

The Christian Watchman

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BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE—BY

LOVE UNFEIGNED.—St. Paul.

REV. E. B. DEMILL, A. M., Editor

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Original Contributions

LETTERS TO A YOUNG MINISTER.

DEAR YOUNG BROTHER:

In my last letter I gave you some general directions as to the manner in which you should discharge the duties which devolve upon you as a preacher of the gospel. I now proceed to give you some more explicit directions, and to point out what seem to me the most important qualities of a gospel sermon.

As a general thing a sermon should be the expression of but one important thought. When several points of equal importance are presented in a discourse, the impression made upon the mind or the heart is comparatively feeble. It is not uncommon for a minister to select a text, which presents several ideas of great importance, each of which would do for the theme of a discourse, and to treat of them all as fully as time will permit. It is sometimes thought that this mode of preaching is easier than to take a single subject, to amplify, adorn, and impress it upon the hearers, and certainly if one is disinclined to mental exertion, he can in this way for a brief period preach with very little trouble. But with what effect? The sermon, or rather the group of little sermons is, uninteresting and unimpressive; the preacher has no opportunity for illustration or explanation, and little solid ground of appeal. The ultimate result is that the soon finds great difficulty in selecting subjects which he has not already repeatedly discussed, and the hearers notice a wearisome sameness in all his utterances.

The sermon should also be analyzed. This is of far greater importance than eloquence in the sentences. Unless the thoughts advance in an orderly and harmonious manner, no matter how impressive or instructive some of them may be, the attention of the hearer is distracted, and the effect produced is comparatively trivial. The labor of preparation is greatly increased, and that labor to a great extent lost, unless the preacher habitually arranges his ideas, marshals each one in its proper place, and directs all to the end in view.

I would not recommend to you any particular form of arrangement. The old method was, first the introduction, then the body, and, thirdly, finally an appeal to the saints and a closing appeal to the sinners. This mode is now rather out of fashion. Let the nature of the subject, and your own feelings in view of it control the arrangement of the discourse. Arrange your sermon, so that the idea to be presented may exert its due influence upon the hearers. Instead of spending your time in moulding sentences, labor to form a clear and natural analysis. If one does not suit, try another, the mental discipline thus afforded is excellent, and the result to your hearers amply repays for the labor. I would here recommend you when you have begun the preparation of a sermon to finish it. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Rather prefer a poor sermon than form the habit of retreating from a subject, when you find it encompassed with some difficulties, or when it may chance that at the time your mind is not in working order. Let me also warn you against the use of those volumes of skeletons or sermons sometimes to be found in the minister's library. In the first place in using these skeletons you are practicing a sort of imposition upon your hearers. Secondly, your own thoughts and feelings will not gracefully clothe those dry bones. All your earnestness and volubility cannot hide the dry and bony forms to life. Your own mind must create not only the flesh, but the bones also; your sermon will be a mere skeleton, arrayed in the habiliments of the living. Finally if you use crutches you will limp for life. The arrangement of a sermon is its essence. He who can analyze a subject, will not lack for suitable thought or expression. If you look away from your own mind, for the arrangement of your sermon, you soon will become dependent on foreign aid, and instead of being a preacher of the gospel, will become a retailer of the crude and lifeless, and may say venal thoughts of others.

Your sermons should also be characterized by a transparent simplicity of expression. This will not interfere with profundity, it alone renders profundity of any worth. It is in perfect harmony with eloquence. In fact eloquence is always simple, never elaborate, never obscure, never learned. We often err by adopting a labored style of preaching, which we fancy will be instructive and interesting to the more intellectual portion of our hearers. Herein we greatly err. The truly intellectual, love transparency and simplicity of style, besides, men of sense attend the house of God, not to have their minds cultivated, or to enjoy an intellectual treat, but to hear the truths of the gospel unfolded in a natural and simple manner, and the gospel is the power of God, to the Greek as well as to the barbarian. Those whom he regards as illiterate need to have important ideas presented to their minds, and to have these ideas presented in such a shape that the mind can follow them. If we present to them a crude and rambling effusion, what is the result? They may not annoy you by criticisms, they simply refuse to attend to your harangue, and while you are speaking, one is thinking of his farm and another of his merchandise. But a gospel theme, presented in an orderly man-

ner, in simple and perspicuous language is profitable unto all, to the learned as well as to the illiterate. Never be argumentative, or ornate, or elaborate, simply to please the more educated portion of your congregation, and on the other hand avoid the error of supposing that merely extemporaneous twaddle will instruct, influence, or in any way benefit the unlearned. The greatest preachers are intelligible to all they can please and profit alike the scholar and the peasant, and they all have exhibited in a remarkable degree, simplicity of style. Read any sermon, which has outlived its author, and you will discover this as one of its most striking qualities.

The sermon should be also the sincere expression of the thoughts and feelings of the preacher. It is rare for an insincere speaker to be effective. Those who seem to reach men's hearts who themselves feel the force of every word they utter. Rhetoric, logic, even grammar may be wanting, but the true expression of the soul overleaps all barriers, and delivers its message. He who would kindle an emotion, or arouse a passion must himself have a heart glowing with some important theme. Sincerity seems to be the quality in an address which penetrates the deepest into the human soul, and which exerts the widest and most resistless influences. It is from this quality that true eloquence derives its amazing power. Especially it is necessary that the sermon should be the genuine expression of the mind and heart of the preacher. It should never contain ideas which harmonize rather with the creed, or the popular sentiment than the conviction of the speaker. Neither should it express a joy or a sorrow, a hope or a fear which is not actually experienced. Our hearts ought always to be in such a state that the truths of the gospel could elicit corresponding emotion. But as a matter of fact our hearts are not thus at all times susceptible to the various themes of the gospel. Yet when the Sunday comes whatever may be the state of heart you must preach, and you are expected to preach interesting sermons. What is to be done? Shall we suppress feelings which we do not experience? Shall we affect a love or a hate, a joy or sorrow, a hope or a fear.

No, at the risk of being dull and cold speak only the promptings of your heart. If you do not, you will be long surprised to find that your hearers, can listen without the slightest emotion to a sermon which in itself presents most important themes in a style fitted to stir the heart. You have doubtless been astonished to find that some powerful appeals, have been totally ineffective, the pathetic parts have called forth no tears, the expressions of joy no smiles. But what was your own state of feeling. Can you expect to infuse in others what you yourself do not possess?

Let me here urge you to avoid anything like cant. There is a sort of religious dialect which has come down to us from our fathers. It was very expressive in its day. It implies the possession of a high order of piety in him who uses it, and embodies the experience of men who loved religion with all their hearts, and for it were willing to live or die. This dialect is very frequently used by professors of religion whose piety is questionable, and ministers often err by making free use of it on every possible occasion. If you thereby can best express the genuine utterance of your heart—there is no objection to the use of this phraseology—though perhaps these religious feelings expressed in your own language would be better understood. But do not suppose that a mere dialect however sacred, will interest your hearers, or atone for want of genuine emotion in yourself.

EPISCOPUS.

For the Christian Watchman.

PARAPHRASE.

2 THESS. CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.—Paul thoughtfully engaged at Corinth, not only in proclaiming the gospel, but also in laboring industriously at his trade, to procure a livelihood, did not forget the church at Thessalonica. This church still retained its integrity in the midst of many temptations and much affliction, yet since Paul had penned the first epistle to the brethren of Thessalonica, the enemy had been sowing tares in this hitherto fruitful field. Paul had kept himself acquainted with the spiritual condition of the church, and while it had been a source of pleasure and gratitude to learn that their faith in Christ had not waned, nor their love for one another faltered, yet he had learned with sorrow that some had maintained erroneous notions respecting the second coming of Christ, and that this error had produced baneful results in those who held it. In this second epistle the apostle expressed his gratitude to God for their steadfastness in the faith, and assures them that their present suffering is a convincing evidence of a great and eternal reward. He then proceeds to correct their error in reference to the second coming of Christ, by assuring them that certain events yet unaccomplished must transpire before that great day. In conclusion he urges the church to withdraw fellowship from the idle and gossiping members whose conduct brought a reproach upon the cause.

PARAPHRASE.—Paul with Sylvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians, which is in fellowship with God our Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are under obligation to thank God continu-

ally concerning you, brethren, as is our duty, because your faith growth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all towards one another abounds, so that we boast of you among the churches of God, on account of your patient steadfastness in the faith, in the midst of the persecutions and affliction which ye have endured.

These sufferings which we now endure are a convincing evidence that there will be a just judgment by God, in which ye will be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer. For surely it will be a righteous deed for God to render to those, who, on account of your faith, afflict you, afflict back again; and also to you who are thus afflicted a glorious recompense, even perpetual rest with us his apostles, in the day when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed, appearing from heaven, with attendant angels, as ministers of his power, and in a fire of dazzling and consuming flame, taking vengeance upon those who know not God and who disobey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These godless unbelievers shall then receive, as a just punishment, everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord, and from the glorious exhibition of his power.

Such punishment will be inflicted on the ungodly at the time when the Lord will appear to reward his people. Indeed the great object of his second coming is to bestow this reward. That very appearance which will fill the ungodly with terror will be the occasion of great joy to his own people, while the condition and prospect of those holy ones will be an occasion of glory to himself. On that day he shall be rendered more glorious than ever in the eyes of the universe by the spectacle of all the holy ones saved by him. He shall then be an object of admiration to every holy intelligence, through the holy and happy state to which believers on him have attained through their faith. Ye also my brethren will cause him to be more illustrious and more admirable on that day by your salvation to perfect holiness and blessedness, for our testimony among you was believed.

To the end that ye may be able on that great day to glorify the Lord by your complete victory over sin and death achieved through him, we always pray concerning you, that God may make you worthy of the calling to holiness and salvation which ye have received, and that he also may with divine power, perfect every good desire after righteousness, and every operation of faith, that thus the Lord Jesus Christ in every effort and attribution may be glorified by your holiness and salvation, and that thus ye also may be glorified by the illustrious exhibition of his perfections.

Thus may ye be able to glorify the Lord in your salvation but not however by any independent work on your part, but only through the free grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. B. C.

For the Christian Watchman.

Philip and the Eunuch.

No. 1.

Philip the evangelist, with the Apostles Peter and John had established a Christian church in Samaria. When they had accomplished their work in this city the Apostles returned to Jerusalem. Meanwhile an angel of the Lord appeared to Philip and ordered him to go on a journey by a certain road which led from Jerusalem to Gaza.

There seems to have been several roads between these two cities; the most northerly, led through Bethshean, one farther to the South, through Eleutheropolis, another and that the most Southerly, through Bethur and Hebron.

It is extremely probable that it was by this last mentioned road that the Evangelist was ordered to proceed. The direction of this road, and the nature of the country through which it led, correspond with the injunction of the angel. "Go towards the South into the way that goeth down from Jerusalem into Gaza, (a way) which is desert," that is which leads through a thidly peopled district; in the language of Luke a desert, (Luke 1—80.) There was an ancient chariot road between Jerusalem and Gaza via Hebron, as is evident from the traces which remain. Sampson in an article in the Baptismal Tracts for the Times writes—"That there was an ancient and even modern route from Jerusalem to Gaza is by Hebron. If the traveller at Gaza, for instance, hires horses and mules to be made by Hebron as the smoother and safer road, and an extra price must be paid to go by the more direct though rougher and more dangerous route."

Philip obeyed the injunction of the angel and was proceeding by the road which had been pointed out to him. While on his way he saw before him a man in a chariot reading. He was of Ethiopia, a chief officer of the Queen of Ethiopia, a proselyte to the Jewish religion. He had visited Jerusalem to worship there, and as now returning homewards, and seated in his chariot was reading aloud, from the prophecy of Isaiah.

The Spirit, by an inward intimation, told Philip to draw near to the chariot and enter into conversation with his occupant. Philip hastened to obey and ran towards the chariot. As he ap-

proached he heard the Eunuch reading from the prophecy of Isaiah. He immediately addressed him, and inquired whether he knew the meaning of the passage which he was reading. The Eunuch replied, how can I understand it unless I have some one to instruct me. He then invited the Evangelist to enter the chariot and sit beside him. The passage of scripture which he had been reading was this:—"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation, (just) judgment was taken away, but (the wickedness of) his generation, who shall declare? for his life is taken away from the earth."

"Of whom I pray then?" inquired the Eunuch of Philip. "Does the prophet speak this, of himself or some other man?" In reply Philip, beginning from this passage, announced to him Jesus as the subject of their predictions. He probably told of the character and work of the Redeemer, the blessings which he conferred, the kingdom which he had set up. He would be likely to repeat the Saviour's words "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven." These words fell upon a susceptible heart. As they thus journeyed, they came to a certain water, and the Eunuch convinced of the truth of the glad tidings to which he had listened, and anxious to comply with the will of the Master, exclaimed:—"See, here is water, what dost thou bid me to be baptized?"

We may here pause to enquire as to the locality of this certain water. There were many places on this road where the rite of baptism could be administered. A few miles from Jerusalem were the three pools of Solomon, which in the days of Christ covered about three acres of ground. Further along is the valley of wells a few miles beyond is Abu Fid with an ancient reservoir some fifty feet square—a few miles further, we come to the supposed site of Bethsai, about twenty miles from Jerusalem. "This spot," says Sampson, "has been fixed on by Dr. Robinson, as the place where the Eunuch was baptized." The ground in front of the fountain and of the structure behind it is so broken up and covered with stones, that it is difficult to determine what once was here. There is now a slightly depressed hollow, with a sandy or gravelly bottom. It is hardly conceivable that in the days of Herod the fountain builder, this most favourable spring should not have been made to supply a pool in this land of such treasures, and even now water sufficient to supply such a reservoir flows from the trough, and seeks into the soil; as, according to Jerome's mention, in his day, it seem to have been absorbed." Thus we find that on the road to Hebron there were several places suitable for the administration of Baptism. However it is most probable that it was when at Bethsai, the Eunuch resolved to follow Christ, saw the pool filled with water which gushed from the mountain side, exclaimed:—"Behold! water, what dost thou bid me to be baptized?"

To his request Philip said "if thou believest with all thine heart there is no hindrance to thy observance of this rite." The Eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." The Eunuch at once ordered his chariot to stop beside the pool or fountain, that there and then he might comply with his Master's command, and solemnly dedicate himself to His service. They then—both Philip and the Eunuch, went down into the water—the one to administer, the other to receive the holy ordinance. There in that solitude with no spectators but the invisible God, and the pagan servant or servants who looked wonderingly on the humble evangelist baptizing the Ethiopian prince into the faith of the new and persecuted religion. When the solemn ordinance had been administered the evangelist was separated from the new convert. As soon as they had come up out of the water, Philip in obedience to a sudden and miraculous intimation of the spirit departed at once. This ended the brief acquaintance which had resulted in the conversion and baptism of the Eunuch, for he also proceeded on his way to his own country. How new and joyous were the feelings which he continued his journey. His mental perplexities had been removed, his sins had been forgiven, his disposition changed, his disposition, his life solemnly consecrated to the service of his Divine Redeemer and he was prepared to announce in the land of his birth or adoption the glad tidings which had infused such joy into his own soul.

X. Y. Z.

For the Christian Watchman.

RECOLLECTIONS OF NAPLES.

No. 9.

SORRENTO.

No where is the beauty of the drive from Casertamare to Sorrento, along the margin of the magnificent bay of Naples to be exceeded. Here is a broad expanse of waters, gleaming in the sunlight, the diversified coasts teeming with villages and towns, or enriched by fertile plains, or hills covered with the vine or the silvery green olive. The most striking and attractive feature in the scene is Vesuvius—which from this point of view displays all its vastness. Never does the volcano appear so glorious as when viewed from this quarter. Flourishing towns of dazzling whiteness and

luxuriant vineyards in emerald green adorn its base, while the cone is tinged with a rich Syrian purple, and over all is the wreath of smoke, which crests the summit of the mountain. Nor are the scenes more immediately in view without peculiar charms. Here are lofty hills clothed with the olive, and there hills more lofty still, whose bald heads ascend into the clouds. Here are deep chasms, beautiful gorges, rugged and perpendicular cliffs extending like a wall along the Sorrentine shore, and lofty hills apparently leaping over this wall and plunging into the sea.

On arriving at Sorrento, we first proceeded to visit the antiquities. The Greek Fiascos, still perfect, is used as a reservoir. The arches were constructed so as to support a garden, on which now grow the largest and finest orange trees to be found on the whole plain. The little temple of Venus, in a good state of preservation, is chiefly attractive from the fact that in front of the portico, are two myrtle trees of great size, which are upward of five hundred years old.

But the bay shore is more attractive to the antiquarian than the elevated region above. Here we hire a boat to row us along the ancient coast, and to permit us to see beneath the waters the substructions of several temples. On the shore is the cave of Polyphemus, an enormous den, some eighty feet in height. Owing to the quantity of water at the bottom of this cavern we did not explore its depths. The Temple of the Syrens, was delved out of the solid cliff. Its chambers and corridors are still to be seen. Further along upon the shore, is the strand on which was formerly situated the Temple of Ceres.

The waters of the bay which have receded from the coast on which Naples is built, have encroached upon this portion of the coast to a considerable extent, and in the course of its progress has destroyed the most magnificent of the ancient public edifices of Sorrento, and leaves for the visitor nothing to behold but the hapless foundations of those structures, or bits of marble, or colored mosaic intermingled with the sands of the bay.

In one of the little piazzas of Sorrento is an Egyptian statue of Osiris. Once it was one of the best preserved, and most expressive of existing Egyptian statues, but relic hunters like ourselves have greatly defaced it. We do not forget to visit the house in which Tasso was born, nor to explore the broken chambers of the villa of Vedius Pollio.

The walk from the promontory on which these ruins are to be found, to the town, is one of the most delightful in the world. We can imagine nothing more exquisitely beautiful than the ever varying scene which is presented to the eye. Before us is a plain three miles in length and one in breadth, surrounded by hills on every side, except that which fronts the bay. The plain is broken by numerous deep and narrow ravines, over which little bridges have been thrown, and these chasms with the perpendicular cliff along the coast, and the rocks and hills above, give a character of boldness to the scene. The plain itself is one vast orchard, divided by walls, and interspersed with towns and villages, which seem to be bathed in verdure. The pomegranate, the apricot, the vine, with many rare and beautiful trees and shrubs, find here a very congenial soil. But the olive and the long lines of orange trees laden with their golden fruit are the most plentiful and the most attractive.

"The thriving bees confessed the fruitful mould, The verdant apple ripens here to gold, Here the blue fig with luscious juice o'erflows, With deepest red the full pomegranate glows. The branches bend beneath the weighty pear, And silver olives flourish all the year. The balmy spirit of the Western gale, Eternal breathes on fruit untaught to fall; Each dropping pear another pear supplies; On apples apples, figs on figs arise, The same mild season gives the flowers the blow, The buds to harden and the fruit to grow."

The climate of Sorrento is the most delightful in Italy, if not in all the world. The narrow peninsula between the Bay of Naples and Gulf of Salerno, is perpetually fanned by delicious sea breezes in summer, while the range of hills the vast Monte St. Angelo, which rises toward the East to the height of 5000 feet protects the plain from the chilling wintry winds. The spring is perpetual, the air laden with delicious perfumes—the trees are evergreen, and the fruit always in season—while every natural object on which the eye rests is exquisitely beautiful.

Yet alas we did not find Sorrento to be a Paradise. On arriving at the town we left our valises at the hotel and then sallied forth in search of the mirabilia. When the afternoon had slipped away—all but two of the party from economical motives, dined at an eating house. Our dinner was excellent, the pork steaks, for which Sorrento is famous, unimpeachable, and we returned to the Hotel in high spirits. But to our infinite disgust, we were informed that those of the party who had not dined could not be accommodated for the night, that since they had eaten elsewhere they might also seek elsewhere for beds. It was now ten o'clock.

At this late hour we were obliged to sally forth in search of lodgings; most of the people

had gone to bed. However we began knocking indiscriminately at the doors of the houses, and in a few moments, half the windows in the street were opened and an amount of benediction was bestowed upon us, especially from the fairer portions of the Sorrentines, which we trust will never be realized. Our acquaintance with Italian was not sufficient to explain satisfactorily our situation. At length we succeeded in getting a chamber, dark, damp, and asked, furnished only with three beds. Here we spent a wretched night, and from the dampness of the beds we caught the only cold which visited us during a sojourn of several months in Italy. If all the wishes which we expressed for the benefit of the Hotel keeper have been realized, his habitation is by this time desolate. To add to our satisfaction our two fortunate companions, after a good night's sleep amused themselves by laughing at us most unmercifully.

A. B. C.

Grumbling.

SOME fifty years ago, Earlham—the seat of the Gurneys—was the grand depot for literature and benevolence. A young lady was invited by some of the females of the family to spend a day with them. During dinner, she entertained the party with several anecdotes, that illustrated the not very amiable disposition of an aunt with whom she lived. John Joseph Gurney—shrewd, reflective, and benevolent—was a silent observer of the young girl, and waited for the pause that precedes the separation of a party from a dinner-table to address her. "Friend," said he, "thou hast told us many things to the disadvantage of thine aunt; canst thou not remember one solitary circumstance to tell us, in her favour before we separate?" The young lady was a type of humanity—her memory failed her as to the good, and was only retentive of that which was evil.

It is common to us all to make the worst of everything; people seem to find a melancholy pleasure in exaggerating evil, where any exist, and creating them where they are not. To make the worst of everything, in fact, belongs to our fallen nature; and when the present is tolerably comfortable, it is almost universal the propensity to dive into the future, and anticipate a coming evil. The reverse of this—to make the best of everything—to try and turn upward the bright side, is the only way to creep through life with any degree of comfort. But go where we may—to poor or rich, wise or foolish, ignorant or educated, old or young—what do we find? A fixed determination to make the worst of everything; to pull every feather and bit out of our nest, and by fault-finding and grumbling, make ourselves and other people as wretched as we can! Truly the heart knows its own bitterness, and the poet wrote the truth when he said—

"Who has found a happy lot, Without a cross therein?"

But we speak now of the general tone of discontent that pervades all classes of society, and that proves so plainly the depth of the fall.

It is a world in ruins, and the "foundations of the earth are out of course." But there are a few whose temperament is to make the best of everything; and in a family, or society, what blessings they bring. What a comfort is the wife, son, or sister, or friend or daughter, whose disposition, cheerful and even, throws round the detail of daily life the sunlight of a mind ready to make the best of everything! How different the domestic circle where members, male or female, are ever on the watch to make the worst of everything. Now readers, we advise you not to think of anyone but yourself in these remarks; and egotism, in this case, may prove very healthful to diseased practices.

But who only can make the best of everything? None but God's people. Of them we read, "All things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." They may win under many a galling cross, they may weep many a secret tear, they may cry to God day and night because of the enemy, but it is all working together for good; and sooner or later, they shall see it all worked for the best—the very best. "They shall see," as Dr. Hawker used to say, "they had the fittest cross, the fittest body, the fittest yoke-fellow; and so be enabled to praise the Lord for all." We have often noticed that it is those who are the heaviest loaded that complain least. Great weights are not matters for conversation, but for thought; and those who feel most, and have the most cause to feel, are invariably silent about their sufferings.

Grumbling is a plant of luxuriant growth, springing from an unsuitable temper in some, and in others only an unmeaning habit. Impersonal grumblings are generally the matter of universal grumblings, such as health, business, weather, infirmities, and things of that sort. But the wedge soon widens a space, and whole households take out a patent to grumble at everything till, like the American weed called the "devil's shoe string," the fibres get so strong, that they defy the plough, unless the share be sharpened every yard.

Dear reader, if you feel yourself guilty, is a good sign; the sword of the Spirit cuts and cures; and at the feet of a lowly, cross-bearing Christ, His people are made to hate their sin, prize His full salvation, and learn to amend their ways.