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I.—LITERARY.

REPLY TO BISHOP SPALDING ON CATHOLICISM
AND APAISM.

Another periodical ground-swell of public feeling against the Catholic Church is on the rise. It has happened before in this country; it has happened in other countries—not only in those which are recognized as Protestant, but in those which are recognized as Catholic. It has happened in Mexico; it has happened in France; it has happened in Italy; it has happened in Germany; it has happened in England. A great English statesman in a once celebrated pamphlet called out by the Vatican Council said*: “To quiet-minded Roman Catholics, it must be a subject of infinite annoyance, that their religion is, on this ground more than any other, the subject of criticism; more than any other, the occasion of conflicts with the State and of civil disquietude.” “All other Christian bodies are content with freedom in their own religious domain. Orientals, Lutherans, Calvinists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Non-Conformists, one and all, in the present day, contentedly and cheerfully accept the benefits of civil order; never pretend that the State is not its own master; master no religious claims to temporal possessions or advantages; and consequently never are in perilous collision with the State. Nay, more, even so I believe it is with the mass of Roman Catholics individually. But not so with the leaders of their church, or with those who take pride in following the leaders.” “The

*Gladstone on the Vatican Decrees, pp. 9-10-11.

WHAT TO PREACH.

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Preaching is the crowning function of the ministry. "Go preach," is the way the commission runs, and to this all else is subsidiary. The minister is God's ambassador, herald, messenger; and nothing that concerns preaching can be unimportant to him. "Cry," says the voice in Isaiah's vision, and promptly there comes the answering question: "What shall I cry?" In like manner the very first question that confronts one called of God is: "What shall I preach?"

The general answer to this question is of course obvious; but vague, and even erroneous ideas upon this most important and practical question are very prevalent.

We will attempt to give a three-fold answer, based upon the clear statements of Scripture.

1st. *Preach the Word.* "Preach the preaching that I bid thee," was Jehovah's admonition to Jonah when he sent him to Nineveh the second time; leaving absolutely nothing to his own discretion as to what he should say. "Preach the Word," was the solemn injunction laid upon the youthful Timothy by the great Apostle to the Gentiles. By "the Word" the Apostle meant God's will as revealed in the Scriptures, supplemented by his own teachings. As for us, we are limited to the written Word, since the same Apostle has committed those teachings to writing. The Bible is God's message to a lost world, which we are commissioned to deliver, and we are not at liberty to take from, or add to it, one iota. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee" is God's message to us, as well as to Jonah. God has revealed himself in his works, as well as in his Word, and the one revelation is just as true and trustworthy as the other; but with the former we have no concern as heralds. This principle is indeed a far-reaching one. It excludes from our preaching the enforcement of morality as such; the teachings of science, however true; the speculations of Philosophy, however beautiful; the dictates of the reason, however useful; the intuitions of the mind, however clear; the supposed revelations of the spirit, however convincing and important they may seem to us.

Coming as messengers sent from God, implicit faith and unhesitating obedience is required on the part of the hearer. He is bidden at the peril of his soul to hear, and it behooves the messenger to have a "thus saith the Lord," for every truth to be received, and for every command to be obeyed. The temptation to widen the scope of one's ministry, and to use the high vantage ground of the pulpit for the inculcation of truth, other than that contained in the Word, is one not to be despised. How hard it is to give our time and strength to the ministry of the Word when so many burning questions arise—questions of gravest moment! How hard it is where one has deep convictions, to refrain from taking advantage of his high position to impress those convictions on others! As a man he has full liberty to speak on all other matters as God gives him opportunity, but as a preacher he is rigorously confined to this God-given message. Let him preach only the Word!

This injunction requires us to preach the Word without taking therefrom. Many deem it their duty to proclaim certain parts of the Word, but sedulously avoid other clearly revealed teachings, deeming them unnecessary, hurtful, or disagreeable to their hearers. The right to reject any part of the message implies the right to reject the whole; and he is no longer a messenger, but one who speaks in his own name and by virtue of his own authority. Paul reminded the Ephesian church that he had "kept back nothing that was profitable" unto them, and had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God.

Again, the Word must be set forth in due proportion. Those things must be dwelt upon which God dwells upon, and those passed over lightly that he passes over lightly. Look through an uneven pane of glass and familiar objects are distorted almost beyond recognition by the unequal refraction; and in like manner the Word is distorted grossly by magnifying the unimportant, and passing over that which is written on every page. A half-truth is often more dangerous than an open falsehood, and many are the victims of a one-sided gospel. It matters little which side it is that is presented; if it be but one side, it can but be productive of evil. In view of this, how grave a mistake it is for one to run before he has any tidings ready; to begin to preach before, by a careful and earnest study

of the Word, he has obtained some adequate conception of the message he is to deliver, and the relation of its several parts. It not unfrequently happens that one has himself a proper conception of the message, and yet produces a wrong impression on the mind of the hearer by a misplaced emphasis. Let the average minister tabulate his sermons, noting the subjects treated, and he will most likely find that not only have whole tracts of Scripture been left untouched, but important subjects omitted or touched but lightly, while scores and scores of sermons have been devoted to some favorite topic. A case comes to mind of a pastor who preached to a plain and unlettered people a series of eight sermons on "the seven seals" of the Book of Revelation. Perhaps eight sermons were necessary for the elucidation of his subject, and we do not object to the discussion of such a subject, but we do assert that in such a case a still longer series should be devoted to a passage like John 3:3 or 3:16. Like some grand portrait, no line of which can be altered without marring its symmetry and beauty, we cannot improve upon the proportion observed in the Word, and again we say: Preach the Word.

Again, we are to preach not the substance of the Word merely, or the truths contained in it, but the Word itself. Wood may be ground into pulp, and this in turn may be moulded into an artificial product, which, it is claimed, is in many respects superior to the natural wood. The substance is there indeed, but the structure of the wood is gone. It has no grain. It has no cleavage; nothing to tell of the life that once built it up cell by cell. So this Word is sometimes ground up into an unrecognizable pulp, and then moulded into a system of theology, and this is preached instead of the living Word. It is indeed true, and beautiful, and logical: but alas, it is an artificial product. We miss the grain of the Word, reminding us of growth, and of an indwelling life. Systems of theology are indeed indispensable, but preach the Word.

2d. *Preach Christ.* "But we preach Christ and Him crucified," is the explicit assertion of Paul, and the same truth is reiterated under varying forms of expression. The great end of the written Word is to reveal the Living Word. One is the gem, and the other is the containing casket; one is "the apple of gold," and the other is the "picture of silver" in which it is set. The frame may be studded with jewels, but it exists only for the picture inclosed.

The story of creation, grand and striking though it be, would never have been recorded but for the fact that the universe was the handiwork of the Eternal Son, and afforded a theatre for the grander work of redemption. The fall, too, finds a place here as affording a fitting and necessary back ground for the story of redeeming love. But for this Christ, there would have been no word of promise to the patriarchs of old; no law given on Sinai amid smoke and tempest, and sound of trumpet; no Jewish church with its gorgeous ritual; no prophetic voice inspiring hope or denouncing vengeance; no sweet singer of Israel, with harp attuned by the Spirit of God, breathing out inspired words that shall linger on our lips until we take up the new song. Christ is the very soul and spirit of the Word, and to preach the Word aright is to preach Christ. "But we preach Christ"—not a system of doctrines merely, but above all a *person* in whom those doctrines all centre; and hence, whatever of truth we may find in the Word, we should seek to let its light fall upon his features, that all men may see him.

This oneness of aim will not produce monotony in preaching, but the very reverse. As no two persons ever see the same rainbow, so no two of the Evangelists give the same picture of Jesus, and indeed, their own impressions of him varied with each changing scene in that wonderful drama which was enacted before their eyes. So, as we preach we can give an unlimited number of views of him, each differing from the others, and each serving to throw light upon his character and work. We can present him, now as a teacher sent from God, and now as an atoning priest; as the fellow of Jehovah, and as the sinner's friend; as weeping at the grave of Lazarus, and as bursting the bars of death, and sitting at the right hand of the majesty on high.

In short, it is not our mission to proclaim truths, however important or useful they may be, but to hold up the living Christ to a dying world. As the artist is not content with merely placing upon the canvas a given number of strokes, but so arranges them as to produce the desired effect, so must Christ be made to appear, or our work is a failure. Draw your back-ground if you will, and shade as you please, but let the portrait be unmistakable! Leave your hearers in doubt, if need be, as to the origin and destiny of the earth; as to the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews; as to the identity of Melchizedek, &c., but let there be no indistinctness about

the great central figure of the portrait. Let him stand forth as Prophet, Priest and King, the Saviour and Redeemer of all who trust in him!

If we want a likeness and not a work of art simply, we will lay far more stress upon the correctness of the outlines than upon the grace of the finishing touches. We will not care so much for the fold of the garment, if so be that the favor is unmistakable. So, let the preacher get a clear and vivid conception of Christ, and then let him grave most deeply those characteristic lines. Let him imitate the great Apostle to the Gentiles, who characteristically says: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you *the gospel* . . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures."

3d. *Preach Self.* Paul says: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Evidently we are not to preach ourselves in the same sense as we are to preach Christ, namely, as Lord; but still there is a most important sense in which we are to preach ourselves; as the messengers of Christ; and hence he adds in the next verse, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The glorious light that came to these Corinthians had not been a direct and immediate revelation to them from Heaven, but it had first shined in the heart of the Apostle, and had come to them through him, so that it was "the gospel according to Paul." The treasure had been conveyed to them in an earthen vessel, not deriving any virtue therefrom, or partaking in the slightest degree of any impurity therefrom, and yet receiving its shape and form from the containing vessel.

It must be borne in mind that while we are messengers, entrusted with a message, the same in all ages and under all circumstances, sharp, clear-cut and unalterable even in its minutiae, yet are we *witnesses*, and each must tell his own story and in his own way. As John expresses it: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and own hands have handled of the Word of Life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness."

God might have blazoned his gospel upon the sky, so that every soul under heaven might read the way of life in living letters, but that would have been a different thing from preaching. He might have written it with his own finger in a book as he wrote the law upon tables of stone, and then placed that word in the hands of each individual, but still it would not have been preaching. He might have commissioned men to go forth and proclaim with the living voice a set form of words, but even that would not have been preaching. The personal element in preaching is an essential one. It is not simply the promulgation of truth, but it is the personal testimony of the living witness to the truth as it is in Jesus.

There is a striking and instructive analogy between the four gospels as recorded, and the preaching of the ministry. Each of the four evangelists had substantially the same facts before him. Each was infallibly guided by the same unerring spirit, and yet we have a gospel according to Matthew, Mark, &c., four distinct narratives.

How clearly the individuality of each writer appears! Here are four independent witnesses, each telling his own story, and testifying to that which he had seen and heard.

It is God's unchangeable message which they bring; it is unalterable truth which they speak, and yet it is as *witnesses* that they speak, and it is *testimony* they bring us. We have the same Christ to preach, the very same message to deliver; but like them we must tell the story for ourselves. We cannot content ourselves with repeating their words, however well-chosen they may be, even though inspired; nor can we repeat what some other messenger has said. We are witnesses, and must preach ourselves. In an important sense we cannot preach the gospel according to Mark or Luke, but must preach the gospel according to self, i. e. as apprehended and experienced by us. This gives an impressive view of the responsibility resting upon the preacher of the Word. A false or incompetent witness may testify to the truth; the truth thus uttered is truth still, and loses none of its value by reason of the character of the witness, but such testimony is worthless, being judged by the character of the witness. In like manner, the preaching of the ignorant or vicious must be a failure; not that the Word as thus preached has no effect, for the opposite is often true, but the *testimony* as such is worthless. It is not "preaching" in the true sense of the

term and often does incalculable harm. The Word must be **rightly divided**, and in this the personality of the preacher **inevitably** appears.

Again, because of this personal element in preaching, the preacher determines, in a large measure, the type of **religion** to be found in those saved by his ministry. Paul **writes** to the Corinthians: "Ye are manifestly declared to **be the** epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with **ink**, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of **stone**, but in fleshly tables of the heart;" and we may be sure **that they** were Pauline epistles, bearing the impress of the **great** Apostle, as surely as do his epistles recorded in the **Word**.

Again he writes to them: "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in **Christ Jesus** I have begotten you through the gospel;" and **again** he addresses the Galatians as "his little children of whom **he travailed** in birth again, until Christ was formed within **them**." Just as surely as the type of the parent descends to his **progeny**, so is the type of the preacher reproduced in his **spiritual children**, and the piety of the church but reflects the piety **and course** creative of the ministry.

We must preach ourselves; from this there is no escape. **Nor is** escape desirable; but let it be a renewed self that we **preach**; a sanctified self; a consecrated self; a self in **thorough** sympathy with the gospel on the one hand, and with our **fellow-men** on the other; a self whose heart throbs in unison **with that** of the Master. Then will we be preachers indeed; **vessels** of honor, made meet for the Master's use.

