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Preachers' Pages.

HOMILETICAL HINTS AND OUTLINES.

[Contributed by the Rev. S. R. CAMBIE, B.D., Rector of Otley, Ipswich.]

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

Text : " The Father of lights with whom is no-variableness." —*Jas. i. 17* (Epistle).

The Epistle brings before us the subject of the Divine Fatherhood. It is the notion of the Father as the Giver upon which St. James dwells,—every perfect boon comes from Him to Whom we are closely related and Who is eternally the same. The expression " Father of lights " suggests those that follow, which refer to the movements of the heavenly bodies. " Shadows of turning " : shadow that is caused by turning.

I. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD. WHAT IS IMPLIED. That He is the Father of men—(a) *By virtue of Creation*. With all His creatures He deals with strict impartiality, making His sun to shine on the evil and on the good. " The eyes of all wait upon Him and He giveth them their meat in due season." (b) *By virtue of Redemption*. " In accordance with His will He made us His children through the message of the truth " (chap. i. 18, Weymouth). This term Father, expressive of human relationship, is used as a concession to our finite intelligence. From it we understand—(1) *That we owe life itself to Almighty God*. Men have tried to find in nature some explanation of life. Protoplasm is one attempted explanation. But " the facts of nature, and the necessities of thought compel us to entertain the conception of an absolute beginning of organic life, when as yet there were no parent forms to breed and multiply " (the late Duke of Argyll in *Organic Evolution*). (2) *That the maintenance of life, too, depends upon the ceaseless care of the First Cause*. He would indeed be a sorry Creator who failed to provide for the creatures whom He had called into existence. One of the first duties of a parent is to provide for his offspring. (3) *That the Creator is responsible for those educative and corrective laws by which human society is guided*. It is recognized as the business of an earthly father to keep his

children in order and, like Abraham, "to command his household." Almighty God, without interfering with that liberty which we call "free will," has given men enactments positive and negative in character.

II. CONSIDER THE SUGGESTION OF SONSHIP AND ALL THAT IT IMPLIES. Both thoughts are evidently and naturally in the mind of the writer (ver. 18). From the thought of parentage and its responsibilities we turn to that of sonship. This involves—(a) *The Recognition which is born of experience.* The infant soon learns to distinguish its parents from others around. Its experience enables it to determine to whom it belongs and to whom it may look for what it requires. (b) *The Reverence which is born of respect.* The son who is cursed with a bad father (and can any curse be greater?) must find it difficult to develop any reverence for one whom he cannot respect. Indeed it is difficult to see how a man can love what he cannot respect. (c) *The Communion which is born of confidence.* That intercourse, that perfect communion that ought to exist between father and son, springs from mutual confidence. (d) *The Obedience which is born of faith.* It is impossible for the child always to walk by sight. He has to be content to walk by faith in a superior wisdom and larger knowledge.

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to TRUST and OBEY."

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

Text: "Ask and ye shall receive."—*John* xvi. 24.

This is Rogation Sunday and the subject before us is prayer. In the Gospel Jesus gives His disciples some simple instructions on the prayer-life. This suggests for our study—

I. SOME ASPECTS OF THE PRAYER-LIFE. (a) *It must be based upon a sense of the being and beneficence of Almighty God.* "He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (*Heb.* xi. 6). (b) *There must underlie the outward expression and inner and sincere purpose of amendment of life.* "We know that God heareth not sinners." By this we understand it would be neither "wise or kind on His part so to intervene in the lives of those who are clinging to sin and worldliness, by granting them temporal mercies in answer to prayer . . . as to make them more content with their godless-

ness and perversity" (Canon Hay Aitken in *The Divine Ordinance of Prayer*). (c) *It must be according to the will of God.* Therefore we qualify our petitions with the words, "as may be most expedient for us," or their equivalent. (d) *It must not be concerned entirely with personal matters, but must have regard to the needs of others.* Intercessory prayer is distinctly enjoined. (e) *Nor should it be entirely a secret exercise.* Public prayer witnesses to the social side of our religion. "Common Prayer" is a public acknowledgment of God as well as a means of Grace. It is a duty inculcated throughout Scripture. (For fuller treatment of the subject see *The Divine Ordinance of Prayer*. Aitken.)

II. SOME EXAMPLES OF THE PRAYER-LIFE. Only a few are possible here. (a) *Our Blessed Lord.* If He was Divine why should He pray? Prayer does not necessarily spring from a sense of need. It may be *telling* rather than *asking*,—communion with God, in the happy confidence of Sonship. Some, however, of our Lord's prayers were offered in the consciousness of need (Heb. v. 7), and they evidence the reality of His humanity and the dependence upon God in which it involved Him. (See Stalker's *Imago Christi*, chap. vii.) (b) *St. Paul.* In almost every letter the Apostle reminds his readers of the frequency and urgency of his prayers, and he urges upon them the duty of constant and united prayer (Rom. xv. 30-1; 2 Cor. i. 9-11; Eph. vi. 18-20; Phil. i. 19; Col. iv. 2-4, etc.). (c) *Epaphras.* "Always labouring fervently for you in prayer" (Col. iv. 12). He had fulfilled his ministry at Colossæ with faithfulness (Col. i. 7), but there is still a service he can render, though absent,—he can pray for them. Observe the burden of his prayer: (1) *That they may "stand."* The trumpet calls them to the battle against falsehood and wrong, and he wants them like good soldiers to face the foe. (2) *That they may be "perfect."* Not walking in any sin of which they are conscious. (3) *"Fully assured"* (R.V.). Established in the truth of the Gospel, not wandering off into those errors which had already appeared in the Colossian Church.

Sunday after Ascension Day.

Text: "While He blessed them, he was parted from them."—*Luke xxiv. 51.*

Our Saviour prayed—"And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before

the world was." On the first Ascension Day that prayer was answered. "God hath highly exalted Him." A pledge, too, was given us.

"Mighty Lord, in Thy Ascension
We by faith behold *our own!*"

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ASCENSION REMIND US OF THE PRESENT WORK OF CHRIST. In heaven—

"He still pursues His mighty plan,—
The Saviour and the friend of man."

It has been observed that there was only one work our Lord left incomplete. He never finished the blessing—"while He blessed them He was parted from them." He ascended up "far above all things" that He might succour and defend us on earth. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). Thus we see that "the life of the world to come" is not a state of inactivity. "My Father worketh hitherto (up till now) and I work" (John v. 17). There are ministries in heaven which we shall exercise, for there we are told "His servants shall serve Him!" (Rev. xxii. 3.)

II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ASCENSION REMIND US OF THE SECOND ADVENT. "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go" (Acts i. 11). This promise cannot possibly have been fulfilled either by Pentecost or by the fall of Jerusalem, as some would have us believe.

"Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28).

"Then we shall with Thee remain
Partners of Thy endless reign,
Then Thy face unclouded see,
Find our heaven of heavens in Thee."

Whit Sunday.

Text: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—*Rom.* viii. 14.

There is a sense, no doubt, in which the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of all men. The knowledge of sin, the capacity for discriminating between right and wrong, is due to the convicting power of the Holy Ghost, even in them that are unregenerate. But the text indicates that there is a distinct company composed of those who are consciously and constantly under the influence of the third person of the ever blessed and glorious Trinity. The previous verse (13) makes it clear that this is the result of their own volition. The power

to become the sons of God has ever been granted to those who receive Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. They are recognized and rewarded by special guidance. Let us take into consideration—

I. THE GUIDE. See who He is. (1) *One from all eternity in the Godhead.* (See John xv. 26, etc.; Heb. ix. 14; Ps. cxxxix. 7.) (2) *Partaker of the essential characteristics of God.* (a) The Spirit of POWER (Matt. xii. 28; Rom. i. 4). (b) The Spirit of PURITY (Gal. v. 16-18). (c) The Spirit of LOVE (Rom. xv. 30; cf. Gal. v. 22). (For outline treatment of this subject see Macgregor's *Things of the Spirit.* For something fuller Dr. Griffith Thomas' *Holy Spirit of God.*)

II. THE NATURE OF THE GUIDANCE. He gives—(a) Capacity for work and witness (1 Cor. xii. 1-13). (b) He indicates the sphere of service (Acts. xiii. 1-4; Acts xx. 28). (c) He assists us in appointed undertaking (Acts i. 8; ii. 4; Heb. ii. 3-4). (d) He inspires our prayers (Rom. viii. 15, 26, 27; Eph. vi. 18). (e) He throws light on the interpretation of Scripture. (For stimulating thought and suggestive Homiletics see Canon Body's *Guided Life.*)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

[Contributed by the Rev. J. W. W. MOERAN.]

National
Character: Its
Defences.

The city of Paris is the heart of the French Empire. Its protection against the attacks of an enemy has always been the care of the French General Staff. But so obsessed were they with the idea that the Germans would come from the east, that they have girdled that side with a triple cordon of forts, leaving the western side with next-to-nothing in the way of defence. This error proved almost fatal when the first German rush in September, 1914, nearly smashed through the allied armies to the north-west of the city. At that time "thousands of men were digging trenches in the roads and fields with frantic haste, and throwing up earth-works on the banks of the Seine. . . . The forts of Paris on the western side would not have held out for half a day against the German guns. All that feverish activity of trench work was but a pitiable exhibition of an unprepared defence. The enemy would have swept over them like a rolling tide." ¹ The glory of a nation is the character of its people. That citadel needs protection against attack from its spiritual foes.

¹ *The Soul of the War*, by Philip Gibbs, pp. 99 and 104.

But you may build strong lines of forts on the one side whilst leaving the other side exposed. For instance, you may do all that is possible on the educational side, by enabling the rising generation to baffle foreign competition in commerce, in science, in chemistry. And you may to a large extent safeguard the moral side of human nature by purifying the stage, banning the unwholesome novel, forbidding all pictures suggestive of evil in the cinema show. But these things are not enough. They will fail in the end, unless you also defend that side of the character which is open to the assaults of unbelief. If that side is left exposed, a day will come when the enemy of souls will make his strong endeavour to break through; and then the frantic efforts made in bewilderment and fear will not avail to stem the tide of religious doubt and unbelief. English statesmen and patriots, remember this. Build on the spiritual side as well as on the moral and material. Girdle the national character with the everlasting principles of faith in God and obedience to the laws of His Righteousness, until we can say with Israel of old, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever."¹

* * * * *

"The only thing which saves the world is the little **Few or Many?** handful of disinterested men in it." These words were spoken by President Wilson in a speech he made at the National Press Club in Washington in the Spring of 1916. He was outlining the position America might be called on to take in the reinstatement of European peace when the war is over. The words themselves have always been true. They were so in a very special way when our Lord commissioned His Apostles to preach the Gospel in all the world. And ever since then, when the Church grew in power and wealth and numbers, it has been the few and not the many who have done the real work of evangelizing the world. The bulk of nominal Christians have always been too much entangled by the interests and pleasures of the world to think of saving it. But is this going to be so always? Must we acquiesce contentedly in the old formula about the Lord's people being only "a small remnant on the earth"? Surely that is not the Lord's will and purpose. It is said of Napoleon that he once exclaimed, "Men are

¹ Psalm cxxv. 2.

scarce ; there are twenty millions of people in Italy, but I have only met two men." If he were alive to-day and could visit the Italian army on the Tyrolean front, he would find thousands. The spirit of Patriotism has been awakened in that fair land and has drawn her sons out of their centuries of slumber. The love of Christ is needed to-day—and oh ! how great is the need—to permeate the whole Church with its sacred fire. That would arouse men everywhere, as nothing else can, from their spiritual lethargy ; and soon " the little handful of disinterested " souls would become a mighty and triumphant host.

* * * * *

" SINN FEIN " was the title adopted by that **Selfishness.** extreme political party in Ireland whose machinations came to a head in the rebellion of Easter 1916. The meaning of " Sinn Fein " is " Ourselves alone." Its adherents, no doubt, claimed that self-reliance was their ideal and was therefore the idea which lay at the root of the movement and was expressed in the Irish words " Sinn Fein." None the less do the words mean " ourselves alone " in the sense of utter, heartless, cruel selfishness. The Sinn Feiners thought of no one but themselves. They disowned all allegiance to the British Crown. They repudiated the authority of John Redmond as the leader of Irish Nationalists working on constitutional lines. Their selfish disregard of the rights and sentiments of their compatriots led to their intrigues with the enemies of their country and to the barbarous murder of soldiers, police and civilians. All this was the logical sequence and outcome of an unrestricted course of political selfishness. There are plenty of people in private as well as political life whose motto—written and unspoken, but none the less the spring of their actions—is " Ourselves alone." And there is nothing in the end so treacherous or cruel as unbridled selfishness. It makes a man disregard the feelings and interests of others. It is the mainspring of vice and dishonesty and murder. There are very few people in the world who are altogether free from selfishness. It is a taint of our human nature, from which we can be cleansed only by the pure waters of Divine Grace. Our Lord has given us this golden rule, " Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." That is the healthiest antidote to the poisonous doctrine of " Ourselves alone."