

Sunday Reading.

Poetry and the Poor.

"The world is very beautiful!" I said. As yesterday, beside the brimming stream. Glad and alone, I watched the tremulous gleam. Slant thro' the wintry wood, green-carpeted With moss and fern and curving bramble-spray, And bronze the thousand russet margin reeds, And in the sparkling holly glint and play, And kindle all the brier's flaming seeds.

Confess your faults one to another.

What shall those do who have no faults? They must spend the more time in deploring and denouncing the faults of others. In fact, those who are satisfied with themselves are very liberal in their use of time and tongue in commenting on the errors of their fellow men.

This is a timely word from the Christian Advocate: The prayer-meeting, the spiritual thermometer of the church, often goes down as the other thermometer goes up. The piety of some people seems to meet too severe a test when the heat reaches to the neighborhood of ninety degrees.

There are briars besetting every path, That call for patient care; There is a cross in every lot, And an earnest need for prayer.

Associational Sermon.

Fidelity to the Word of God.

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE NOVA SCOTIA CENTRAL ASSOCIATION, ON MONDAY, JULY 30.

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"Now therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces lest I confound thee before them."—Jer. i. 17.

1. In every age of human history, man has been an honored instrument in the administration of the Divine Government. He is a "laborer together with God," and in being a "co-worker," has developed the most laudable human character, and won the worthiest honors.

2. Moses, emerging from the Patriarchal, inaugurates the Mosaic dispensation, by the marvellous deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Every step in that inimitable emancipation, from the rescue of the child Moses from death in the waters of the Nile, to the song of triumph on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, flashes with glowing evidence of a present Divine power, and that power exerted by human instrumentality.

3. And if we turn to the New Testament, we will clearly discover the use of the same method. The Christian dispensation is no exception to the rule. The prominent feature of Christianity, the incarnation, so mysterious in its nature, and grand in its results, is an example. God would instruct man more perfectly in His duty and opportunity. He would expand his nature and develop his character. He would prepare him to enjoy the divine glory and elevate him to His right hand.

4. The life and work of Jeremiah the prophet, furnish examples of God working by means of human instrumentality. He lived during the decline and fall of Jewish power, previous to the captivity of Judah. We have the account of his call to the prophetic office and subsequent career, written by himself. In v. 9 we read, "Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said unto me, behold I have put my words in thy mouth, see I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build and to plant."

Having briefly considered the general principle of human instrumentality in the unfolding of the Divine plan, we will now proceed to consider our duty of Fidelity to the Word of God.

What we shall say we deem appropriate to individual Christians, ministers, churches, and associated churches. These all, surely, are "the stewards of the manifold grace of God."

1. Our duty is— TO DECLARE OR PREACH THE WORD OF GOD.

"Speak unto them all that I command thee." Christ's clear announcements to his disciples were and are, "Ye are the light of the world," and "Ye are witnesses of these things,"

and he further enjoins upon them the duty of "preaching the Gospel to every creature." Their calling is to fearlessly announce the truth of Revelation. In the performance of this obligation, the disciples became instructors, and were used as the instruments of leading the spiritually blind "out of darkness into light," and those under bondage "from the power of satan unto God."

1. There are two principal methods of instructing—precept and example. Precept may be oral or written; but it is the enunciation and elucidation of the principles in hand to the understanding of the instructed, by means of language. Example is a manifest representation of those principles worked out in real life. There is a disposition to give undue prominence to the wholesome adage, "example goes before precept," but this is folly. They mutually sustain and complement each other, and are both most powerful, when harmoniously combined. It is true, to give our words weight, we must live them. But it is also true, to give our lives meaning we must explain them.

2. The use of language, and particularly of the living voice, can never be dispensed with in the work of religious instruction. The power of a direct personal appeal is unmeasured, particularly in matters of conscience. Christ by His example consecrated this method, and His disciples faithfully followed in His footsteps. It is not to be understood by these remarks, that written discourse is to be condemned or even despised. But it is insisted that after such labor is performed the other remains, and cannot be disregarded without loss and disaster. This is one of the great needs of every age, a frank, open avowal of dearly-prized principles—principles that lay at the foundation of our holy religion, and much lauded civilization. Without this, how formal, how cold, how lifeless our religious ceremonies become!

It was an essential part of the Paschal feast, to recount to the assembled family and friends the gracious dealings of God with the fathers. This gave interest, life, reality to the Passover. So our religious exercises in the family, in the Sabbath School, in the prayer meeting, in pastoral work, in preaching the Gospel affect with a living power, when the living man with a living voice declares the living Truth.

3. As it devolves upon individuals to declare the Truth of God, so it is incumbent upon churches and associated churches, to shew by the Word of God and the facts of the case, the responsibilities and possibilities of the hour. In fact, it must surely be for this purpose churches are organized and associated. And from the various Boards of our denomination we expect to learn the present needs, plans and opportunities. We want to know about our Home Missionary affairs; and we expect the Board is here to inform us. We are anxious for the safety, expansion and success of our Foreign Missionary enterprise; and we suppose the Board is represented by some one able to give us the necessary instruction. We are profoundly interested in our educational institutions at Wolfville; and we trust that our interest will not be sacrificed, by the lack of some one to speak out. We regard it the privilege and duty of these Boards, appointed, it is true, by the Convention, to lay before our churches and Associations from time to time, what they consider can be done towards the dissemination of the true light in the world, if they are sustained. And it is our duty as churches and Associations, to consider the matured plans of our brethren, and if reasonable and right sustain them financially and morally in their development of the purposes.

II. Our text indicates THE AUDIENCE.

"Speak unto them," that is, those to whom the prophet was commissioned, first "Judah," then "the nations," and "kingdoms." "The field is the world are the suggestively instructive words of Christ, "Go into all the world" and preach the gospel to every creature," is the command of the risen Saviour. "And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth," is the parting announcement of the ascending

Lord. These references include all men.

1. All Christians. They are disciples, and desire and need constant instruction, thus teach them from the Word. Are they faithful, candidly tell them frankly. Are they unfaithful, tell them frankly. Are they niggardly and covetous and miserly, reason with them kindly. Are they inexperienced, advise them. Are they weak, strengthen them. Are they cast down and discouraged, comfort and animate them. "Exhort one another daily and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

2. The audience consists of the ungodly. They are in our own land, and our immediate neighborhood, probably in our families and social circles. By estimation from the National Census and church statistics, only about one third of our Christian population are communicants, and alas, that so many of them are doubtful Christians! But the remaining two thirds should hear the teachings of the divine Word, and by repeated endeavor induced to receive and obey them. Here our churches and the Home Mission Board operate; and if we desire our cash converted into Christian instruction, for the conversion and sanctification of our countrymen; just pass it over to the Board of Home Missions. It already employs as many voices as it can maintain; and would gladly engage many more, should the funds allow.

3. But the commission of Jesus will not let us rest here. "The field is the world," keeps echoing in our ears. As we enquire into the moral and spiritual condition of the nations, we are compelled to conclude, how much they require the gospel, the "good seed of the kingdom!"

By the latest calculations the population of the world amounts to nearly one and a half Billions. The number of Christians including all sects amounts to 390,500,000. That leaves a balance who are, not merely nominal Christians, but heathen, Mohammedans and Jews amounting to 1,209,500,000. But of these nominal Christians only 115,218,000; are nominal Protestants, and of these it is estimated, that only one third, or 38,406,000, are professors of spiritual religion. Hence, the whole number of professors of spiritual religion are to those who are not, as 1 to 30. Now, what is this one world doing for the conversion of 30 worlds from sin and woe? Or what is the one world professing spiritual religion doing for the dissemination of the Truth among 28 worlds of not even nominal Christians?

There are 71 organized Foreign Missionary Societies among Protestants. They employ more than 2825 missionaries, besides native helpers. They expend for this purpose about \$7,350,000 annually. That is to say, 14,000,000 of people are under the charge of each missionary society; 400,000 souls are under the instruction of each missionary, and about \$1.20 is expended for the conversion of 200 souls.

Thus, a survey of the world exhibits the magnitude of the work before us! What a host there is to speak to! What an audience! And the sad condition of this vast multitude calls to us loudly, and emphasises the Divine command, "Speak unto them all that I command thee."

III. But the emphatic idea is,— "ALL THAT I COMMAND THEE."

1. Christians are limited as to what they shall say to the Word of God. Paul's injunction to Timothy is "preach the Word." They may not add nor alter this. To add would be to corrupt. To alter, would be to mutilate. Such sacrilege is profane, and the violator cannot escape the righteous judgment of God.

The terms of the commission emphasise loyalty to the Word, "preach the Gospel," and "teach them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you." The apostles Peter and John when arraigned before the Sanhedrim, understood their position and obligation in this respect as positive and binding, when they replied to those proud persecutors, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken more unto you than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." The Apostle to the

Gentiles received the Gospel that he preached "by revelation from Jesus Christ," and so impressed was he with its divine authority and sacred character, that no other gospel was to be entertained for one moment, no, not even if an angel from heaven proclaimed it. Jude, the apostle, was impressed with the same conviction, when he exhorted those to whom he wrote "to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," and charged them to protect it from the inroads of heresy. In the Revelation, Christ commends the church at Philadelphia above the others of the seven churches of Asia, because she honored and kept the Word of God, and resisted the encroachments of false doctrine.

2. But we are not only limited to the commands of Jehovah, but enjoined to speak all that He commands. Paul, when he was about leaving his friends at Ephesus, amidst the deep feeling manifested on that occasion, reminded them that he had "not shunned to declare all the counsel of God," and consequently was "pure from the blood of all men," and able to look forward to the glad meeting with Christ in glory, with great confidence. Jeremiah was faithful to his trust, notwithstanding it entailed upon him untold difficulty and suffering.

Temptation to keep back something may arise from various sources.

1. The message is disagreeable to fallen human nature. It plainly reveals the God of the universe, as a sovereign of infinite love, justice, majesty, power and glory. It clearly sets forth as the law of human life, a code of spotless purity and light. It lays bare the sinful heart and disobedient life, and arraigns man before the bar of inexorable justice. It repeats the curses of the law upon the head of the offender. It demands implicit faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for atonement, and insists upon true repentance and obedience as the test of saving faith. Without this firm reliance upon a personal Saviour no ray of hope arises to chase away the black despair of the transgressor. Against all this depraved human nature persistently rebels. It is too humiliating, too self-sacrificing.

2. So the teacher of Christianity is often tempted to fear for the consequences. He has been aiming to save men, but finds certain salient points obnoxious to their depraved ideas. It is suggested to him, would it not be wiser to keep those searching, scorching verities in reserve, or even exclude them entirely, in the prosecution of his religious endeavours. He has witnessed some little indication of interest, and something whispers to him, if you should speak the whole truth, all is lost, and these hopeful ones will "go away and walk no more with Jesus."

3. So the counsels of God are reconstructed to suit the depraved sentiments and feelings of fallen humanity! The harsh edges are taken off, and the distasteful elements are eliminated, as being more suitable to a bygone age, or perhaps a more genial climate! Thus heresy has made its inroads. Corruption and dissent have followed. The church of God has been mangled, maimed and corrupted. Many have gone down to perdition, and the infidel world has looked on with "decisive triumph. Dark and sad is it for the character and career of that individual or church that picks and chooses between the commandments of God, or "shuns to declare all the counsel of God!"

IV. Hence, we have a caution, "Be not dismayed at their faces."

1. The medicine of the Great Physician is bitter to the "carnal mind," and wry faces, fierce expostulations and bitter resistance may be anticipated. Be not deceived. This is to be expected. The sinner is not immediately willing to humble himself by an open confession of his transgressions, nor to trust in the atonement of the Saviour. He will struggle under the bondage of the law; and strive to wriggle out of its power, and resist its claims and curse, in any way that fancy or the evil one may suggest. He says with disdain, "your account of the whole matter is too horrible! Your way of salvation is too benevolent to the feelings! Cannot you modify it in some way? Or is there not some other way known to man by which he may escape the ruin of sin?" And so he mourns over the matter,

with conflicting emotions of resistance and surrender. He is not left to settle this matter with the light of revealed truth. A number of—spiritual-quacks, we may call them, attempt to comfort him with their nostrum. We will linger just a moment to become aware of their aims and methods.

(1.) The first is Tradition. He is hoary with age. He comes from the misty past; and the furrows of centuries are upon his brow. He is dignified but patronizing. He pities the sinner in his sad condition, but commiserates him more than all that he is so ignorant of the past, and that his knowledge of God and duty, of ways and means, have been limited to the written word, which is but a fraction of all he knows, and is able and ready to communicate. Listen, he speaks, "My son give more heed to the words of the Rabbis than to the words of the law." "My son the written word is but the shell, tradition is the kernel." "If you would be near to God and happy, keep close to the traditions of the fathers," "What is the chaff to the wheat?"

(2.) Now Ritualism makes his approach. He moves with measured ease and grace. His dress is of endless variety of pleat and fold and form. But every curve of his movements and every particular crease and fold and fashion of his robe has a deep spiritual meaning. He goes through his religious exercises with studied precision and pious regularity. Every joint and muscle and nerve of the face and body are brought solemnly into requisition, to complete the sanctimonious performance. "This" he says "is the ancient and most honorable way to secure the favor of God, and gain the noblest end of your being, not found indeed in the Word, it is true but better, an inheritance of our honored ancestry, and also, is more in harmony with the dignity of enlightened manhood."

(3.) Still you find the sinner is accosted by another who pities his sad misfortune, and would render assistance. He is of more modern mein, yet, withal of strange manners. There is a deep mystery about him. He walks loftily. Nothing scarcely about him is worthy of his attention. And, if you narrowly mark him, now that he has found his man, you will discern that his eyes are tightly closed to the regular surroundings of an external world. You may call his attention to this and that, but he waves his hand with impatient superiority, and says, placing his hand on his head or heart, "I have it all here!" Nothing past, present nor future, in heaven nor in earth, can alter his convictions. He confidently says to our suffering friend, "The Bible is all right enough, but there is a higher tribunal," "Inner-consciousness." "Follow what harmonizes with your feelings. Reject what is disagreeable to your sensitive nature, or replace it with what you may deem as good or better, or more convenient."

(4.) And now, Philosophy, falsely so-called, proudly and impudently steps forward. He looks around upon everything about him profoundly, as though he was familiar with all things, and was fully acquainted with all the mysteries of nature and destiny. He condescendingly greets our heart-stricken brother: "If you could only look through my spectacles, how differently you would see matters! You would immediately recognize an infinite number of theories that would assuredly satisfy your mind. It makes no difference which of these you take, only lean towards the latest. The Bible has had its day, and doubtless suited the times of barbarism for which it was intended, but now the world has outgrown it. Seeing nature has unlocked her lore, and exposed her treasure to the admiration of the millions. Follow nature."

(5.) You need not be surprised that blatant and coarse infidelity now uses his endeavours to bring peace to the awakened conscience. All creeds and sects, "broad" and "narrow," and "liberal" are exposed to his keen-edged ridicule. He gives assurance that he has tried all the nostrums recommended to no purpose, and perhaps honestly but vainly thinks there is nothing to offer but sham and clap-trap. He is confident and boisterous. He strikes right and left at all religious feeling and doctrine, and the sinful and unwary are often made easy victims to his guile.