

supremacy is the beginning of all strength. To recognise that God is God, and that His supremacy is identical with the absolute wisdom and absolute love; to perceive that only by doing God's will and work can our strength be well spent, and that His inviting us to and fitting us for actual friendship with Him is infinitely gracious—thus to know God and the hope of His calling is lasting joy and strength.

MARCUS DODS.

DR. MACLAREN.

DR. MACLAREN'S life-work has been that of a preacher. Though he has published not a few volumes of sermons, he has scarcely been in the strict sense an author. The first collection of discourses issued by him was printed for private circulation in Manchester in 1859, and is thus prefaced: "These sermons have no pretensions to accuracy and completeness either of matter or of manner. Some attempt has been made to prune roughnesses and repetitions, which, though of little moment in spoken address, are grave blemishes when in print. But these and other faults are too deeply ingrained to be got rid of by any process short of recasting the whole. For the most part therefore the very faithful reports of Mr. W. H. Hill have been printed *verbatim*." Two editions of this volume were privately printed, and then, in 1863, Messrs. Macmillan showed their usual discernment in reproducing the volume, with a few additions and omissions, in what is now so well known as the first series of *Sermons Preached in Manchester*. The same publishers, it will be remembered, took up a book privately printed in Birmingham, and gave to the wide public *John Inglesant*.

The success of this book was very great, and Dr. MacLaren has since issued many volumes, particularly of late years, when his sermons have been regularly reported. In

connexion with all of these, it is of the highest importance to remark that they were never committed to writing. Beyond a very few notes, Dr. Maclaren writes nothing for the pulpit. They are printed, with very little change, from reporter's notes. A somewhat strained and heated volume, *A Spring Holiday in Italy*, was delivered as a series of addresses; and an excellent little book, *The Life of David as Reflected in his Psalms*, is evidently made up of materials previously used in the pulpit.

In occasional addresses Dr. Maclaren has very clearly explained his theory of preaching, and the strength and weakness of his sermons may easily be traced thereto.

Preaching in his view is proclaiming. It is not arguing or speculating: it is the delivery of a message. This message is delivered with a view to practical effect. If this effect is not produced, the preaching hurts instead of helping. It arouses emotion that finds no vent in action, and reacts disastrously on the spirit. The first aim of preaching is to convert souls to Christ. Whether men need to be redeemed from gross sins or no, they need in all cases to be redeemed from the bondage of the things of time. When the soul has made the great surrender to Jesus Christ its battle is not over. It remains among the old captors and enslavers, and it needs to be shielded, fortified, recalled to itself. Thus it is the work of the preacher to teach Christ as the Wisdom as well as to preach Him as the Power of God. On this view certain things follow.

1. Such preaching is grounded on an acceptance of the authority of Scripture, and a conviction that its broad meaning and drift are plain. It testifies of Christ, and all texts lead to Him. According to preachers of Dr. Maclaren's school, one of the most serious injuries it is possible to inflict on religious life is to induce a doubt as to the simplicity and straightforwardness of Scripture.

So much is common to Dr. Maclaren with other preachers. But his distinction is that he, while accepting the main conclusions of evangelical interpreters, is a *practical* believer in the manifoldness of Scripture, the infinite freshness and novelty which make the miracle of inspiration. We have heard it said that all the years of his ministry he has every day read one chapter of the Old and one chapter of the New Testament in the original. He is an exact and fresh exegete. It follows that while he always begins with a text and always ends with Jesus Christ, his hearers are led delightedly from text to Christ by a new way; or, if the way is not new, it is bordered with fresh flowers. And all the sermon rises plainly from the text. Thus the words, Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, are made to yield their lesson thus: "Old disciple" means "a disciple from the beginning," one of those who had seen Christ in the flesh. Mnason does not seem to have known Paul before; but though many Jerusalem Christians looked suspiciously on the great Apostle, this old man had full sympathy with him, and opened heart and hand to receive him. The lessons are: I. *Hold fast to your early faith and to the Christ whom you have known.* "How beautiful it is to see a man, below whose feet time is crumbling away, holding firmly by the Lord whom he has loved and served all his days, and finding that the pillar of cloud which guided him while he lived begins to glow in its heart of fire as the shadows fall, and is a pillar of light to guide him when he comes to die." II. *Be ready to welcome new thoughts and ways.* Mnason did not say he was too old to go in with these changes, and that he knew Christ longer and so better than Paul. He united constancy and flexibility of mind. Then, III., the words suggest the *beauty that may dwell in an obscure life.* A disciple—that is the noblest summary of a life. "A thinker? a hero? a great man? a millionaire? No, a disciple."

2. Such preaching is directly practical. It aims at producing an immediate effect. Hence it must be in the language of the day, it must be interesting, and it must be memorable. Dr. Maclaren's preaching is all this in an eminent degree. His style is sharp, clear, nervous, without one trace of mysticism or obscurity. It is the language of the time, and sometimes in his desire to make truth and reality imperiously supreme the preacher oversteps the limits of good taste. But one feels he is always in earnest, that he never uses phrases conventionally, that he says things with a sense of their practical recoil upon himself. Then he is a most interesting preacher. His illustrations from life are profuse and illuminating; they are indeed a great feature of his preaching. Above all, he is memorable. He has the clear, logical Scottish intellect, and can divide his texts and lead up to his conclusion in the most natural and least commonplace manner. What is remembered is that which is neither unnatural nor commonplace. Hearing sermons is often very fatiguing, because one feels no progress is being made. The text is announced; we wander forty minutes through a wilderness, and end where we began. Dr. Maclaren never speaks without saying something; his sermons have a beginning, middle, and end.

But all this would avail little if it were alone. Mere shrewdness in the pulpit is not enough. That is what people make way by during six days of the week. They do not care to miss it on the seventh; but they want besides emotion, sympathy, poetry. One of the most successful preachers to the masses in London was shrewd even to coarseness; but he passed in a moment from the exposure of some mercantile trick into the profoundest mysticism. Mr. Spurgeon is a mystic in the fleshly vesture of John Bull. Dr. Maclaren is nothing at all of a mystic, and this is his greatest weakness; but he is a poet—with close affinities to the Laureate. He is the Tennyson of

preachers. His thoughts are coloured, not shadowed or cloud-fringed. His expressions are often highly poetical; as in all imaginative prose, except that of the very first rank, we have the forms of poetry often unconsciously used. Besides he has the Celtic temperament, its melancholy and its chivalry. Along with the clearest perception of fact he has the Celtic reaction against its despotism. He has the Celtic loyalty to the unpopular, which holds by a man "though his back be at the wa'." He is a devoted champion of the Church he adorns. Few men go more thoroughly with the wise and pious old counsel, "Sparta is your portion; do your best for Sparta."

Dr. Maclaren's beliefs are distinctly orthodox. We should imagine from various hints that he hesitates between the theories of the endless conscious existence of the lost and their extinction. But he is not afraid to use the appeal to fear, and he insists upon this life as the time for the calls and succours of grace. He is true to the Scripture, which again and again "limiteth a certain time, saying To-day"; and would say with the saint, *Scrutetur qui potest judiciorum Ejus tam magnum profundum, caveat tamen præcipitium*. He has certain favourite thoughts which often recur. One is, that the glory of God is His grace, not His wisdom or power. Another is that Christ foresaw and meant His death. It is from this fact that he approaches the doctrine of the atonement and interprets the life of Christ. So called lives of Christ that do not take this as their guide he repudiates. Another idea with which his readers are very familiar is that of the immortality which some obscure men and women have through the Bible—"Quartus, a brother," and the rest. "They crossed the illuminated track, and there they blaze," prophesying the true and sure immortality of souls that trust in Christ. As a Biblical critic he is, as shown by his book on David, as well as incidentally

elsewhere, conservative, though he is evidently familiar with the recent reconstructions of the Old Testament.

Dr. Maclaren's defects are those of his qualities.

1. He has not helped to solve the great problems of thought. He has not written on the theological or philosophical problems that perplex the mind of our time. We do not find him discussing the doctrine of election, or the philosophy of miracles, or the inspiration of the Old Testament. So keen an intellect might have done much to help us in these perplexities, and such service would no doubt have given Dr. Maclaren a position as a thinker which he cannot now claim. But it would be a mistake to say he has not faced these problems. We believe he has faced them with all his great powers, and deliberately resolved to leave them. For he holds that preaching is preaching certainties, and nothing besides. He holds also that it is the duty of the preacher not to build up a system of theology, but to explain the Scriptures. And he would say, we doubt not, that he finds both Arminianism and Calvinism in the epistles, that each is a side of the truth, and that the absolute statement of either is an injustice to the manifoldness of truth. He would say also that reasoning on such subjects as the atonement is, beyond very narrow limits, useless or worse. He is one of the many who would deprecate with Newman "the exercise of thought upon matters in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue"; nay, who feel that if this is not so, there is no religion for them. He speaks of "that abomination which maketh desolate called intellectual preaching." Problems about the philosophy of miracles he might not consider higher or more hopeful than that of the squaring of the circle. Let it be remembered by those who are not with us in these matters that the refusal to speculate rises often not from indolence, but from the

reverse ; from the fact that the mind has done its best, and failed—failed with the feeling that success is impossible. How many can say with Omar ¹—

“ Myself, when young, did eagerly frequent
 Doctor and saint—and heard great argument
 About it and about ; but ever more
 Came out of the same door as in I went ” !

2. It is true also that he has not much Church feeling. The very highest type of preaching implies, we imagine, a subsidence of the critical faculty before the majesty of great expressions of thought and feeling consecrated by the consciousness of the Church. We see in some sermons a spirit kindling at the fire of a magnificent thought ; we draw near, and are kindled also. We must use the language of to-day ; but there is a language of the Church that persists, and that ought to colour and master the speech of the hour.

3. Neither does he say much about the questions of the day in the light of the gospel. The best sermons are those that are a heap of ashes once preached ; they have set souls on fire, and have so perished. Dr. Maclaren’s sermons, from their plan, do not admit of much intellectual advance ; and indeed his sermons of to-day are no improvement upon those of thirty years ago. But that is because he at once reached and has maintained the perfection of his particular style. In his own line of things he is an unrivalled master.

Preachers, even more than hearers, have felt this. We have heard of a preacher who read one-half of Dr. Maclaren’s first volume with intense and growing admiration, and then bade the preacher farewell, because he could not resist the temptation to reproduce his divisions. But we have heard of many more who have fallen : and indeed we doubt if there are many who have not in one way or another succumbed. Dr. Maclaren’s divisions are often final and irresistible. He fills up in a form too compressed

¹ Fitzgerald’s translation, first edition.

and poetical for the multitude; but spread out and popularized, his sermons may win a real command of the masses. Our belief is that Dr. Maclaren, more than any other except Robertson, has altered the whole manner of preaching in England and America, and that immeasurably for the better.

From our point of view he cannot print too much. His literary reputation is not increased by the volumes which are now appearing. But his divisions of texts and his comments are such that one wishes he may be spared to go over the whole Bible. There have been more subtle, learned and poetical preachers in our time, though not many; there have been a few far more profound: but we believe Dr. Maclaren's sermons may be read when the rest are forgotten, because he, above all his contemporaries, has faithfully interpreted the Scriptures.

EDITOR.

JOB AND SOLOMON.

WE congratulate Professor Cheyne¹ on the firstfruits of his return to University life. The brilliant and masterly volume which he has now published is a real contribution to the study of the Old Testament. It embodies evidently the results of long and patient study; it opens new and suggestive lines of reflection; it is enjoyably written; the author's wide and diversified reading makes every page attractive. So full indeed is it of thought, that most readers, probably, will appreciate it better the second time of reading than the first. Nor is the author forgetful of those who may be ambitious to pursue their researches beyond the limits of his own volume: at the end of each division of the book, a paragraph headed "Aids to the Student," acquaints him with all that has been most recently said on the subject of the

¹ *Job and Solomon; or, The Wisdom of the Old Testament.* By Rev. T. K. Cheyne, M.A., D.D., Oriel Professor of Interpretation at Oxford, Canon of Rochester. (London: Kegan Paul, 1887.)