us a higher standard is rightly expected, and any indulgence of bitterness by even an insignificant member reflects on

the whole body. Though there may be provocation, it is surely not right to say sharp, even though clever, things in conversation or in the public papers which we should not care to say to a man's face. Whenever Christian men transgress the rule of Christian charity, far greater harm results than is often imagined. A bitter letter may neutralize many excellent sermons, and an uncharitable speech may weaken a ministry for some time. I well remember the Master of Trinity, Dr. Butler, saying at a large meeting how Evangelical men often forget the harm they do to younger and generous minds by an apparently uncharitable line and tone. If we would advance the truth, we must carefully show by our own spirit and words how completely Christ's example has permeated our characters, and not so much our words or our arguments as our temper and tone will win adherents to our side. "Speaking the truth in love" will be the characteristic as well as the aim of our life.

For direct means to advance our principles I should say—

1. Let us consider the times in which we live. For this duty we have direct scriptural authority. Of the men of Issachar (1 Chron. xii. 32) it is left on record that they had "understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do." And our Lord's scathing rebuke of the Pharisees has its lesson for us. "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the sign of the times?"

Certainly the days are evil, and there is more than enough terribly aggravated, shameful, dark wickedness to make every Christian heart inexpressibly sad, and to call down the righteous anger of an infinitely holy, sin-hating God; and yet surely every sober-minded Christian sees more than enough to make him devoutly thankful and hopeful: the opportunities are so great, the agencies for good are so innumerable, there is abroad a high estimate of truth and right, and there is a readiness to hear. If anyone is surprised how these two phases can appear together, I would remind him of one word in our Lord's parable of the tares and the wheat. It is the word "grow"—our great

Master did not say, "Let both live," or "exist"—but He said, "Let both *grow* together until the harvest." A bright, cheerful optimistic view is of great value to keep from despondency and to cheer us in our work.

In a recent book by the Bishop of Stepney called "The Opportunity of the Church of England," being Pastoral Theology Lectures which he delivered at Cambridge in 1904, the Bishop shows how certain influences have entirely altered the character of the people, and unless we recognise these forces we cannot successfully adapt our organizations to meet the requirements of the times. Among these influences the Bishop specially mentions the immensely improved education of the people, the spread of science, criticism of the Bible, and the spirit of independence.

No doubt we have tried to lay to heart some lessons which the recent General Election has to teach us Evangelical men ; and here let me call attention to a book edited by Mr. George Haw, called "Christianity and the Working Classes." In that book several writers show that, while there is among the masses a high appreciation of the character and work of Christ, it is the caricature of His teaching in the lives of His professed followers which alienates the people ; that they are not opposed to Christ, but to the manifestation of Christianity which is exhibited before the world. The fact is very painful and heart-searching, but we must in all sincerity allow that the charge is only too true.

2. Let us keep abreast of the times. This is easier said than done, I well know. With a large parish and so many irons in the fire, perhaps with slender means and an isolated parish, the difficulties are great. Then with necessary study for the pulpit, it is hard to follow outside studies systematically, and a little knowledge may become a danger. Certainly I do not mean for one moment to suggest that all new discoveries and theories should be broached from the pulpit, or that any man should dabble in subjects which he does not understand : but I mean this, that we of the clergy ought to know what men are

reading and thinking and believing ; and while we ought not to attempt to meet their views and objections in a controversial spirit, yet, when occasion calls for it and there is good opportunity, we ought to show that we are not wholly ignorant of modern thought, and certainly we should avoid, if possible, making any strong assertion which an intelligent member of the congregation would know to be palpably untrue and disproven. It has been said with truth that, when we cease to learn, then we cease to teach.

I am thoroughly convinced we shall not advance our Evangelical principles by simply denouncing Higher Criticism. Whether we like it or not, to use a common expression, Higher Criticism has "come to stay," and it has thrown immense light on the Bible. I am not for one moment supporting all that some Higher Critics have said. They are not agreed among themselves, and have had to eat their own words ; but unmeasured denunciation of the whole subject, I am convinced, does much harm and no good.<sup>1</sup>

It is a great mistake to suppose that all Higher Criticism denies inspiration. On the other hand, it often brings out more and more clearly the fact how entirely the Bible is God's Word. No doubt Higher Criticism has modified our views as to the mode and kind of inspiration, but the *fact* of inspiration, I believe, stands out as clear and sure as ever. Dr. Lock, the Warden of Keble, in his "Bible and the Christian Life," says : "To those who are prepared to welcome the methods and conclusions of modern criticism, the Bible still bears conclusive proofs of its inspiration, and still remains a sure guide for life." Professor Orr, of Glasgow, in his new "Problem of the Old Testament considered with reference to Recent Criticism," strongly opposes the general conclusions of the advanced critics, but as his reviewer in the *Times* says : "He acknowledges that

<sup>1</sup> I am well aware that the advanced German school, with some English scholars, has propounded extreme views, which seem entirely subversive of a belief in inspiration. These views I would not on any account be thought to support. I simply protest against wholesale denunciation of all the work of Higher Criticism.



the acceptance of the general results of modern literary criticism does not necessarily involve the surrender of belief in supernatural revelation"; and Professor Orr himself says: "The case which the critics present must be met in a calm, temperate, and scholarly way, if it is to be dealt with to the satisfaction of thoughtful Christian people."

*(To be continued.)*



## A Pioneer of Church Reform.

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

IT will soon be the eighth century since the stormy life closed of Arnaldo di Brescia. Not long ago a sketchy representation of him flitted across the scene in the pages of a medieval romance by one of the foremost novelists of our day. If history is, as is often said, "philosophy teaching by examples," Christians of this twentieth century may learn much if they study dispassionately a life so deeply interesting.

Arnaldo resembles his illustrious namesake, the Headmaster of Rugby, as in some other ways so especially in this, that he founded no sect, no school of thought even. Like Coleridge and Maurice, he influenced the world indirectly; unlike them, he was, though a student and writer, essentially a man of action, impelling his hearers not to abstract reasonings, but to an end immediately in view and close at hand. The same ardour of aggressiveness which moved Abelard to contradict the orthodox convictions of his day moved his pupil, the monk of Brescia, against Pope and Emperor. Like Savonarola and Erasmus, he was a pioneer of the Reformation rather by his invective against social and political evils than as a theological disputant.

Time and place seemed ripe for his teaching. The cities of Northern Italy were, in the first fervour of their young republicanism, encouraged by the Pope, eager to set them