

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XIII.—FEBRUARY, 1887.—No. 2.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—HOW CAN THE PULPIT BEST COUNTERACT THE INFLUENCE OF MODERN SKEPTICISM?

NO. I.

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“SKEPTICISM” is a wide term, embracing in its scope all forms of unbelief, philosophical and scientific, moral and religious, critical and practical. And “modern” is no small expression. It includes, at least, the period of the last two centuries, or, if limited still more, our present age. It covers not merely the shallow, coarse, and flippant infidelity of a Voltaire, Paine and Ingersoll, but that deeper, far more dangerous, more imposing academic infidelity of Spinoza and Hume, Hegel and Comte, Huxley, Spenser and Clifford, together with all that the so-called “Higher Criticism” has accomplished in disparagement of the authority of God’s Word as ages have received it. The whole phrase means, in short, the result of the recent “Time-Spirit,” or “Spirit of the age,” the so-called advanced “Culture,” which seeks in our days to do for Christianity what the Reformation of the sixteenth century did for Popery—viz., break its back!

The subject is a comprehensive one. In one word, it invites us to consider how best the minister of Christ, the preacher of the gospel, may meet successfully and “counteract” the various forms of Naturalism, so current in our times. Clearly, the refutation of error, not less than the impartation of truth, falls within the legitimate province of the pulpit. Apologetic and polemic, not less than didactic, are a true homiletic discipline. The “good seed” must be distinguished from the “tares,” the “wheat” from the “chaff,” the “birds of the air” from the “branches of the mustard-tree,” the “leaven” from the “meal.” The great “Teacher sent from God,” the Apostles, the Apologists standing next them in the sub-Apostolic Church, and history, both sacred and profane, have taught us this. The student of the past knows full well that there is not a heresy, now rife in

human mind is not quite so crammed with the world as on other days; the human heart is a little more free to consider the duties which are owed to God and the church. Of this advantage the minister and the church should make the most. The services, moreover, should be so varied as to give sufficient, and no more than sufficient, work to each worker, and also so varied as to minister to the special needs of each individual who comes within the circle of its influence.

But I will not draw this paper to a close without noting that the best method of getting the members of a church to work—a method which makes all the methods of most worth—is for the pastor—

6. To love his church, and to love the work which God has called him and his church to do together. This remark hardly requires elaboration. It is one of those truisms, however, which needs statement. If a minister fails to love his people or his work, he better both resign his pastorate and retire from the profession. He can neither inspire a spirit of work into them, nor draw any product of work from them. But if he loves both them and their common work, he will be able, with wisdom and conversation, to make them as well as himself workmen who need not be ashamed.

V.—THE HOMILETICAL STUDY OF BUNYAN.

NO. II.

BY PROF. J. O. MURRAY, D.D., DEAN OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

IN a former paper on this subject, it was his "Pilgrim's Progress" which was specially considered. While, however, Bunyan's place in literature is chiefly determined by this allegory, it forms but a moiety of his work. His "Holy War," less known, is in some respects an equally interesting subject for homiletical study. And no discussion of Bunyan, as an author to be studied by ministers, would be complete which did not consider him as preacher and author of religious treatises. These outweigh in bulk all his imaginative writings a half-dozen times. Into them he has thrown the greatest part of his intellectual energy and productiveness.

The "Holy War" borrows much from Bunyan's experiences and observations. Bunyan had been himself a soldier. Like Baxter, he was familiar with camp life. Baxter was chaplain in Col. Whalley's regiment. Bunyan, as the best evidence shows, was a private in the garrison at Newport under the command of Sir Samuel Luke. Both were in the Parliamentary army, soldiers of Cromwell. The scenes of war were familiar to both. Mr. Brown in his biography has called attention to the realism in "The Holy War" caught from the actual life of the time. "Mansoul itself," he says, "with its walls, gates, strongholds and sallyport, largely took shape in his mind from the garrison at Newport Pagnall, or the fortifications of the Newarke at Leicester.

The army of Shaddai, with its captains clad in armor, its forces marching, counter-marching, opening to the right and left, . . . all these were reminiscences of Cromwell's army, of the new model and of the military manœuvres in which he himself had taken part under Sir Samuel Luke. So, again, Diabolus new-modelling the corporation, changing mayor, recorder, aldermen and burgesses at pleasure, was simply doing the same thing the king and Lord Ailesbury were doing at Bedford about the time 'The Holy War' was written." More, indeed, than this of suggestion from characters and scenes in that stirring time of English history might be traced. An allegory so written, and of so unquestioned power, could not fail of being rich in homiletical teaching for ministers. And this, because Bunyan has so well analyzed the forces of temptation, and has urged with so much power the perils environing the Christian soul. A preacher has learned a great lesson in dealing with certain themes, such as temptation to evil, when he has learned *how not to be abstract*. This and kindred themes demand concrete treatment and living illustrations. And while the preacher may not adopt Bunyan's line in allegory, yet he will catch suggestions and imports to a mode of exhibiting such truths which will be Bunyan-like. There are scores of texts in the New Testament, like the following: "Fight the good fight of faith," "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith," "I have fought a good fight," "That thou mightest war a good warfare," "Lusts which war against the soul"; and for treating which in sermons the best possible preparation would be a fresh perusal of this grand old allegory, which came glowing hot from the soul of a man to whom this contest with evil was the most real thing in life, and the spirit of whose allegory is contagious.

As a picture of the perils by which Christian souls are environed, the allegory is not less impressive. The latter portion is "occupied with two perils which loomed large to Bunyan's thought as besetting the Christian soul: that of being again seduced from the right by the world's blandishments, and that of being forced from it by the world's persecutors." The latter of these was intensely real in Bunyan's times. He had faced them in all their power. Twelve years' imprisonment in Bedford Jail attested what they had been to him. But for the men of our day this peril no longer exists. If possible, however, the first of these dangers is more imminent and more baleful in our time than his. It has become one of the common phases of pulpit discussion, the absorbing power of worldliness in such a growth of material progress as the present age contains. And preachers do well to study Bunyan's ways of dealing with it. The danger comes upon Mansoul, though Lucifer counsels are that "Mansoul is a market town and a town that delights in commerce." . . . "Let Mansoul be taken up in much business, and let them grow full and rich." . . . "Yea, may we

not by this means so cumber Mansoul with abundance, that they shall be forced to make of their castle a warehouse instead of a garrison fortified against us, and a receptacle for men-of-war?" This was accounted the very masterpiece of Hell. It is worthy of remark, that in the life and death of Mr. Badman, Bunyan has enlarged on the same thought. Mr. Badman's bankruptcy points a sharp moral for some modern bankruptcies, and Bunyan's doctrine of Christian fairness in trade as Mr. Wiseman puts it, is truth for all times. Obviously, Bunyan's conception of the Christian life, as necessarily one of spiritual conflict, is at war with some modern notions of a "Higher Life." But all the more reason for the study of his views. He has gone deeply into the philosophy of the matter. And any preacher who will thoroughly study this allegory will find a skillful treatment of these perils suggested, and many a theme brought up for pulpit discussion. It goes almost without saying, that in "The Holy War," as in the "Pilgrim's Progress," forcible illustrations will be found for pulpit use. Such characters as Mr. Carnal-Security, Mr. Loth-to-Stoop, Mr. Incredulity, Mr. Ill-Pause, Captain Resistance, Captain Credence, Mr. Recorder, Lord Will-be-Will; the gates of the town: Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, Nose-gate and Feel-gate; such scenes as the trial by jury of the more guilty Diabolonians, and the final parting of Emmanuel with Mansoul, and that wonderful valedictory address; all these are a fund of illustrative material which the preacher can draw from at will. The character of the illustrations will differ largely from that of characters and scenes taken out of "The Pilgrim's Progress." But they are not less fitted for pulpit use. In fact, they have one advantage over most found in the more celebrated allegory. They are far less familiar. Many a hearer has from childhood known the wonderful story of the Pilgrim all the way from the Slough of Despond to the Celestial City, and has had for the hero of early life Great-Heart. But to most people, nowadays, the town of Mansoul is less known than the sources of the Nile—Diabolus and his war upon Mansoul far less familiar than the last war England has waged with her foes.

Bunyan's work as a preacher is only less remarkable than his work as an allegorist. "Preaching became the passion, as it had become the work of his life." Some of his expressions are memorable, as showing the intense earnestness of soul with which he "held forth the word of life." He felt "as if an angel was at his back." In his introduction to his "Light for Them that Sit in Darkness: a Discourse of Jesus Christ," he says: "I say, again, receive my doctrine: I beseech thee, in Christ's stead, receive it. I know it to be the way of salvation. I have ventured my own soul thereon with gladness; and if all the souls in the world were mine, as mine own soul is, I would, through God's grace, venture every one of them there. I have not writ at a venture, nor borrowed my doctrine from libraries. I depend upon the

sayings of no man; I find it in the Scriptures of truth, among the true sayings of God."

This extract shows us what was the key to his power as a preacher. His soul was his own. He was fearless. He was intense in his convictions. He had but one aim in his preaching—to convert men. He had but one substance for his sermons—the gospel of Christ. He began, indeed, as something of a controversialist, but soon threw this by, saying "that he came not to meddle with things that were controverted and in dispute amongst the saints, especially things of the lowest nature." He preached occasionally for his friend John Owen, and then had for auditors such people as Lord Charles Fleetwood and Col. Disborough. But his work was mainly among a different class—the same class afterward reached by the Wesleys. His power as a preacher continued to his death. Of his latest ministry, it has been said, that, "when Mr. Bunyan preached in London, if there was but one day's notice given, there would be more people come together to hear him preach than the meeting-house could hold." "I have seen," said his friend Charles Doe, "to hear him preach, by my computation, about twelve hundred at a morning lecture by seven o'clock on a working-day in the dark winter-time. I also computed about three thousand that came to hear him on our Lord's-day at London, at a town's-end meeting-house, so that half were fain to go back again for want of room, and then himself was fain at a back door to be pulled almost over people to get up-stairs to his pulpit."

We have, however, very few of Bunyan's sermons in the exact form in which they were preached. He threw them into the shape of treatises and then published them. His "Jerusalem Sinner Saved," "Light for Them that Sit in Darkness," "A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity," "The Acceptable Sacrifice," "Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ," all were originally sermons, and which he worked over into form for publication. The discourse on the "Greatness of the Soul" remains, however, as he wrote it, in sermon form. All, however, may be studied as homiletical subjects. The indelible stamp of Bunyan as a preacher is to be found in them all. The preacher may learn from their faults. Of these, the chief one is peculiar to the age, in excess of analysis, divisions and subdivisions, till the mind is wearied of the sum in long-division. When the preacher says with the Psalmist, I "may tell all my bones," he may be sure he has gone too far in his analysis. This may not have been deemed a fault in Bunyan's time, though, on all known laws of mind, a greater effect would be produced by a method less painfully analytic. But the merits of these discourses entitle them to the preacher's study.

1. Their admirable diction. The short, plain Saxon speech, words which everybody knew the meaning of, form the basis of their power as pulpit discourses. It is worth a great deal to a minister to have

such a vocabulary. The failure of some preachers might be sought here. They have never learned to use the speech of common folk. "Fine writing" is out of place in sermons. Now, a true vocabulary for the preacher could not be better gained than by a study of Bunyan's discourses. He is a true model here.

2. Bunyan's discourses reveal that element in public-speaking which is so effective—the combination of the conversational method with the more oratorical. He is either, by turns, as will suit his purpose. Sometimes he does this by question and answer, sometimes by raising objections, and meeting them. We have no space to quote illustrations; but if any one will turn to the *Second Use* in his sermon on the "Greatness of the Soul," he will see an admirable specimen of the conversational manner followed quickly by what is more oratorical.

3. Bunyan's sermons are valuable for the knowledge they show in dealing with the sinful heart. His insight into its shifts and disguises is marvellous. Nothing escapes his scrutiny. He flings open the shutters and lets in the light of day upon all the dark and sinister evasions of an impenitent soul. It is a sort of morbid anatomy, but no man can come to "close grips" with an audience who has not something of this gift. In this respect no preacher excels Bunyan. He drives the sinful man from one stronghold of excuse to another till at last surrender is all that the soul can do. Such sermons as that on the "Pharisee and the Publican," "Come and Welcome," are admirable specimens of this.

4. It is another marked excellence of these sermons that they combine in the true gospel proportions the motive of fear with that of love. Here extremes are easy. A preacher's temperament will sometimes determine this wrongly. He will be all ablaze with warnings, or all possessed with appeals. It is clear to all students of the Bible, that while both fear and love are used as motives in the inspired Word, they are blended in a gospel proportion. Bunyan has hit this well, and a study of his sermons may correct evil tendencies in some, and wisely guide in the case of others.

It will be very easy to put aside such discourses as "old-fashioned," "not suited to this age," and all that. No one would for a moment advise the reproduction of such discourses, save in their spirit, and something, perhaps, of their form. But, after all, no preacher can afford to neglect the study of the great masters in the art of preaching. There is too little of such study. Great poets, great artists, great orators, of other days, are studied by modern poets, artists, and orators. And the modern preacher will not be less modern, he will only be the more fully furnished, if he shall give to the study of the great preachers of past ages a modicum of time and care.

The study of Bunyan, in whatever department of work we take him, has an influence on the heart, which has the highest value for minis-

ters. Much of his reading may of necessity be distracting, some of it disquieting. It is good to turn over these quaint pages of an author, his allegories, or his sermons, or his treatises, or even his poetry, for which Mr. Froude has a very kind word, especially for his *Book of Ruth* and the *History of Joseph*, done into blank verse. Dr. Johnson said the man was little to be envied whose piety would not grow warmer amid the ruins of Iona. Little is that minister to be envied who does not enjoy wandering with Christian or Great-Heart, fighting with Captain Credence or Captain Conviction, who cannot find an uncommon delight in the pleading fervors of his discourses. They do warm the heart. We live in an atmosphere of strong, deep, beautiful conviction. We frequent the society of no half-heated souls. It braces us for struggles, and shames all our haggard, halting steps. Well were it for our ministry if the pages of such men as Charnock and Owen and Baxter and Bunyan were more familiar.

VI.—THE CHURCH IN THE CATACOMBS.

BY REV. HORACE C. STANTON, PH.D., ALBANY, N. Y.

It was Divine providence which ordered that the most striking monuments of the early Christians at Rome should be buried deep under the Seven Hills. Had they been above the surface of the earth they would long ago have disappeared. But hidden in the dry, soft stone, on which the Eternal City stands, they still survive to touch the heart of Christendom, and give their imperishable testimony to the faith of the Martyr Church. The Catacombs are not in the labyrinths of now abandoned pits, once yielding the sand or pozzolana, which, mixed with lime, made the indestructible Roman cement. And rarely are they cut in solid rock. Though a few quarries, believed to have been dug by men who lived before Romulus and Remus, contain some of the earliest interments, even those of persons who may have listened to the voices of the apostles. There is the date of burial of one man who died less than forty years after the Crucifixion. The great majority of the Catacombs are cut in the clayey tufa. They are not earlier than the second century, and the custom of subterranean sepulture ceased when Rome was sacked by Alaric in 410.

Said St. Jerome, fifteen centuries ago: "My schoolfellows and I used on Sundays to make the circuit of the sepulchres of the apostles and martyrs. Many a time did we go down into the Catacombs. On either hand, as you enter, the bodies of the dead appear in the walls. Only occasionally is light let in to mitigate the horror of the darkness. You recall the words of Virgil,

"The gloom and silence fill all minds with awe."

With exactly such impressions, through the Church of St. Callistus, one enters now this city of the dead. The dry air smells of earth and