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Poetry.

The sifting of Peter

A FOLK-SONG.

"Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."—
ST. LUKE, xxii. 31.
In St. Luke's Gospel we are told
How Peter in the days of old
Was sifted;
And now, though ages intervene,
Sin is the same, while time and scene
Are shifted.

Satan desires us, great and small,
As wheat, to sift us, and we all
Are tempted,
Not one, however rich or great,
Is by his station or estate
Exempted.

No house, so safely guarded is
But he, by some device of his,
Can enter;
No heart hath armor so complete
But he can pierce with arrows fleet
Its centre.

For all at last the cock will crow
Who hear the warning voice, but go
Unheeding,
Till thrice and more they have denied
The Man of Sorrows, crucified
And bleeding.

One look of that pale suffering face
Will make us feel the deep disgrace
Of weakness;
We shall be sifted till the strength
Of self-conceit be changed at length
To meekness.

Wounds of the soul, though healed, will
Ache;
The reddening scars remain, and make
Confession.
Lost innocence returns no more;
We are not what we were before
Transgression.

But noble souls, through dust and heat,
Rise from disaster and defeat.
The stronger,
And conscious still of the divine
Within them, lie on earth supine
No longer.

—H. W. LONGFELLOW, in "Harper's
Magazine" for March.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Doctrinal Preaching, and the
place it should occupy in
our Ministry.

AN ESSAY PREPARED BY REV. E. O.
READ, AND READ BEFORE THE MIN-
ISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF KING'S
COUNTY, AT WOLFVILLE, JANUARY
1880.

The above subject, assigned me by
the members of this Conference, is of
sufficient importance to arrest our care-
ful attention, and should call forth our
best thoughts. To us as servants of
Christ, is committed a dispensation of
"the glorious gospel of the blessed
God," a work the most important that
can possibly occupy our minds and fill
our hands.

When Jehovah appeared unto Moses,
appointing him to the work of deliver-
ing the children of Israel from bondage,
the servant of God overpowered with
a sense of his own unworthiness, and
the greatness of the undertaking, asks
with an earnestness worthy of the occa-
sion, "What shall I say unto them?"
From the mouth of the Lord the an-
swer is given.

As Christ's ambassadors, chosen and
sent forth with a message and to a work
more important than that assigned to
Israel's Law-giver and Deliverer, we
may individually enquire, what message
shall I deliver to the people, or what
shall I preach? To God we must look
for an answer. It is not within the
range of my subject to point out the
special qualifications of the Christian
minister, I may say however, it is es-
sential that there be strict loyalty to
the great head of the Church, adhering
to "all things commanded, and seeking
to render a good account at his judg-
ment seat, "Whom we preach warning
every man, and teaching every man in
all wisdom, that we may present every
man perfect in Christ Jesus."

The subject of preaching in the gen-
eral keeping of God's Word may be di-
vided into doctrine, experience and prac-
tice. Experience is the life of religion
in the soul.

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING

therefore embraces the wonderful deal-

ings of God in the lives of his children,
both in the past and present dispensa-
tions, God dwelling "with men on the
earth," and working in them "both to
will and to do," and the great salvation
worked out by the believer. In the
Holy Scriptures how beautifully shines
out the experience of the saints, as we
listen to the language of Moses, David,
Isaiah, Paul and others as expressed
therein, we seem to hear them with one
accord saying, "Come and hear, all ye
that fear God and I will declare what
he hath done for my soul," the same
may be said of God's children on earth
to-day.

PRACTICAL PREACHING

has to do with the subjective of Christi-
anity, and is the grand outgrowth of all
that is experienced; or in other words,
the fruits of a Christian life, the duties
arising out of our relation to the Lord
Jesus Christ, the doing of all things com-
manded by the Master. Here the faithful
servant will find a large field to culti-
vate, where "line upon line" and "pre-
cept upon precept" will need to be en-
forced, but the fruit of the toil will
amply repay the labourer.

DOCTRINAL PREACHING

deals with the foundation truths of the
great system of redemption.

However fair and costly may be the
superstructure, it is little value without
a good foundation. Take from the gospel
plan the doctrines of the Cross, and the
whole scheme of human redemption
crumbles and falls to the ground. The
New Testament is not silent on this
subject but reveals to us a plan of di-
vine grace, in which the infinite pur-
pose, and will of God are revealed to
man in such a way that all the perfec-
tions of Deity harmonize at the cross.
This Word is our text book the perfect
standard of truth, to which we may ap-
peal and ever look for instruction in re-
gard to doctrines, as well as for practice
and experience.

Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount
is not strictly speaking a doctrinal
discourse. From the storehouse of
Infinite Wisdom he brings forth "things
new and old." Truths that had long lain
dormant or hidden in the rubbish of
earth he gathers up, sets them like
precious gems in a new light, and strings
the beautiful jewels on a golden thread
for all the coming ages to admire. On
other occasions his teachings are dog-
matical and strictly doctrinal.

Take for instance his instructions in
the fifth, sixth and tenth chapters of
John's Gospel, also his discourse deliv-
ered in the hearing of his disciples just
before his conflict in the garden, to-
gether with his intercessory prayer in
the seventeenth chapter of the same
Gospel, and we have the doctrines of
divine grace clearly declared, in which
God's sovereignty shines out with a
heavenly lustre. The Apostle Paul
also insisted most earnestly on the
same great fact. He saw the plan of
infinite wisdom perfect in all its parts
insurmountable in all its results, stretch-
ing away over the whole field of his
labours, the unchanged and unchange-
able counsel of God. In this he great-
ly rejoiced, while practically holding up
the duty of man on the one hand, he
did not fail to declare the purpose of
God sure and certain. The Apostle
Peter likewise speaks of the "elect ac-
cording to the foreknowledge of God the
Father," and the other writers are not
silent on this theme, hence the doctrines
form part of the teachings of the New
Testament.

Doctrinal preaching then is to set
forth in clear and forcible language the
grand foundation truths therein taught,
The doctrine of God, in all his attri-
butes and divine perfections. The
doctrine of man created in holiness, but
now fallen "dead in trespasses and
sin," justly and righteously condemned
"having no hope and without God in
the world." The doctrine of Christ,
his divinity, incarnation and atonement
in all its intrinsic value, what the
Divines called, "the blood theology,"
also the doctrines of regeneration by the
Holy Spirit, the safety of God's people,
the resurrection of the dead, the final

judgement and the rewards of the
righteous and the wicked.

We are now to enquire

WHAT PLACE THE DOCTRINES ARE TO
OCCUPY

in our pulpit administrations. I may
here state that the tendency of the
times is rather to ignore than to prize
doctrinal preaching. When I speak,
however, of this tendency, it is not to
be understood that all have objections
to this part of our work, for good doc-
trinal preaching will always command
attention and awaken interest in the
best minds in our congregations.

Objections are made on the ground
that the tastes of our times object to
dogma, it is antiquated and unpopular.
Henry Ward Beecher is reported as
saying, "If the Apostle Paul were on
earth to-day and were to preach as much
doctrine as he did eighteen hundred
years ago he could not get a hearing."
This remark evidently indicates not only
the objections in his own mind, but
the popular sentiment in high places in
regard to doctrinal sermons. It is to
be lamented that the vitiated tastes of
so many cry out for the sensational
rather than the substantial in the pul-
pit. It is therefore the more important
that there shall be a strongly aggres-
sive movement all along the line, hold-
ing up the sublime doctrines of the
Cross, so as to elevate the pub-
lic sentiment in this particular, rather
than cater to the opinions of men; to
"be strong," and "earnestly contend
for the faith once delivered to the
saints." To say as did the Apostle,
"For I determined not to know any-
thing among you save Jesus Christ and
him crucified."

To the infallible standard of truth
we are then to look for information. If
we find there the place that the
doctrines occupy, our duty is plain.
Some phases of the truth may be
more congenial to our feelings, in fact
more easily presented than others, but
it is not ours to choose the easiest or
most popular subject. Always our prin-
cipal aim should be to give to all truth
its proper place, declaring "all the coun-
sel of God." Some truths do occupy
more prominence in the Divine Word
than others, such for instance, is the love
of God manifest in "His unspeakable
gift," His willingness to save, man's
duty to repent and believe the gospel,
yet these are not presented apart from
doctrine, but rather as blending in
sublime and beautiful harmony.

Is it desirable to preach a sermon, or
a series of sermons on some particular
doctrine? This is a question of some im-
portance. Circumstances may occur in
which such a course may be pursued
with profit, such for instance, when
error has been propagated, or some par-
ticular doctrine assailed. As a rule, I
think a wiser and better plan is, to follow
the Scriptural order, and have the
doctrines well interwoven in all our
sermons, as well as the basis on which
the whole edifice is reared.

In the course of our ministry all the
doctrines are to find a place, and must
be explained and enforced with the
ability that God has given, but if diffi-
culties arise, and we find doctrines taught
that we cannot explain, it will be wise
on our part to state the doctrine as we
find it in God's Word, frankly confess-
ing our inability to elucidate the same.
Some preachers claim to know too
much, they can explain "all mysteries,"
while it may only be a "darkening of
counsel with words without knowl-
edge."

We may have some pet theme and
by constantly harping on some one par-
ticular doctrine, may do injury to the
cause of God, and greatly lessen our
ministerial power. Instead therefore
of being extreme in views and contro-
versial in our preaching, it is ours to
seek for symmetry in our ministry, so
that the grand doctrines of Christianity
may be interwoven as golden threads
in our sermons, giving to them beauty
and strength, and showing the relation
between the doctrinal, experimental
and practical in the work of redemp-
tion.

Another important consideration pre-
sents itself to us. We are to avoid, as

much as possible, offensive terms and
an unkind manner. We cannot expect
all to hold exactly the same views with
ourselves. Our success in impressing
other minds with our views will depend
largely on our manner in treating im-
portant subjects. As a rule I positive-
ly object to the habit of advertizing a
given subject on doctrine. This meth-
od may possibly increase the congrega-
tion, and may bring some to hear who
would not otherwise do so, it may also
keep others away for fear of being as-
sailed in their weak fortresses. The
whole tendency of such a course is to
create prejudice and close the heart
against the light of heavenly truth.
Rather, let doctrinal preaching be natu-
ral and unexpected, let it come with full
force in our ordinary work, and pre-
sented in such a light, that offence can
be reasonably given to none.

To give as much prominence to doc-
trine as we have stated, or the Word of
God warrants, the specious question is
put,

"WILL IT NOT LESSEN YOUR POPULAR-
ITY AS MINISTERS?"

Our answer is, we have a higher
aim, it is infinitely more important
to have the approval of the Master than
the applause of men. We may also
add that the doctrines preached by Dr.
Chalmers, John Knox, Spencer H.
Cone, Edward Manning and C. H.
Spurgeon, have in no wise weakened the
influence or lowered the popularity of
their ministry. The necessity of our
times demands more doctrinal preach-
ing. Dr. Heman Lincoln says, "When
Dr. Griffin was settled in Newark, he
gave great offence to many of his peo-
ple by some strong remarks on God's
sovereignty. They called the young
preacher hard names, and threatened to
drive him from the Church, in great
distress of mind he sought the counsel
of a neighboring pastor, a man of large
experience and strong character, the
neighbor listened patiently to a glowing
account of the situation, and then ad-
vised young Griffin to go home and
prepare two sermons for the next Lord's
day on the rightful sovereignty of God,
putting into them the best thoughts he
could evoke by study and prayer,
Griffin listened with mute wonder and
followed the advice. He wrestled hard
with the Bible and with God; brain
and heart at highest tension were fused
into the sermons, and he felt like
Moses coming down from the Mount
with a message from the Almighty.
The house was crowded, for many had
come with the expectation of an apology.
The majesty of the thought awed
the hearers; the solemnity of the truth
thrilled. They listened, wondering,
convinced, humbled, and a great reviv-
al began that day which added to the
Church nearly two hundred converts.
The doctrine was its own witness and
vindicated its advocate.

The necessity of giving to doctrinal
preaching its proper place is an impor-
tant consideration. We may preach
too much doctrine, extremes are to be
avoided. If we give an undue promi-
nence to doctrine, our preaching may
become dry, and the effects injurious
to the Church. "Like people like
priest," may be seen in this under such
a ministry, a church may have a name
for great soundness in the faith, but
dead in regard to good works. The ten-
dency will be to undervalue man's re-
sponsibility, a sliding into Antinomian-
ism; or we may run to the opposite ex-
treme, our preaching may lack the true
doctrinal element, too much "milk"
and not enough "meat," hence, a sickly
church—a body with all the appearance
of life but lacking that vigorous vital-
ity essential to growth, shorn of
strength and granting in soul prosperity.
Such are the legitimate results of
extremes which we are bound to avoid.
When we give to all truths just the
place authorized by the Word of God,
there will be a grandeur in the gospel
we preach, noticed by every attentive
hearer, and as the prismatic colours
blend in, and give beauty to the bow
that God has set in the cloud so there
will be harmony and beauty seen in the
Gospel Plan. It will also tend to give
greater permanency to the pastoral re-

lation, and the best results in building
up the cause of God in the field of our
labours.

Our duty in regard to what we
preach may be further urged, by a few
important considerations.

In the first place

OUR MESSAGE IS FROM GOD.

"For I delivered unto you," says
the Apostle, "that which I also re-
ceived." Every Christian minister re-
ceives his message from another, he is
not a principal but an agent. "Now
then we are ambassadors for Christ as
though God did beseech you by us;" to
our Master therefore we stand or fall.
Paul had so much confidence in the
gospel that he everywhere preached,
that he could say, "though an angel
from heaven preach any other gospel unto
you let him be accursed." Such confi-
dence in the gospel and boldness in
proclaiming the same would ensure
greater success, and make our ministry
more efficient. We need therefore
make no apologies for presenting any
doctrine taught by the Lord Jesus
Christ or His Apostles, for here we
have the wisdom and power of God
displayed.

Then again this power being in the
gospel we are to use it, as Christ com-
manded. The "treasure is in earthen
vessels but the excellency of the power
is of God." "For I am not ashamed
of the Gospel of Christ for it is the
power of God unto salvation to every
one that believeth" says the Apostle,
when his heart yearned to preach the
gospel in the grand metropolis of the
world. What a work then is ours.
"Tis not a cause of small import the
pastor's care demands." Ah! no, men
and women will be in eternity what
they become under our ministry. It is
our duty to win as many souls to Christ
as possible—to do all in our power in
upbuilding his cause. And this can best
be done by presenting the old gospel,
with all its wholesome doctrines, with
the best preparation that we can give,
and with the power of God resting upon
us. Doctrinal preaching gives to the
pulpit its highest power, the doctrines
of the Cross are not effete, the grandest
triumphs are being witnessed to-day,
wherever these truths are faithfully
proclaimed. We need no new gospel,
but we do need more faithful preaching.
The same message that was delivered
in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost
by Peter, at Corinth, Rome and
Ephesus by Paul, needs to be preached
to our people, and with the blessing of
God the grandest results will be wit-
nessed.

To the Master who has called us, we
are soon to give an account of our
stewardship. His eye is ever on us,
his presence is ever with us. All that
we can do must be done quickly, the
account must soon be rendered, we
shall soon meet our people at the judg-
ment seat of "the King of kings and
Lord of lords." How powerful then are
the motives urging us to make known
"all the counsel of God," and to be
"free from the blood of all men."

If therefore in the rightful discharge
of our work, we have sought to make
known the revealed will of God in all
things pertaining to Experience, Practice
and Doctrine, our work has not been
in vain, the reward is certain. Christ
will say to us in the presence of his
Father and the holy angels, "Well done
good and faithful servant, thou hast
been faithful over a few things, I will
make thee ruler over many things,
enter then into the joy of thy Lord."

Mr. Moody, lecturing on the Lord's
Prayer in St. Louis the other day, and
dwelling much on the forgiveness of
trespasses, noticed that while he was
speaking fifty or more persons rose and
left the church; whereupon he said
that he had known persons who had
heard about this requirement for for-
giveness hastily to leave the church and
seek out those they needed to forgive,
and he hoped that those who were
then leaving the congregation were
prompted by such a spirit.

Universal music—the bank note.