Changes in Recent Preaching.

BY REV. ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D. D.

As to preaching, we have noticed conspicuous changes in the tone of the pulpit in the United States and Great Britain, for a considerable time past.

1. Toward *greater simplicity*. The true idea of the highest art is that which conceals all art. To-day one of the grandest facts to my mind is found in this, that men like Dr. John Hall or Dr. Taylor are most popular preachers in New York city. To depreciate the simplicity of John Hall would be like depreciating the artistic beauty of paintings like those of Apelles and Zeuxis—where the very birds mistook painted fruit for real, and an artist himself mistook a painted curtain for a real damask screen, and raised his hand to lift the screen that he might see the picture which he supposed to be behind it. The most acceptable and useful preachers of the world to-day are men whose preaching is marked by simplicity both of thought and diction. Pre-eminent in this direction stands Charles H. Spurgeon. The more we hear him, the more we are impressed with the clearness and transparency of his entire treatment of his themes.

2. Tendency to *abandon manuscript* in the pulpit. I can remember when I scarce ever heard a man in the American Presbyterian and Congregational pulpits preach without notes. "*Paper*" is only "Cauld kail het agin," in the opinion of some of the old-time Scotchmen; and the idea seems spreading. A few preach *memoriter*, with the disadvantages of mechanical memorization. But many of our noblest and strongest preachers preach without a manuscript, and without commission of discourse to memory. There is a growing aversion to *mere* memorization. The true idea of preparation is studying over the theme till the whole being is infused, transfused, suffused, then to go before the people and preach, etc. Like the building of the temple in which no sound of tool was heard, the minister simply brings well prepared, symmetrically shaped material to the pulpit, and there with the skill of a master architect builds his discourse on the spot. This is the ideal of preaching.

All this demands a higher type of education in the *ministry*. Simplicity itself is a ripe result of culture. Everything superficial, artificial, affected, is a result of a want of culture. The more a man knows, the more he is conscious of not knowing; and so the nearer a man gets to true greatness of mind and heart, the more will he despise all those assumptions and affectations which small men use and cultivate in lieu of greatness or real power.

Evangelicity demands culture. Full as the Word is, ample as is the theme of redemption—exhausting cherubic knowledge and seraphic love, power to open a single theme demands a high order of culture. Like a vein of silver and gold, it may be rich and exhaustless, but it requires patient work in digging and drilling—the work with spade and pick, perhaps with steel drill and gunpowder.

True extempore discourse requires high culture. Preaching without a manuscript demands constant study, large resources. A man must be a *full* man, in order to be a ready man; or, as was said by Dr. Bellamy, he must "*fill up the cask*," or he will not get a good stream. Extempore preaching, properly so-called, is not the fruit of the time when spoken, but, as Dr. Shedd says, of *all time* previous. And in such culture, a great help is the study of the Bible in the original tongues. Its effect in enriching a man's stock of themes, making him evangelical, filling with unction, affording him material both for pungent discourse and helpful illustration, is immense. I remember a preacher who stopped preaching on Bible themes and took to "Pilgrim's Progress" as his text book. But he got as far as the Slough of Despond, and stuck there. Daily study of the Bible, in the original, is in my judgment the most helpful preparation for a powerful preaching career, and when sanctified by fervent prayer is itself a "university education."

3. There is likewise tendency toward *greater evangelicity* in preaching. More prominence is given in American pulpits to purely gospel themes, and those who "make much of the *blood*" are the mighty preachers. It is so in Britain. The conspicuous pulpits in the metropolis of the world are, even in the Anglican church with all its man-millinery and posturing and ritualism, pulpits where the gospel is most preached. Canon Liddon is one of the giants, and his discourses are absolutely old-fashioned in their evangelical type. One looks throughout Great Britain to-day and notes the men who command the positions of pulpit power are such as Alexander Maclaren of Manchester; R. W. Dale, of Birmingham; Spurgeon, McNeill, Archibald Brown, of London; Andrew Thomson, Principal Cairns, of Edinburgh; Andrew Bonar, of Glasgow, and a host of others who scorn the charlatanry of sensationalism, and with all their learning keep close to the Cross in all their pulpit ministrations.

Of course any man can draw a crowd if he will stoop to the level of buffoonery. But the crowd is ready to go elsewhere whenever a more attractive circus comes along. The "long run" is the supreme test. Looking back over a life-time of preaching, who can question that the pulpit that wields the mightiest scepter for the eternity beyond, never stands on any basis of sensationalism? Only the gospel *wears*.

At the same time it must be sadly confessed that there is both in America and Britain a very critical condition of affairs, doctrinally and ecclesiastically. German Rationalism, under the name of "Higher Criticism," has made fearful inroads among even evangelical believers and preachers. The standard of inspiration is so lowered with many that the divine Spirit in prophets and evangelists is virtually eliminated. The vehement and sometimes violent controversies over Prof.'s Dods, Bruce, and Drummond, and now over George Adam Smith and his book on Isaiah, show the current here in Britain; while the writings of such men as Prof. Briggs in America reveal the corresponding drift on the other side of the water. What can be done in these days, but to protect the foundations of our faith! We have no conscious uncharity toward our brethren who may widely differ from us as to evangelical doctrine. But in this matter we must lose sight of *persons* in the defense of *principles*. To let down the divine standard of an inspiration which is infallible, is to surrender the *central* fortress of our faith to the enemy. The moment the Bible becomes to our faith tainted with fallibility and peccability, it becomes worthless, and the more so because of its august and extraordinary claims as the Word of God. We see no middle ground: it is for us either a total surrender or a total defense; no compromise will suffice. As Canon Liddon observes, to surrender the story of the flood, Lot's wife, Jonah, etc., is to surrender the Deity of Him who quoted and applied these as veritable historic facts. If He was mistaken here, why not elsewhere!

Who is My Neighbor?

The progress of humanity and of civilization is an aid in the interpretation of the Scripture. Possibly, Moses would have regarded every member of the same tribe, or perhaps every member of the same nation, as a neighbor, though living in some remote quarter. Perhaps the dweller in Dan might be considered neighbor to him who lived in Beer-Sheba, because of the common tie binding them as members of the Israelitish nation. But Moses would hardly have regarded a member of another nation as a neighbor; and especially the Samaritans were of no kin to the Jews. "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof." They were of an alien race; they were intruders upon the heritage of Israel; they had mocked at Israel in the days of its depression and weakness. The hereditary enmity had grown from generation to generation. Of all the nations on earth, probably the Samaritans were those whom the Jews would least reckon as neighbors. Hence, the force of our Lord's selection of a Samaritan to illustrate the true principle of neighborliness.

The idea of distance and remoteness has largely passed away. When our Dr. Boardman came from Burma, he was nine months on the voyage. This was, it is true, rather an extreme case; but one hundred and fifty days was hardly an extraordinarily long passage. Now the telegraph has annihilated distance, and any event of moment, occurring in any part of the world, is shortly known everywhere. According to the teaching of our Lord, according to the principles of human brotherhood, according to the revolution wrought by modern means of transportation, every human being is our neighbor, every human being is our brother. There is no one to whom we do not owe a duty; there is no one for whom we are not a trustee, under the will of our common Father. To the question, 'Who is my neighbor? we may reply, Every one. To the question, Who is my brother? we may reply, Every one; and the claim of kinship is in proportion to the necessity of our brother.

Within a little while, a most touching account has appeared, in the papers, of an outcast known as "the elephant man." He was a victim, we suppose, of a disease called elephantiasis, by which the feet and hands and all the limbs are swollen so as to resemble the limbs of an elephant. He was so hideous that, on seeing him, men turned sick and women fainted. One of the surgeons of the London Hospital, Mr. Treves, found him in a room off Whitechapel, destitute and starving, trying to warm himself over a brick heated by a gas jet. Mr. Treves spoke to him; and for the first time in twenty-four years, Merrick heard a kind word and was spoken to like a man. For some time, he gained a wretched livelihood by being exhibited in a show, though commonly enough even the most brutal audiences shrieked and ran from the tent as soon as the curtain was drawn. He went to Belgium, where again the police interfered, and the show was prohibited. He made his way back to London and to the London Hospital, where was the only man who had ever spoken a kind word to him. Mr. Treves had him lodged for a time in an attic in the hospital, and tried to find permanent shelter for him. After he had been refused by one institution after another, an appeal was made in the London *Times*, and the British public, which is more often thoughtless than knowingly cruel, responded; and the past four years, from November, 1886, the poor man was provided with a home and surrounded with every kindness. Among those who showed friendliness to him, were the Prince and Princess of Wales and Mr. Gladstone. In April last, he died, thanking with his last breath the doctor who had rescued him.

This was true neighborness, showed to one who was a stranger, showed to one who had no claim except that he was a human being and that he was suffering.

Who is my neighbor? Every human being, be he Chinaman, African, Indian—be he outcast, be he lost; and my duty to him is in proportion to his need and my opportunity.

— A young college student, anxious to serve the Master, went out to preach in one of the worst districts of London. A crowd soon collected, and among them were an infidel and one of the colporteurs which Mr. Spurgeon's church sends out to sell Bibles in the streets. The young preacher delivered an earnest discourse, when suddenly the infidel interrupted him with a remark in which there was some wit and much profanity. The little gathering laughed, and the infidel was encouraged to proceed. After he had held forth for a time in his own style denouncing the Bible as false, and so on, the preacher was so upset that it was necessary for the colporteur to stand forward. "Did you ever know of a thief who liked a policeman?" he asked the man who was interrupting the service. "No, yer fool, no more did you!" was the reply. "We are a pair properly matched then; we shall get on well now," said the colporteur. "But why don't the thief like a policeman?" he went on. "It is because he has broken the law. Now, that is just like you," he added, looking well at his man. "You don't like the Bible because you have broken God's law." He then went on to show how then love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; the result being that the disturber was silenced, and on parting accepted a tract, and shook hands.

A Night Missionary among Thieves.

The story of an adventure among New York thieves is told in Dr. Gordon's *Watchword* by Mr. H. B. Gibbud, the devoted missionary who for many years spent his nights in going about the streets of New York, rescuing the friendless and fallen. He says that one night, or, rather, in the small hours of the morning, he was in Pell street, the Chinese quarter, and also the headquarters of the dreaded Whyo gang of toughs. "It is only one block long, and runs from the Bowery to Mott street. On one side of the street are a number of tumble-down tenements inhabited by a colony of Chinese, who run gambling dens and "opium-joints." On the other side there are a number of stables, and several cheap lodging-houses, where, for seven cents, one can find shelter and a place in which to lie down. Half-way down the block a dark lane, with the local name of "Shin-bone Alley," runs around into the Bowery.

He spoke to a poor, ragged boy, who was trying to get asleep on an ash-box. As he was trying to say a word for the Master, a rough voice from a wagon, which was left without its horses by the sidewalk for the night, summoned the boy by the name of "Dutchy." "It's de gang," Dutchy explained, by way of excusing himself, as he promptly responded to the call by running to the wagon. Mr. Gibbud heard the voices of several men inside the vehicle. "Listening closely," he says, "I learned from several allusions that they were planning to rob me. I now began to realize that I had "fallen among thieves," and to debate what was the best course to pursue. My fears strongly suggested flight, but another voice from within kept saying, "He that hath My word let him speak My word faithfully." And was not here a chance to speak the "wonderful words of life" to some who, perhaps, had never heard of Jesus and the great salvation? So, praying for wisdom, I awaited further developments. In a few minutes several of the roughs got out of the wagon and gathered around me. One said, "Boss, give us seven cents till we get a pint er beer ter wash der cobwebs outen our t'roats."

"I saw the time for action had come, so I said, 'See here, boys, I want to give you a bit of advice. When you go to rob anyone, never pick out a missionary, for they are always as poor as a church mouse, and never have anything worth stealing. Now, I'm a missionary, so I can save you the trouble of going through my clothes.' As they stood speechless, I told them the story of the Cross, and how Christ in the agonies of death stopped to save a dying thief, and took him as a companion to paradise, and that if there was salvation for a dying thief there was certainly a chance for living ones, if they would only come to the same Saviour. I urged them to quit their life of sin and to follow Christ. When I turned to go away I said, 'Boys, I want you to remember me. Will you do it?'

"Corkey spoke up and said, 'Wall now, young feller, I've ben round dese corners for de last seven year, an' you're the fust un I ever seed round here preachin' religion. Yer kin bet yer bottom dollar I won't furgit yer phiz.'

"This first meeting led to many other quiet talks, and to much seed-sowing among this and other gangs of thieves; and I trust much good has been done. One of their number, to escape a detective, ran into the mission meeting, and, to use his own words, 'was caught by the Great Detective, and kept from stealing and everything else that is wicked.' Worthy the Lamb to receive all the glory!"

Find Your Place.

Every reasonable man would be glad to occupy the place assigned for and adapted to him; but it is not always easy to find it. Some drop into it, happily, at an early hour, while others stumble about in the search all their lives, waking up, it may be, at the last moment, to find that life has been poorly economized by operating out of its natural and easy grooves. To prevent this, every good man should cast about for the path suited to his own make-up and condition. To reach this end, he should consider what he likes. Your own liking is one grand element of success in whatever you undertake, and your calling will not be in opposition to your permanent tastes and predilections. To like a particular course or calling is a first and important consideration in favor of its adoption. Adaptation is closely connected with your likes and dislikes. Few are adapted to positions, or lines of service, for which they cherish dislikes; the like evinces adaptation. But there is another side to be considered. You must not only find what you think of the place, but also what the place thinks of you. That is, the view of others is to have weight in the making of our selection. Our neighbors not seldom understand our real adaptations bettter than we do ourselves. Not a few persons have found their true sphere by the criticism or appreciation of others. Charles Sumner enjoyed the quiet life of the scholar, and aspired to nothing better than the headship of his *alma mater*; but public appreciation of his deep convictions on the subject of human liberty led him first to the anti-slavery platform, then to the Senate of the United States, where, every one felt, he found his life-work in aiding to guide the "ship of state" through the pitiless storm of civil war and the breakers of reconstruction.

But all this is merely human. You need to look higher, and to find guidance in the spirit and providence of God. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting; for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." The providence of God supplements the teachings of His Spirit and Word. We therein not only hear His voice, we feel the guidance of His hand, conducting our fortunes along strongly-marked grooves from which we can diverge only with some difficulty. A traction engine seems to be hold of us, and will take us safely onward unless the connection be severed. Moses would never have chosen the position of leader to the chosen people; a higher Hand marked out the course and conducted him into it. St. Paul would not have chosen the apostleship to the Gentiles, but Barnabas drew him to Antioch in the nick of time, and Providence opened the path for him, thrusting him into the great harrest-field of the west. So it has ever been. Listen to the voice and hearken for the footsteps of God; you will be sure to find Him marching that way.

Talkers.

BY THE REV. CHARLES SPURGEON.

"Much cry and little wool." So some who are ever talking yield but little sense. They can preach from any text, and everything they say is "gospel." Still we cannot help having our doubts about some of the things they say, remembering as we do that suggestions are of two classes—"wise and otherwise." I heard someone describe a certain Mrs. ——'s manner of speech by the following phrase: "Oh, she can go sixteen to the dozen." Make-weight is very good when you are buying bread and a baker dozen of thirteen is advantageous in purchasing buns; but I am rather doubtful about the profit to be gained in dealing with a woman that gives you four words over the righteous twelve. But all the crumpled horns are not to be found on cows. To hear a man talk at random is as painful as to listen to a woman who is run away with by her tongue. Both are bad. The wise man was right when he wrote, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles," and "He that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." There are some talkatives that will surely wear out their tongues sooner than their teeth, they do chatter at such a rate. It reminds one of Southey's description of "How the water comes down at Lodore:"

"Spouting and frisking,
Turning and twisting,
Around and around;
Collecting, disjecting,
With endless rebound.
Smiting and fighting,
A sight to delight in.
Confounding, astounding,
Dizzying and deafening the ear with its sound,
* * * * * * *
And so never ending, but always descending,
Sounds and motions forever and ever are blending;
All at once, and all is o'er, with a mighty uproar."
(And this is the way that some talk at your door.)

The last line is by another poet (?), but we feel sure that the sentiment is correct, though not very poetical. If all these good people said were worth the hearing we would find no fault, but unfortunately the dilution is thin and common sense is their most uncommon ingredient. If we have anything good to say let us say it, and have done with it by the acceptability and suitability of the word chosen, but to talk for talking's sake is to be deprecated. People take but little notice, save to complain, of the constant ding-dong, ding-dong of the parish bell; its tongue is always sounding and so the tale told is unheeded; but let it be seldom tolled and all ask the meaning of its ringing. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it?" Let us make the prayer, "O Lord, open thou the door of my lips," then shall our mouths show forth His praise.

Rich Toward God.

What is needed now is that all Christians everywhere consecrate their wealth to the service of God. Too many are wasting or hoarding the Lord's money. Too many are consuming it upon their lusts. In the meantime the evangelization of the world is retarded. We cannot plead poverty; this is a false plea. The Chinese are incomparably poorer than we are, and yet they spend $200,000,000 a year in ancestral worship. The people of this country pay a billion dollars a year for drink. There are as many Christian people in America as there are drinking people, and they are immeasurably better off. We spend $58,000,000 a year for finger rings alone. In these last days, when God is opening the doors of all nations and speaking to us as never before to go forward and win these lands from savagery and superstition to civilization and Christianity, we are shamefully hoarding what He has given to us in trust. Myriads of Christian lives need to be reconstructed. There are those who need to be taught that they must economize for Christ's sake. An eminent Christian woman tells how she was taught when a child to save rags, to pick up pins, and to save the old bones. The family dressed plainly and lived plainly that they might give the more. There is no telling what Christendom could do if all would resolve to be rich toward God. —*Christian Standard.*

A lady writes: "I was enabled to remove the corns, root and branch, by the use of Holloway's Corn Cure." Others who have tried it have the same experience.

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— You have not fulfilled every duty unless you have fulfilled that of being pleasant.—*Charles Buxton.*

Mrs. L. Squire, Ontario Steam Dye Works, Toronto, says: "For about 30 years I have doctored for Liver Complaints and Dyspepsia without getting any cure. I then tried Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery, and the benefits I have received from this medicine are such that I cannot withhold this expression of my gratitude. It acts immediately on the liver. As a Dyspepsia remedy I don't think it can be equalled."

— It hurts less to hit the nail on the head than it does to hit it on the finger. —*Boston Globe.*

A Test of Courage.

One of the severest tests of courage is to carry on one's life quietly and faithfully under the cloud of a great uncertainty—something which makes it uncertain in what direction one's activity is hereafter to be put forth. This is not an uncommon experience; but although it happens to many, it is never on that account the easier to bear. Living by faith has always involved a struggle even for the most heroic souls, and most of us learn it by the most painful processes. Nevertheless, if we are to live in any strength and peace, learn it we must, sooner or later. If one broods over an uncertainty, strength is paralyzed and work half done; the man who worries loses the power which comes from concentration and a calm putting forth of his whole force. There is nothing to be gained by this brooding; there is everything to be lost. A strong life is one which commands itself and does not give up the rudder to every wind of circumstance. When the time of uncertainty comes to a strong man, he is not deflected from the thing in hand; if possible, he puts more strength and skill into it; not defying fortune, but accepting Providence by that calm doing of one's work which goes with the consciousness that the honest laborer is worthy of his hire, and that work well done to-day means the opportunity of more work to-morrow. Take your life bravely and strongly; if uncertainties come into it, meet them with quiet courage and good cheer. Above all, keep heart and hand in your work, and trust the future to that Divine Providence which has ordered the falling of every sparrow.—*Christian Union.*

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