

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters to a Young Preacher.

LETTER XXXI. INTRODUCTION TO A SERMON.

My Dear Brother,—

It is not my intention to attempt to teach the art of sermonizing. A few remarks, however, with direct reference to preaching, may be naturally expected in this series of Letters.

The introduction to a sermon should, of course, be adapted to prepare the minds of the hearers for the subject that is about to be presented before them. It is generally considered inexpedient, and it evidently is so, to anticipate the substance of a discourse in observations at the commencement. If the sermon appear to be only a repetition of what was said at the outset, the hearer will be disappointed, and consequently dissatisfied. It seems advisable, therefore, in ordinary cases to communicate some thoughts indirectly connected with the main subject, and preparatory to it.

In many instances it is expedient and proper to notice on what occasion the text was written, or uttered, to whom it was addressed, in what circumstances the writer was placed at the time, &c. If the preacher design to use his text in a way of accommodation, or to apply figuratively what was originally said in a literal sense, he should at first distinctly state its literal import. I remember to have heard a preacher, about forty seven years ago, discourse on the words, "The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way." He acknowledged that he could not tell where his text was; but said he was sure it was in the Bible. It has been justly remarked, that some men can find Christ no where, and others find him every where. Our preacher was one of the latter class. Of course he told us that the "lion" was Christ. To those who could not find the passage, and see in what connexion it stood, this might seem allowable. (Rev. v. 5.) When, however, he proceeded to represent Him who "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them," as "the destroyer of the Gentiles," he was manifestly obliged to do violence to the language, by suggesting, as its meaning, that the Lord Jesus would destroy people's carnal pleasures, &c. Had he made himself acquainted with his subject, by an examination of the context, he might have informed his hearers, that the text, (Jer. iv. 7.) related to a fierce invading enemy—doubtless Nebuchadnezzar—of whom it is said in the same verse, "He is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate, and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant." It would then have appeared evident that he might have applied it with much more consistency, by way of accommodation, to "the devil," who "as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," and of whose names one is "Abaddon," or "Apollyon," that is, *Destroyer*. 1 Pet. v. 8. Rev. ix. 11.

The commencement of a sermon should be deliberate and moderate. For a man to become warm and earnest as he proceeds is quite natural; but an impassioned beginning has the appearance of affectation. This necessarily excites prejudice against the speaker, and militates against his usefulness.

The introduction should also be delivered in a subdued tone of the voice. Every word ought to be so distinctly uttered that all present who have good hearing may understand it: otherwise it can not profit them. But he who begins to speak upon a high key, will be almost certain to lose the command of his voice; and consequently to labor throughout his discourse under great disadvantage. I am aware that I have frequently erred in this particular. This has not resulted from ignorance of the fact now stated, but from compassion toward persons partially deaf. In many instances these are our most attentive and anxious hearers. Preachers ought, however, to consider what will be most conducive to the general welfare. If they injure their own organs of speech, they will be liable to render themselves unable to make any hear them; and so bring their labors prematurely to an end.

Occasionally it may be allowable, and useful, to introduce a sermon by the relation of a striking anecdote, calculated to call attention to the subject of discourse. In general, however, this course is injudicious. Illustrative anecdotes can be much more advantageously introduced afterwards.

In some rare instances the introduction of a discourse by a brilliant thought, or striking expression, may succeed well. But in ordinary cases care should be exercised to avoid raising the expectations of hearers too high at the first.

If they perceive that the most impressive ideas have been communicated at the beginning, they will naturally grow weary, and listen anxiously for the *Amen*. This must be unpleasant to him, and both uncomfortable and unprofitable to them.

The introduction should be short. If it be protracted to an undue length, the audience will probably anticipate a long sermon. This anticipation will tend to prevent them from listening attentively to what may be communicated, and of course from profiting by it. A little time judiciously employed in introducing the main subject of discourse, will be spent advantageously but the multiplication of words, and the suggestion of a number of ideas, naturally distract the attention, and so do harm.

May you, my dear young Brother, always be enabled to introduce your sermons in a prudent and profitable manner, and in a way adapted to secure the serious attention of your hearers, and to promote their best interests!

Yours in gospel bonds,
CHARLES TUPPER, Sec'y.
Tremont, Aylesford, March 27th, 1862.

For the Christian Messenger.

Our Benevolent Institutions.

When the Redeemer sent forth his Apostles to preach the Gospel, that they might be the more fully imbued with his own benevolent spirit, and realize more clearly the nature of his kingdom of love, he said, "Freely ye have received, freely give."

His cause, the Redeemer now commits to his people—to them he says "Freely ye have received, freely give." To us christian brethren, a solemn charge is committed. Calls are reaching us from many weak and languishing churches, for the gospel. Our Missionary Boards are telling us of exhausted and overdrawn treasuries, while the cry of "help us" is wafted to us on the wings of every wind, from the land of the perishing heathen.

Our Educational interests, already so productive of good, so signally blessed of God only drag along, the wheels roll heavily, while some of our young men who are devoting themselves to the work of the Christian Ministry, struggle with great difficulties to obtain the desired, the needed preparation. The fear is, they may be induced, yea compelled, to take only a partial course. The evils of this are many, as far as possible it ought to be avoided. Especially ought those who desire it, be assisted to obtain the best, the most thorough preparation for their important work.

Those who intend devoting their energies to other callings, will take the advantage of the fullest course—shall the student for the ministry fall in the rear? The former will have the means of moulding the masses of society, at least the best advantage for doing so, while if piety be not the foundation of the moulding influence, how detrimental may that be to the souls of men! Why should not talent sanctified by the grace of God, be favoured with all available helps, to mould the susceptible masses, according to the true pattern?

Can we afford the expense of sustaining these institutions, Missionary and Education?

Can we afford to relinquish them? Members of Christ's body, will each of you consent to use some influence in their behalf?

Do you agree to the proposition, to attempt the average of fifty cents, from each of our 14,800 members? Some cannot contribute this amount, may be unable to contribute anything, yet do you believe with me that this average can be reached? Carefully look over this matter in your own church and community. Cannot this amount be obtained? Twelve and a half cents from each every three months. As many seven peace half-pennies each quarter, as there are members in the church! Look carefully into this subject, solemnly, prayerfully! Well what is your conviction? *Can it be done?* Will you try? *Will you brother, sister, disciple of the self-sacrificing, the meek and loving Redeemer?* Will you go to work at once? If you have a pastor he will help and encourage you—if he will not, or if he be cool in the matter pray for him.

The only real difficulty in obtaining the amount specified in my former paper, namely Seven Thousand four hundred dollars, to be paid in at our coming Associations, is the want of the proper effort! My heart sinks to think it should be so! I write not for the sake barely of writing, but because my heart is moved. The cause of our Redeemer—the crucified one, languishing, not for the want of means, but for the want of effort to obtain them! EFFORT will obtain the amount. Brother, sister let not this be wanting. Do not say I will pay my dollar, my two, or four dollars,

and there let the matter rest—labor to make it general, this is one great benefit to be obtained by the plan—it is to make the blessing general, to engage the energies, interest, and prayers of the whole body of believers. Adopt a plan and for three years carry on the campaign.

Lose no time, the Associations are approaching; and your whole working time is short—you will soon be called to your reward—to your other labors add this one more for the cause of your Redeemer.

March 27th, 1862.

CALCULUS.

For the Christian Messenger.

The hand of God in war.

MR. EDITOR,—

In all the comments upon the American war that I have seen, I do not remember to have noticed, as exhibited very prominently, the Scriptural view that war is a chastisement sent from God, and sent as such to nations and to individuals for their sins. It is called in Ezekiel one of God's sore judgments just as famine and pestilence and evil beasts are. Like famine and pestilence it may come through the medium of secondary agents. But like them it begins, continues and ends just where, and when, and how, God pleases. It does not depend altogether upon superior numbers, nor superior skill, whether one party or the other, or neither, shall beat or be beaten; but on the word of Jehovah. See this fact declared and illustrated every where in the Bible. The way to overtake calamity, or to bring it to a close, is to use means of course, as in the plague and pestilence. But prominently, and above all, to "search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord." The parties punished, we may naturally conclude, are the parties who have sinned. No one, I suppose, doubts, who believes in a superintending Providence, that in the present destructive war, raging among our neighbors, both parties are being scourged, and that both parties are chastised for national offences. It is not so readily seen and confessed that national sins are the sins of individuals and not merely the sins of Government. And who has dreamed that the sins of England and France, of Nova Scotia, of New Brunswick, of Windsor, and Yarmouth, &c., have helped to bring on the American war?—And yet all these places are severely feeling the scourge. This clearly proves our participation in the guilt. Our plaister trade is stopped; there is no market for our fish; the cotton spinners and weavers of England and France, are looking at starvation, and wondering when the war will cease, and where they are to get bread.

Various suggestions have been made respecting remedies for the impending calamity. Has any one thought of the plan of repenting of our sins, and of putting them away? even the particular sin—the sin of slavery, which all admit has brought on the war. It turns out that with our fish and our plaister and our "unbleached cotton," trade we have been aiding and abetting, supporting and sustaining, one of the most fearful crimes that has ever stained our sin-cursed globe. Alas! for the poor slaves! and alas, for our consistency! We sigh over their sufferings and wrongs. We blame and abuse the Americans, North and South, and boast and swagger about our national greatness, generosity and goodness. But it is not righteousness and equity, and liberty for the oppressed, we seek; but a good market for our plaister, our fish, our potatoes; and good freights for our ships. We regret the American war, of course we do, and as devout christians we pray that it may come to a close. Why so? Why? because it has raised the price of tea, doubled the price of tobacco, and if it keep on much longer, we shall have to pay 1 shilling per yard for "unbleached cotton," instead of 8d. "Oh shame! where is thy blush." O for some Ezekiel, some Jeremiah, some watchman, worthy of the name, to lift up his voice like a trumpet and show us our sins!

MALACHI.

For the Christian Messenger.

"I shall be satisfied."

Ah yes, says the tired merchant, as he paces his counting room, when I make a few thousands more, I shall be satisfied and spend my remaining days in pleasure. His prospects are fair, and his hopes high. But alas! he soon learns, "They build too low, who build below the skies." The goal is never gained, e'er he reaches the sparkling bubble it vanishes.

Thus all mankind, look forward to a time, when every wish shall be gratified, every desire filled; just one drop more it may be, will fill

the cup of bliss. All have those earnest hungerings, the aching void that the world cannot fill, because the immortal part cannot be satisfied with earthly mortal joys.

The weary, worn spirit, will sometimes cease its roivings, and ask is there not a better country? Precious truth, there is a beautiful land revealed in its glory, to the eye of humble faith; and reached only by those who, forsaking the sinful pleasures of this world, have loved and served the Prince of that country—Jesus the Saviour. It is said, though the sun shines not, and the dewy shades of night never fall, yet, it is clothed in immortal green; its river is of pure water, clear as crystal, its sea has the appearance of glass mingled with fire. Its city is founded with precious stones, gates of pearl, and streets of pure gold. "And there is no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it." The Lamb is the priest and the Sacrifice. It is a land of purity; sin with its blasting influence has never entered. All the inhabitants are clothed in robes of righteousness, purchased with, and made white—in the blood of the Lamb. "And of this land naught is more wondrous than these few words, "I shall be satisfied."

"Satisfied! Satisfied! The souls vague longing,
The aching void, which nothing earthly fills,
O! what desires upon my soul, are thronging
As I look upward to the heavenly hills."

Thither my weak and weary steps are tending,
Saviour and Lord! with thy frail child abide
Guide me toward home, where all my wanderings
ending,
I shall see thee, and shall be satisfied."

M. B.

For the Christian Messenger.

THINGS I DO NOT LIKE TO SEE.

I do not like to see people living near the House of worship make it a rule to enter half an hour after the Service has commenced, and then with so much noise that the minister is obliged to stop until they get seated, perhaps in the pew farthest from the door. Nor do I like to see the minister waiting after the congregation has pretty generally assembled, till some have almost gone to sleep, and others occasionally glancing out of the window wishing Mr. A. or Mr. B. for whom he appears waiting, would come.

FIDGETY.

[The moral of our friend "Fidgety's" remarks is that both minister and people should be punctual to the hour appointed for public worship. A want of punctuality is prevalent, we believe, in many congregations. It is of course difficult in many places in the country for all the members of a congregation to keep the time very correctly and alike. A spirit of kind forbearance and a readiness to give and receive christian admonition, would in most cases soon produce a beneficial change so as to correct the habit and make punctuality the "rule" and late attendance the exception.—ED. C. M.]

For the Christian Messenger.

MR. EDITOR,—

Hold! enough! a truce to this twaddle of "A. C." So long as he rambled in posting up (?) ignorant Blueosen in the ideas of others in American affairs, your readers could very well stand it, and be amused at your correspondent's enjoyment of self-glorification at doing so smart a thing. But, sir, if American hate to "Britishers" (as "A. C." elegantly terms the British nation) is to find expression from one of Acadia's patriotic sons, do please have sufficient regard for your numerous friends not to allow its appearance in the columns of our family paper, and have our children taught to distrust our foster mother.

Yours,
PATRIOTISM.

For the Christian Messenger.

Tea Meeting,

TO REV. BENJAMIN VAUGHN.

Mr. Editor,—

The Ladies connected with the Baptist Church in Cambridge, Hants Co., with some belonging to other denominations, in order to manifest their esteem and respect for the Rev. Mr. Vaughn as a preacher of the Gospel, met together for the purpose of holding a Tea meeting for his benefit. Ample justice having been done to the good things so liberally provided by all classes, consisting of Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians, the tables being relieved of part of their burthen, the collectors had the satisfaction of presenting the Rev. gentleman with £14 in cash. We should be happy to learn that other districts in his circuit go and do likewise. We