

LAY-PREACHING.¹

WHEN a work is exciting the pious enthusiasm of good men it is an invidious task to cry, "*Cave.*" But it may, none the less, be a necessary and imperative duty to utter that *caveat*. No friend of God and man, who witnesses efforts which really result in rescuing sinners from perdition, can fail to approve of that effect, however he may mistrust the mode; and if he permits any pride of class or spirit of party to sway him into condemnation of the former, he is not only weak, but criminal. We may concede, likewise, that it will be very difficult for the dissentient from the new mode so to utter his *caveat* against it as not to appear opposed to the result, in which all good men should concur. Yet the friends of truth may be shut up to attempt that nice distinction. Ministers of the gospel should, of all men, be most humble, and therefore they should be the first to remember that their regular membership in the ecclesiastical *guild* will by no means ensure to them a monopoly of all the skill for its functions. The regular medical faculty has doubtless learned some things from classes whom it stigmatized as quacks. The Thompsonian taught them some things about caloric as a remedial agent, and the homœopathists have made them more sparing of their drugs. The ministry should be discreet, and be taught by such instances not to be too proud to learn from humble laymen the ways of proclaiming God's truth more effectively, if there is anything to be learned from them. The history of Eldad and Medad (Num. xi. 27-30) has not seldom been cited against the clergy, and the modesty of Moses com-

¹ This article appeared in *The Southern Presbyterian Review* for April, 1876, reviewing: 1, *Minutes of Assembly, Southern Presbyterian Church*; 1869. 2, *Narrative of the Awakening*; London: James Nisbet & Co. Pp. 384; large octavo. 3, *The American Evangelists*. By Dr. John Hall and George H. Stuart, Esq. Dodd & Mead. Pp. 455; 12mo. 4, *Addresses and Lectures, with Narrative of Labors of Messrs. Moody and Sankey*. A. D. F. Randolph. Pp. 222; 8vo. 5, *The Work of God in Great Britain*. By Rufus W. Clark, D. D. Harper & Bros. Pp. 371. 6, *Sacred Songs and Solos Sung by Ira D. Sankey*. London: Morgan & Scott. (With Music.)

mended, when he replied: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets." Although ministers might fairly except to this instance that the two new prophets in the camp of Israel presented, in their inspired *afflatus*, a divine warrant which would, in any age of the church, if it were really manifested, supersede the necessity of regular appointment, but which none in our age can claim either in or out of the ministry; yet they may well regard it as always seemly for them to pay a modest heed to this instance.

Whatever, then, can be learned from eminent lay-preachers, of devotion, simplicity of language and aim, or skill in winning souls, all this the ministry should meekly and thankfully learn. We may note among these timely lessons the following: The success of Mr. Moody in enlisting the popular attention to the gospel should be an impressive illustration of some homiletical truths which our church anxiously seeks to impress on her young ministers, such as these: that preaching to the people should usually be in popular, as opposed to theological, structure; that it is the fundamental truths of the revealed gospel-theology which, above all human speculations and niceties, command the heart of man.¹ This example reminds us, also, that the profane classes of men will never be brought under gospel influences by building churches and inviting them to come to the minister; the minister must go after them. The practical sense of Mr. Moody has also shown him the importance of finding some way by which transient impressions made in public may be promptly followed up with personal inculcation. He has also given us another illustration of that which can never be too often impressed on those who aim to do good—the power of sympathy and sincerity over depraved hearts.

We shall now claim at the hands of our readers credit for our candor in declaring that all assaults upon Mr. Moody's purity of motive and Christian character are as far as possible from our thoughts. In dissenting from a part of his example, we only assert the well known fact, that good men have often made mistakes, which, though not designed, have been hurtful. It seems almost customary now to assert that the unquestionable divine blessing which is claimed to attend the labors of the lay-evangel-

¹ See *Lectures on Sacred Rhetoric*, by R. L. Dabney, Lectures II., VII., XVIII., XX.

ists is God's sanction of their method. This supposed argument has been lately heard from the most respectable as well as the most inconsiderate sources. Plausible as it appears to the pious, it is transparently erroneous. This is patent from a simple question: has not God often blessed the pious efforts of misguided men, not for the sake of, but in spite of, their peculiar errors? The monk Augustine went to Canterbury among the Pagan Saxons, preaching the gospel indeed, but with especial purpose to assert among them the papal supremacy. Did not God largely employ his preaching to Christianize those barbarians? Doubtless. But are we ready to concede that God thereby set the seal of his approval upon the missionary's Romanizing principles? This was, indeed, the stupid and superstitious inference of Augustine; it is not that of any Protestant. Again: John Wesley urged his great evangelistic movement in the especial interest of an Arminian theology and an unscriptural church-government. No Presbyterian grants that the unquestionable success of him and his missionaries in winning souls is God's endorsement of his erroneous principles. A search through our church histories might multiply these instances a hundred-fold.

With these preparatory truths, we wish to remind our readers of a few admitted Scripture facts. Christ, the Head of the church, has himself ordained the mode in which he wills his gospel shall be preached to mankind. He has instituted in the world a visible church, and appointed it to be "the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) He has given it, at least in outline, its form, laws and officers, and has enjoined upon it the species of didactic and disciplinary functions it is to perform. He has taught this church that her public organic functions are all to be performed through these officers, whose names and places he has himself assigned. When he was pleased to ordain that "by the foolishness of preaching" those who believe are saved, he provided expressly how the preachers were to be selected and appointed. The qualifications of the men he bestows by the gifts of his providence and grace. The brotherhood recognize the possession of these qualifications by certain *criteria*, which he has caused to be laid down in his word. The existing elders of the church are clothed with the function of trying the qualifications of the new heralds, and, on verifying the presence of those qualities, of clothing them with the office-

power of the ministerial elder. It was thus the highest evangelists were appointed. (Acts xvi. 1-3; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6.) Thus the ordinary ministers of the church are to be perpetuated. (2 Tim. ii. 2.) We thus see that Christ has not left anything to human invention, as to the instrumentality for preaching his gospel; that matter is distinctly settled. It should be enough for the humble Christian that thus Christ has ordained. Hence, we are as sure that Christ's plan is the wisest, as any human experience can make us; we do not need the lessons of church history, so often repeated, where the betterments which man's officious zeal has insisted on making upon Christ's plan have borne their regular fruits of mischief and confusion, to make us content with the ordained method. Amidst all the plausibilities and excitements of the human inventions, we remain quiet in the conviction that *Christ knows best*.

But it is not unprofitable to recur to the practical reasons for this divine ordinance of a regular ordained ministry, preaching officially only as they are commissioned by the church through her presbyterial courts.

Were we Quakers, we could consistently claim an exemption from this law. If all preaching were done like Eldad's and Medad's, by the specific and immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the preacher might consistently claim that he was not dependent upon these practical reasons. But the apostle taught us (1 Cor. xiii. 8), that "prophesyings should fail." The modern evangelist and pastor must preach aright, by the combined assistance of his natural and acquired mental gifts, scriptural knowledge, and spiritual discernment. Hence, the preacher needs all the support, the guidance, and the restraining responsibilities arising out of his official relation to the church, and the church cannot possibly fulfil her grand function of being "the pillar and ground" of the gospel, unless she preserves those official relations and checks with those who preach. She must claim her rights of selection, ordination, and government, over those who preach her gospel, for her own and her Master's sake, as well as for the sake of sustaining and endorsing their message. This point of view gives us a triumphant answer to that flippant argument which asks, What actual effect an ordination ceremony has upon the ordained? "Do gifts and graces," they ask, "emanate from the palms of the ordaining prelate or pres-

byters, and penetrate the skulls or hearts of the candidates?'' If the truth is preached, what difference can be made by a formal, human appointment of him who preaches it? We answer it makes this difference: in the one case, the hearer has the opinion of one individual fellow-sinner; in the other, he has the judgment of the church of Christ, uttered through her proper organ, that the things uttered are the truths of God. This is a very different position from that of the papist, who claims for the church infallibility, and demands of the hearer an implicit faith; yet it secures to the sinner an important didactic advantage. He can only be saved by the truth, as he has rational assurance that it is from God, and therefore of divine authority. Of that rational conviction the associated testimony of the church, God's appointed witness on earth, is an important element. The minister is, to most of his hearers, personally a stranger; they know nothing as to whether he is a wise and true man or not; but the church he represents is not a stranger; her character and *status* are known. Again: the lay-preacher speaks under no ecclesiastical responsibility; he may present the truth aptly or inaptly, to the edification or the misleading of his hearers; but the church which permits him to preach without her commission cannot curb him. He does not derive his right to speak from her. How can she supervise it, so long as his errors are not flagrant enough to constitute what would be a disciplinable offence in a layman? The Presbyterian Church does not make it a *culpable crime* for a layman to believe that children should not be baptized, that a saint may totally and finally apostatize, that regeneration is synergistic. Then, can she punish one who owes her no other responsibilities than those of a layman for saying what he believes? This view makes it perfectly obvious that *lay-preaching implies broad-churchism*. The church which accepts it as a customary ordinance must, in consistency, fling down her doctrinal standards, and open her doors to latitudinarian doctrine, with all its fearful consequences. Let all Presbyterians, then, bear in mind, as one "fixed fact," that the recognition of lay-preaching *means broad-churchism*. This argument may now be brought within very close and simple limits. Christ ordained that the human heralds of his truth, since they would not be infallible, should preach under strict responsibility to his church. But the lay-preacher, especially the one who merges

his own denominational connection in catholic labors, is under no responsibility to the church. She has no check on his motions. We must add that the concession of the full right of lay-preaching will leave us no guarantee of the preacher's preparation. Christ has declared that particular qualification and preparation are essential. But if the preacher appoints himself, how is this requirement to be enforced? The impulse to preach, of course, implies the subject's conviction of his own fitness, and he "is judge in his own case." There is no safeguard left.

The momentous nature of this consequence is not apprehended until we remember that such lay-evangelists as Messrs. Moody and Sankey are destined to have many imitators. It might be well for the church could we be guaranteed that all those who are to come after will be as sound and scriptural as the distinguished leaders. But we have no right to anticipate any other result than this: that these imitators will be of all kinds, "good, bad, and indifferent." If the journals may be believed, our prophecy is already fulfilling in some who are aping Mr. Moody's *role*. But when we are infested with that harvest of rashness, indiscretion, bad taste, heresy, and intrusion, which is to come from this sowing, we shall understand why the Head of the church imposed official responsibilities, in addition to the lay, upon those who publicly preach his gospel.

We are perfectly aware of the retort which awaits us, that the church court is no more infallible than the lay-preachers. We shall be told that the preacher's keeper needs keeping as much as he does. But the reply to this is in the principle which Solomon announces in the words, "In the multitude of counsellors is safety." The error or apostasy of the many is far less probable than that of the one; the aggregate wisdom of the many is far greater than that of the one. All legitimate governments are but specimens of the wisdom of divine Providence in so combining men in society as to make them checks upon each other. Church government contains the same useful and beneficent feature. And we repeat that it should be enough for us that this is the method which Christ, in his divine wisdom, has actually adopted to repress the disorders of erratic, individual minds and wills in his kingdom on earth. If the objection meant no more than that this method will also come short of yielding perfect results, we

should freely concede it. No plan, though devised by divine wisdom, will ever work perfection when intrusted to human hands, for these are at best imperfect. But shall we, therefore, disclaim the safeguards which that wisdom has devised to protect us from total and disastrous failure?

But to our Assembly of 1869 there appeared to be another side to this subject. That body looked abroad upon the vast destitutions of the country, and then observed the lamentable masses of buried talents in the laity of the church. It seemed to ask itself why this latent talent should not be at once directed to attack these vast destitutions everywhere, and without the formality of professional training. Thus it was prompted to adopt the ambiguous action which authorized church sessions to license, in a sense, elders and laymen who should be virtually lay-preachers, and yet, in some sort, ecclesiastical officers of the church. To us it always appeared that the Assembly should not have gone thus far, or else should have gone farther. The only kind of preacher, not an ordained minister and administrator of the sacraments, known to our constitution is the "probationer." The only court which can lawfully license him is the Presbytery; and he can only be licensed lawfully after a certain prescribed preparation. But these sessional *appointees* were preachers, and yet not probationers. If the Assembly judged it right to direct lay effort into public channels, it would have been less inconsistent and illegal simply to invite laymen (and elders) to exercise their gifts publicly, without waiting for formal authority from any church court. That is to say, it would have been better for the Assembly to hold and teach that these extra-constitutional public exercises of individual gifts, while encouraged by the brotherhood, must yet be held as authorized by the personal rights of private members, as Christ's freemen, and not by any official appointment. Or if the Assembly felt the intrinsic looseness of this footing for the exercise—as Presbyterians could not but feel—and yet desired to encourage this species of public labor, it should have gone farther, and changed the constitution, so as to provide for sessional "licentiates," who should not be "probationers," nor trained for the ministry, and yet regular ecclesiastical officers. It is fortunate for the integrity of our system and the peace of our churches, that the instincts of good sense in our people have left this legislation practically a dead

letter. So may it remain until the "sober second thought" of the Assembly shall revoke it.

But yet, pious zeal urges us with such thoughts as these: There is, notoriously, high qualification for usefulness outside of the ordained ministry; why not let it act, when the world is perishing? The truest wisdom is to give free scope for all good energies. And then, has not Christ made every believer a teacher of his lost fellow-men, leaving it as the last enactment entered upon the pages of the New Testament, "*Let him that heareth say, Come?*" (Rev. xxii. 17.) Thus, it is the very condition of every Christian's life, that he shall, somehow or somewhere, speak to others for Christ. Now, if, by speaking for Christ to one fellow-creature, a believer ascertains that he can edify two, where is the difference in principle? Is it not twice as well? And if he may properly speak to two, why not to twenty, or to two hundred, or to two thousand? And if God blesses his speaking in the awakening, renewal, or edification of souls, how can any good man dare to arrest the blessing for the sake of a human ordinance which is lacking to the speaker?

This is plausible; yet the reconciliation is not difficult. We remind the pious advocate of this liberty, that ordination is not a "human ordinance," in the sense of his argument, *but a divine one*. Christ enjoins it; only he enjoins man to perform it. When amiable enthusiasm asks of us whether we expect divine grace to "run in our ruts," we fearlessly reply—abating the homeliness of the image—that we do expect it to move in channels which Christ has assigned for it; and if we have these, then we are entitled to expect that Christ will honor his own institution. The solution of the objection is found, secondly, in the fact that, this side of the official heralding of the gospel by the word and sacraments, there is a wide and diversified field for lay effort, extending from the teaching of the child at its parent's knee, up to the school and the Bible class. But, third, if this lay effort develops in any male Christian real qualification for more public usefulness than all this field can offer him, *this is one element of his call to the regular ministry*; and with the seal of success added, it is the crowning and decisive element. As a devout and faithful believer, he is bound to accept the sign as meaning this. The "aptness to teach," "good report with them that are without," and other traits which constitute him a suc-

cessful lay-preacher, are precisely those which Christ has laid down as designating those whom he calls into the ministry. That regular ministry, ordained in the regular ecclesiastical mode, is precisely the agency which he has appointed to do the preaching. Hence the case is perfectly clear. If the man is mistaken in supposing he has the gifts for lay-preaching, he should be stopped. If he really has them, then Christ thereby calls him into the regular ministry, either as a pastor or evangelist. How else can any man be more clearly called than by just the gifts and successes which are claimed for these evangelists by their friends? If they may refuse to heed, we see not how any other man can be more bound to come into the ministry. If love and duty to Christ prompt them to preach as laymen, we see not how the same affections can fail to draw them into the ministry. If, for instance, such laymen as the late Mr. Brownlow North and Mr. Moody have the qualifications and the seal of the divine blessing which their friends claim for them, this is, to our mind, a demonstration that God calls them into the regular ministry, and they should seek a regular ordination like other ministers, each in that branch of the church which has his conscientious preference.

This, then, should be the solution of the impulse to lay-preaching. The consistent application of this solution would not imply the refusal of all liberty to the exercise. The ecclesiastical authorities would permit a tentative use of the gifts of laymen in this way. But they would require that each case should, before very long, find its appropriate issue, either by passing on into the regular ministry, or by such practical evidence of the lack of ability to edify as would justify the church court in withdrawing the exceptional privilege. If the possession of gifts were evinced without the learning and culture which the church rightfully requires as necessary to the highest ministerial efficiency, then the same honest zeal which prompts the aspirant to serve God in public should surely prompt him to submit to that training by study which will equip him for serving God effectually and wisely in public.

Now, the evasions which will be attempted from this plain reasoning are, first, that the lay-evangelist honestly believes he can do more good thus than if ordained. This plea deserves no more answer than has been already intimated. We presume that

God knows best, and he has called the preachers into the ministry. Another plea is, that the irreligious will listen with more sympathy and confidence to one who is not paid for his preaching. Again we retort, we presume that the God who "ordained that they who serve the altar should live of the altar" knows best. If the regular ministry is indeed mercenary, then the proper remedy is to correct the fault by rigid church discipline, to extrude the mercenary men, if necessary, from the office they disgrace, and to fill it with regular ministers of a Moody's generous devotion. If the profession is not obnoxious to this suspicion, then we opine that to truckle to the hostile, infidel prejudice, which wickedly defames a noble and disinterested order of men, is but a sorry way to promote the interests of truth and righteousness. A third and more respectable plea remains, that there are gifted elders, who are prevented by the duties already owed to dependent families, or by the *res angustæ domi*, from making their way into the regular ministry, but who are admirably qualified to do good by public discourse. The aspirations of this class deserve the most generous sympathy of every good heart. The true solution which ought to be applied to their cases should be assistance from the brotherhood, so unstinted that it would meet all domestic obstacles and open up a happy road for these yearning souls into the full work of God, by supplying the wants of those dependent on them while they are preparing for the higher sphere. But suppose this solution is not given, then it might be a more harmless irregularity, if there must be any, for these gifted elders to continue to speak in public, with due prudence and modesty, *by virtue of their ordination as elders*, than to resort to a species of licensure as preachers from a court which has no constitutional right to give it. Believing assuredly, as we do, that the ruling elder is a presbyter, a member of that order of which "aptness to teach" is required in general terms, we would rather see the zeal and gifts of non-clerical laborers expand themselves in elders'-preaching than in lay-preaching. For the former exercise would possess the all-important advantage that it was performed under official sanctions and responsibilities.

There are heedless thinkers, who call themselves "practical," who suppose they find an answer to all cautions and every plea of principle in the triumphant question, "How many regularly

ordained ministers preach as well or with as much success as Mr. Moody?" Possibly few or none. Any admission we might make on this point is wholly irrelevant to the argument. For the "practical" Christian will not defy God's word by denying that study and sacred learning give some advantage for expounding Christianity, or that the church institutions Christ has ordained have some utility for promoting the great work of the world's redemption. Now, we remind them that Christ requires all of us to love him with all our hearts, and serve him with all our strength. The thing which Christ demands from a Christian of eminent natural gifts and zeal, is not merely that he shall love and serve God better than we poor, plodding "professionals," but that he shall serve him as well as he can. If his natural gifts, unassisted by ministerial training and sanctions, enable him already to surpass us, that is not the question. The question is, whether the gifted layman, with this training and ordination, might not surpass us a great deal farther in glorifying God? If he might, then he is solemnly bound to do it; and thus he is bound to make these professional acquisitions which confer that fuller efficiency.

It is from this point of view that we would proceed to what is the most distasteful part of our task—and yet a part required by fidelity to truth—the criticism of Mr. Moody's actual method of preaching the gospel. Let it be, then, distinctly borne in mind, that we do not complain that his preaching is not good, but that it is not better. We do not charge upon it fatal error, or any criminal unfaithfulness to truth; but we assert that it presents blemishes enough to offer precisely the proof that might be expected of the necessity of regular training to him who undertakes to preach the gospel. Mr. Moody's preaching is correct enough to evince great promise, and great knowledge of the English Scriptures; but it is not correct enough to evince that he, more than any other man, can adequately instruct the church of God without the regular training. The point which we claim, after conceding all his eminent merits, is, that here again we have the experimental evidence, the more conclusive because it is found in so eminent an instance, to prove that no man should preach who has not had the advantages of preparation and regular appointment.

We hear Mr. Moody, for instance, telling the Christians of

Edinburgh, in January, 1874, it was "his belief that God punishes believers in this life for their transgressions, while the punishment of unbelievers was reserved for a future state." The natural construction of this sentence would, of course, give the same meaning to the word "punishment" in its two members. Were Mr. Moody's attention challenged to this grave error, he would probably claim that he knew the wide difference between chastisement (of justified believers) and punishment (of condemned sinners). But our objection is, that his language teaches the ignorant to confound that distinction.

In a sermon delivered in London, he divides his hearers into three classes: Christians; those who have wandered from God, or backsliders; and "those that never have been saved." This distribution seems to imply, that the second class are not Christians now, but were once saved. Yet Mr. Moody is a declared believer in the perseverance of saints.

Again, he paints in colors of the warmest approval the conversion of a bereaved father, who professes no motive for desiring salvation or heaven except the certainty that only by reaching that state and place could he again enjoy the society of a favorite and engaging child, who had died in early youth. And this conviction was the result of a vivid dream only! How dangerous may not this delusion be, which thus encourages impulsive minds to confound the yearnings of an affection merely natural, and shared by myriads of hearts utterly carnal and impenitent, with spiritual-mindedness.

In a sermon on the new birth, he describes the domestic peace and happiness which have returned to the hearth of a reformed drunkard, who is the father of a family, and exclaims: "Yes, God has done all that; and that is regeneration." Would it not have been safer to say, "That is one of the fruits of regeneration," lest some vicious man might adopt, from his words, the soul-destroying error that reformation is regeneration? In the same sermon he describes Nicodemus, whose history gives him his text, as "belonging to the house of bishops"; "one of the church dignitaries"; "one who now would doubtless be a D. D. and LL. D." There is here, perhaps, a very fair hit at the two unfortunate classes among the moderns designated by these titles, but we perceive also a rather confused view, for a religious teacher, of the duties of the Jewish Sanhedrim.

In the sermon on the word "gospel," he repudiates the kindly intercessory petition of a brother, that he—Moody—"might lay hold of eternal life." He declares that, having gotten this gift at his conversion, nineteen years before, he has no use for this prayer. Does not this savor a little of the unscriptural extravagance of the Plymouth Brethren? They deem it an absurdity to pray for the Holy Ghost, because, they argue, every man who has faith to pray, has the Holy Ghost already. Such teachers forget that Bible saints, whose title to an assurance of a gracious state is at least as sound as that of any modern Christian, do continually pray for life and for the Holy Ghost, and do expressly exhort each other to "lay hold on eternal life." They forget that rudimental truth of Christian experience, that breathings after spiritual blessings are the very acts of soul in which the possession of spiritual gifts finds its normal expression.

In the same sermon a desire for eternal life is unhesitatingly ascribed to every person in a vast congregation of impenitent persons; and "eternal life," that which is the great gift of the gospel, is described and illustrated as merely the endless prolongation of that natural life to which any worldly man would cleave in the prospect of natural death, even at the cost of his wealth. The argument by which this multitude, dead in trespasses and sins, are assured that they all really have a supreme desire for "eternal life" is simply this. Suppose any one of them were in the condition of a rich man with a million sterling, in a sinking ship in mid-ocean, who offered to give all this wealth to save his life from drowning, would he not do the same? Of course. Well, then, he supremely desires eternal life, and as the heavenly Father stands yearning to bestow it on everybody, everybody may get it on these terms. Thus "slightly is the hurt of the daughter of the people healed." Yet Mr. Moody would promptly accede to those Scripture statements which describe all unbelievers as carnal and dead to every spiritual desire. The slightest discrimination should have saved him from this dangerous confusion of that natural love of existence which every vilest sinner feels, and feels all the more pungently by reason of his guilty remorse and fear, with the desire for that true life which is a "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." It is to the latter only that the gospel-promise is made, and the real misery and

sin of every unbeliever's state is that of this desire he *does not feel* a single pulse, and never will, save as the Holy Ghost quickens his dead soul.

And here a solemn protest should be uttered against this trait which pervades much of the preaching of Mr. Moody and his admirers, that tends so strongly to betray the partially-awakened sinner into a "temporary faith." These teachers regard the inviting features of the gospel as far the most persuasive. Hence they are not thorough in probing the corruptions of dead souls with the instrument of God's holy law. They wish to make coming to Christ very easy. Hence they continually speak to wicked men as though all that is needed is to gratify the natural desire for well-being and impunity. They are so eager to induct their pupils into the joys of a full assurance that they tacitly pass over that careful self-examination and the self-distrust implied therein, which alone can safely discriminate, as assisted by the witnessing of the Spirit, between a spurious and a genuine faith. They abound in soft and sensuous pictures of the believer's life and of heaven, as smiling with enjoyments and security. Thus, in his sermon on the great commission, Mr. Moody tells sinners expressly, "Let me say—mark the words—God does not come here and ask any man to give up anything." Is it possible for a religious teacher to fly more directly into the face of his Master? We remember that Christ said, in Luke xiv., except a man gives up *everything*, he cannot be his disciple. It is true that the preacher explains his declaration by promising his hearers that their cases shall be all like his; in that the reception of a free salvation through Christ's blood, in his own case, immediately made the crucifixion of his sins perfectly easy. We feel no disposition to test the accuracy of Mr. Moody's own peculiarly happy experience. But this we do know, that if his experience has been thus singular, he has no right to promise a similar one to other believers; Christ never did. The teaching which we hear from him is after this fashion: that the denial of our lusts for his sake ought not to be difficult, and were holiness complete in us, would not be; that, therefore, redeemed sinners, in their militant state, are bound in duty to practice that self-denial manfully, whether they find it more or less bitter, that, by reason of indwelling sin, they will find it more or less bitter, but that his grace will assuredly give them prevalent consolation and final

victory in this death-struggle, if they cleave to him by faith. Such is the amount of encouragement upon which Christ invites the soul that is awakened to the "sinfulness of sin," and animated by the "godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto life," to enter upon the Christian warfare by trust in his love and grace. To the truly humbled and renewed soul it is glorious, sweet and sufficient; to the mere stony-ground hearer it is but a sapless promise. What he desires is a gospel of easy impunity, selfish advantage and luxurious sentiment. But we warn those who preach the gospel thus that they must expect their converts to fulfil the prophecy, "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended."

The sermons since preached in America betray similar inaccuracies. At Northfield, Mass., Mr. Moody tells us "Paul's letter on election was written to the church, and not to the world." First, we ask, which is Paul's "letter on election," the Epistle to the Romans, or Ephesians, or those to Timothy? The intelligent reader finds election in all his epistles, as well as in Christ's sermons. And next, we see no evidence that the holy apostle restricted his teachings of this doctrine to believers; certainly Rom. ix. 20 does not wear this appearance. Again at Northfield, commenting on Matt. vii. 7, he teaches his hearers that the "asking Christian" is a lower grade, the "seeking Christian" a higher, and the "knocking" the highest and best grade; the last being most assured of an answer to prayer. But our Saviour, in the next verse, proceeds to give the very same promise to all three, thus showing that he did not mean to distribute praying people into gradations by this language, but to reinforce the encouragement given to all praying people in common by an emphatic repetition. It is a far graver error that he evidently confounds the two classes of objects of prayer and promises of answer given in the gospel. He speaks as though Christians had the same specific warrant to pray for objects of problematical benefit (yet naturally and innocently desirable to the pious heart), as for the benefits of redemption expressly pledged to faith in the promises. This heedlessness tends to encourage believers who are more ardent than well-informed to push their faith into presumption. The wretched result will be, when they are refuted by a final disappointment, that they will infer either their own rejection by God, and thus

fall into profound discouragement, or a skeptical doubt of God's faithfulness. This error and its dangers has been fully explicated in a former number of this *Review*,¹ and we therefore dismiss it with a reference to that discussion.

The reporters have doubtless done that kindly office for Mr. Moody, in preparing his speeches for the journals, which they are wont to render to other extempore orators. Enough remains, however, in defects of grammar and style to make every cultivated Christian feel that training for the ministry would not have hurt the preacher. The bad grammar and the provincialisms which bristle over his discourses are not the worst blemishes. An English wit has drawn an amusing picture of a lady of the old-fashioned high-breeding, who was intensely anxious to rebuke in her son a certain fashion of speech, and who yet could not bring herself so far within that guilty fashion as to pronounce the unseemly—though only—word which characterized it—"slang." We labor under a similar embarrassment in doing our duty on this point to Mr. Moody. We can only protest that we do not believe even a coal-heaver or sailor finds the infusion of this element, in addition to all that simplicity, perspicuity, earnestness and affection can do, essential to his edification.

There are two more points in this movement which require a word of caution. One is the absolute importance attached by the lay-evangelists to the undenominational quality of all their measures. The point to be remarked is not that their services are "union meetings," or that the evangelists deem it expedient sometimes to subordinate their own denominational convictions for the temporary purposes of wider Christian communion. The most decided and consistent ministers have done this. But the point is, that the leaders of the new movement make not only the subordination, but the suppression, of their own and of all other people's denominational convictions, even the most conscientious, an absolute requirement of the success of their work, and that not occasionally, but uniformly. When Mr. Moody was asked, in London, to what branch of the church he belonged, the only answer he would give was, "that he belonged to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." When a young person honestly asked him, in Edinburgh, to instruct her conscience as to the proper

¹ January, 1872. "Theology of the Plymouth Brethren," Vol. I., p. 169.

mode of baptism, he positively refused, and required her to satisfy herself with some views as to the significance of baptism. These must have been most inconsistently "sectarian," inasmuch as immersionists differ from us as much about the significance as the mode of this sacrament. In a lecture at Dublin, Mr. Moody's two chief topics were "*drunkenness and sectarianism.*" "God had vouchsafed a blessed unity; woe to the unhappy person who should first break it. Yet it would be broken if there was proselytism. This would be the triumph of sect over Christ. The cry is, 'Come out, come out from a sect.' But where? Into another sect? Every body of believers is a sect."

There are several remarks which will serve to set this claim in its proper light. It is almost self-evident that he who would cooperate in a work thoroughly undenominational with members of several denominations, must expurgate his teachings of everything which might impinge upon either of his friends' peculiarities. Now the evangelist, who is at once competent and honest, must be supposed to have adopted for himself, either from the standards of some denomination or from his own original studies in Scripture, a *system* of revealed doctrine which he conscientiously believes to have correctness and a certain completeness. If private members were justly blamed by the apostles, in Heb. v. 12, because they had not advanced beyond "the first principles of the oracles of Christ," such a state of knowledge is, of course, unpardonable in one who assumes to teach multitudes. But this teacher must now clip off one truth at one corner of his own system, in concession to his Methodist ally; another for the Immersionist; another for the Episcopalian; another for the Romanist. He will plead, "Yet the fundamentals of saving truth remain." We reply, Possibly. But yet, dares he assert that a maimed system of truth will be as efficacious as a complete one? Is any divine truth valueless? Is the faithful soldier as willing to fight for his king with a sword which has large gaps on its edge, and has lost its point, perchance, as with a perfect blade? A good man, as we conceded, may consent to a temporary silence concerning a peculiar truth which he believes to be God's truth, for the sake of other righteous objects of wider Christian communion. He may concur in a Bible society effort with Quakers, Papists, and even Socinians; but to consent to a constant silence is dishonest and unfaithful

In the second place, the great proximate end of the church is the redemption of souls. If undenominational teaching is so much the more efficient for this end, it seems very evident that denominations ought not to exist in the church at all. That is to say, the church ought to have an absolute visible unity, as Rome claims. Then, first, the church must either have an earthly infallible head, to settle and suppress all doctrinal differences, as Rome claims; or secondly, this catholic church must be a "broad church," wholly latitudinarian as to doctrine outside of the bare fundamentals of saving truth; or thirdly, some Christians must be forced to surrender a part of their fundamental convictions to other Christians no more conscientious or infallible than themselves.

In the third place, this exalting of the union effort as the only efficient mode to build up Christ's kingdom, and this denunciation of denominationalism as an obstruction to good in revival meetings, contain a very plain implication that denominations are wicked things. The inevitable effect will be, that a generation of Christians will be educated opposed to all denominational distinctions. Then there will be but three possible resorts for these Christians—popery, or broad churchism, or the renunciation of the visible church in every form. This is the lesson which divine providence has taught to Christendom by the struggles of eighteen hundred years, and especially by the agonies and blood of the Protestant Reformation; the existence of the visible church catholic in branches or denominations, each conscientiously teaching the whole counsel of God for man's salvation, as it honestly understands it from the Scriptures, yet each respecting the sincerity and the church rights of the others, is the only condition possible for the existence of orthodox Protestantism—on the one hand, not persecuting, and on the other hand, not dishonestly latitudinarian—in such a world as ours. Such, we solemnly testify, is the lesson of God's providence as of sound reasoning. Let the reader scan the grounds of this conclusion again and again; he will find them adamant. It will be a calamitous day for truth and for immortal souls when the novelties of a restless and conceited age shall persuade us to cast away this costly truth.

Let a more popular *ad hominem* argument be applied to Mr. Moody. He is, we will suppose for the argument's sake. an

immersionist. His own denominational connection is with that church. Now, either he believes that there is some value in the argument for that mode of baptism, or that there is not. If there is none, why is he himself an immersionist? If there is some value in that mode, then he is bound in honesty to seek that advantage for his converts also. Why should a good man be willing to leave others deprived of that scriptural means of blessing which has done his own soul good? ¹

We conclude with a word touching the office of Mr. Sankey, "singing the gospel." The Jewish temple service had its chief singer. It will be a curious result if this modern movement should develop this function into a new and prominent branch of the ministry unauthorized by the New Testament. Singing is unquestionably a scriptural means of grace, and good singing is a very efficient one. But in order that the church may retain the blessing of good singing, the privilege which Mr. Sankey and his imitators claim, of importing their own lyrics into God's worship, must be closely watched. That saying has been quoted in favor of Mr. Sankey's "ministry of song," which has been assigned to Lord Macaulay and to Sir W. Scott, and to Thomas Moore, "Let me make the ballads of a people, and I care not who makes their laws." We cite that very principle to condemn the approaching license of so-called sacred song. Dr. Nettleton was wont to say that he could cause a company of people to "sing themselves into the doctrines of the gospel more easily than he could preach them into it." Then it is even more important that church courts should use their authority of deciding what shall be sung than of securing the qualification and orthodoxy of its preachers. Dr. Nettleton took the liberty of compiling and using his "Village Hymns" in public worship. His learning, sanctified genius and experience excused the act in him. If the same license is to be usurped by every self-appointed chorister, we shall in the end have a mass of corrupting religious poetry against which the church will have to wage a sore contest. Our children will then learn, to their cost, how

¹ We are not alone in foreseeing the disorganizing consequences of this self-appointment of evangelists. Dr. Thos. H. Skinner, of Cincinnati, has clearly demonstrated the same point in a pamphlet upon "Lay-Evangelism," of unrivalled manliness and vigor, in which he fortifies the inference of good sense by the lessons of experience borrowed from the Congregational, the Scotch, and the Presbyterian Churches.

legitimate and valuable was that restriction which we formerly saw in the lyrical liturgies of the old Protestant churches, expressed by the *imprimatur* of their supreme courts, "*Appointed to be sung in churches.*" The most that can be said of Mr. Sankey's developments in this direction is, that they do not appear to have introduced positive error as yet, and that they exhibit no worse traits than a marked inferiority of matter and style to the established hymnals of the leading churches. The most danger thus far apparent is that of habituating the taste of Christians to a very vapid species of pious doggerel, containing the most diluted possible traces of saving truth, in portions suitable to the most infantile faculties supplemented with a jingle of "vain repetitions." What shall we gain by giving our people these ephemeral rhymes in place of the immortal lyrics of Moses, David, Isaiah, Watts, and Cowper, so grand in their rhythm and melody, so pure in taste, and above all, so freighted with compact and luminous truth? "The old wine is better."

Intelligent Christians will watch the results of these mammoth meetings with interest, that "by their fruits we may know them." It is probably impossible to eliminate the chaff from the wheat as yet in the reported results in Great Britain. No one is competent to decide how much of the apparent enthusiasm was due to curiosity, to animal sympathy, to a species of religious fashion and social furor, to the impressive *stimulus* of vast multitudes singing or agitated with a common impulse, and how much to divine truth and sanctifying grace. We have seen the London press, with Mr. Spurgeon, after six months' experience, pronouncing the successes in that city delusive. It is very apparent that the supporters of the effort in Brooklyn were disappointed, though loth to confess their failure. We incline to the conclusion that this method, with its monster congregations and extraordinary incidents, is mistaken; that it will prove a waste of money and labor as compared with the more humble and unobtrusive, but permanently fruitful, work of parochial laborers, and that it will be found more promotive of an unwholesome religious dissipation than of holy living.

THE PUBLIC PREACHING OF WOMEN.¹

IN this day innovations march with rapid strides. The fantastic suggestion of yesterday, entertained only by a few fanatics, and then only mentioned by the sober to be ridiculed, is to-day the audacious reform, and will be to-morrow the recognized usage. Novelties are so numerous and so wild and rash, that in even conservative minds the sensibility of wonder is exhausted and the instinct of righteous resistance fatigued. A few years ago the public preaching of women was universally condemned among all conservative denominations of Christians, and, indeed, within their bounds, was totally unknown. Now the innovation is brought face to face even with the Southern churches, and female preachers are knocking at our doors. We are told that already public opinion is so truckling before the boldness and plausibility of their claims that ministers of our own communion begin to hesitate, and men hardly know whether they have the moral courage to adhere to the right. These remarks show that a discussion of woman's proper place in Christian society is again timely.

The arguments advanced by those who profess reverence for the Bible, in favor of this unscriptural usage, must be of course chiefly rationalistic. They do indeed profess to appeal to the sacred history of the prophetesses, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna, as proving that sex was no sufficient barrier to public work in the church. But the fatal answer is, that these holy women were inspired. Their call was exceptional and supernatural. There can be no fair reasoning from the exception to the ordinary rule. Elijah, in his civic relation to the kingdom of the ten tribes, would have been but a private citizen without his prophetic *afflatus*. By virtue of this we find him exercising the highest of the regal functions (1 Kings xviii.), administering the capital penalty ordained by the law against seducers into idolatry, when he sentenced the priests of Baal and ordered their

¹ Appeared in *The Southern Presbyterian Review* for October, 1879.