

The Pulpit

A SERMON
BY THE REV.
IRA W. HENDERSON

Subject: The New Note.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—Preaching at the Irving Square Presbyterian Church, Hamburg avenue and Weirfield street, on the theme, "The Church's New Note," the Rev. I. W. Henderson, pastor, took as his text Mark 12:30: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." He said:

The adaptability of the Gospel is wonderful. In every epoch and in every age wherever the truth of God as it has been revealed in Jesus Christ has been preached, it has been found to be a fit guide for the leading of the minds and hearts and souls of men, a true solvent for the evils of the epoch and the age in which it has been declared. Always it has possessed a message that has been peculiarly adaptable to the individual and social inequities and to the individual and social spiritual yearnings and necessities of the society to which it has been proclaimed. When in apostolic times the preciousness of budding human life was discounted and largely unrecognized the vitalizing Gospel of Jesus Christ revealed the beauty and the value of life itself. When in the ante-Reformation days the truth was endangered by the regrettable unwisdom of the ecclesiastical authorities of that day and time the compelling Gospel of Jesus opened wide the treasury of written truth that had been preserved in all its fragrance through the centuries and a new era for mankind began. As in those times so throughout Christendom it has been. Whatever may have been the sins, the spiritual yearnings, the mode of thought, the manner of expression, of any generation, the Gospel has always adapted itself and been found humanly adaptable to the sins, the yearnings, the thoughts, the terminology of the period. Every revival in Christian history, especially in the history of the last four hundred years, has had its peculiar message, adaptable to the sins, the yearnings, the spiritual needs, the thought and the terminology of the time in which it has been preached. Historians tell us that when in the days of Jonathan Edwards—days in which Christianity was largely legalistic in thought and speech—the fiery prophet of the living God wished to bring men into an open realization and confession of their sinfulness and their accountability to God he preached them sermons on the essential fact and necessity of Divine sovereignty; and with burning zeal declared to humanity, as God gave him opportunity to sow the seed of His truth, the wisdom of yielding self into the control of the Divine Ruler of the universe. Wesley preached the truth of the freedom of the will to a nation to whom freedom was life. "Whosoever will may come" was not all the Gospel then, nor is it all the Gospel now; but it is the lever of truth by which men in the days of that great revivalist were most quickly turned to love and serve God.

We are face to face with another great world-wide revival. We are in the midst of it. It may not be recognized in some quarters and it may be blinked in others. Many men refuse to recognize it or they may fail to have the insight to perceive it, but it is here none the less. Evidencing itself within the church it is expressing itself more largely perhaps outside of the church than within it.

Men are Gospel-hardened to the messages of yesterday. Not that they disdain Christ, but because the proclamations of the past have lost, through perfunctory familiarity with them, the power to cut deep into their souls. The edge of the truth has become dulled for them. It needs to be brought to the tempering fire of a flaming truth that shall startle and attract men. It must be laid hard on the wheel of a compelling Divine verity that shall put an edge on all that has become dulled. The preaching of Edwards will not do it, the oratory of Wesley will not do it, the burning messages of Finney will not do it, the declaration of God's love in the mouth of Moody will not do it. These are our places of departure. The truth that these men have declared, the men-we-are-after know. We must vitalize that dormant truth by flinging a new message into their souls. We must warm the chilled embers of their own religious experiences with the blaze of a modern message that, having its inspirations in the historic Christ, shall be indwelt of His presence and energized of His spirit for a special ministry to-day. Men know that God is sovereign; they know that the human will is free, for are they not exercising it against God every day? They know that personal responsibility for personal sin or decency is inescapable; they know that God is love. We do not need to prove these things to them most insistently. What we need to do is to proclaim before them a new note from the old Anthem of God's revelation of His truth and Himself in Jesus Christ that shall find a correlative note in their own souls and lead them back into harmony with the age-long chorus of the redeemed of God. It is the business of the church of Jesus Christ to strike this note and to assume leadership.

Granted that these remarks be true, what then shall be our new note? What note shall we strike? What word of God shall be our watchword? What text in the Scriptures shall epitomize our thought? About what idea shall our preaching revolve? In my humble judgment the text which shall epitomize the message of the new revival is that which is to be found as indicated in the text for this evening in the Gospel according to St. Mark, the 12th chapter and the 30th verse: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." And the idea that shall crystallize our thinking shall be the conception of human love for God. As the basis of Moody's evangel was

the love of God for men, so, I verily believe, ere we shall do the work for Jesus that we desire to perform, we must declare, with insistency and with cumulative force, the dignity, the wisdom, the fairness, the efficacy of human love for God.

The trouble with us to-day is not that we do not know that God loves us. The trouble is that men do not love God. The evil which afflicts us can only be cured by the exercise of a controlling and vitalizing love for God, such a love as shall mellow and beautify the souls of men. The inquiry which scourges us now and torments us would not be if, in the past, men had loved God. A thoroughgoing love for God will make evil conditions in this world as impossible as they will be in the new Jerusalem hereafter. The golden rule has failed to accomplish its mission, not because it is not a truth, but because it is only half a truth, as it is popularly used to-day. The second commandment is a safe guide for our rule and practice through life only when it is correlated with that primary commandment which our Lord enunciated as at the logical centre of the moral and spiritual realities. The golden rule is not enough of a guide for us as we travel toward the undiscovered country. We must be more than moral if we desire happiness here and hope to enter into joy eternal hereafter. The golden rule must be vitalized by the living first principle of the kingdom of God. The trouble with the world is that men have been altogether too well satisfied to do and be done by, as God never intended they should. See for a moment how this half truth works in practice. You and I are on the Stock Exchange. You are satisfied that if by trickery or falsification or by spreading of dangerous reports, true or untrue, I can ruin you, I may do so, provided I afford you equal opportunity to do the same to me. You and I are trading horses. It is all right for you to fleece me with my eyes open so long as I am permitted to fleece you in the same manner. You and I are in business. It is proper for me to steal your trade, provided you have an equal opportunity to steal mine. Of course this meets a modern interpretation of the golden rule, which says, "Whatsoever ye are willing that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." But how grievously it violates the spirit of Christ's law. The principle of the business world too largely is this, that it is all right for one dog to eat the other, because they have agreed that it shall be fair to play the industrial and commercial game that way. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," we are told. But when this law is separated from the correlated truth that Christ declared, and transplanted alone into the lives of multitudes of men to-day, we understand what an awful half-truth it has become.

In all seriousness, I do not desire that some men shall love me in the way they love themselves, outside of Christ. I do not care to practice the golden rule as to-day it is promulgated in our social life, outside of Jesus Christ, or to have it so practiced upon me. For some men have no comprehension of their own value and the demands of their own integrity upon their lives; and how, therefore, can they appreciate the value of the lives, the minds, the hearts, the souls, the peace and purity and happiness of their fellow men? Some men have such a small estimate, seemingly, of themselves, judged by the way they treat themselves, that we should be untrue to ourselves did we not resent like treatment by them of us. Some men have such a debased idea concerning what is right for men to do unto them that they cannot be expected to know, unless the grace of God inform them, what they should do to their fellows.

The message for our own time, the appeal of to-day, must be based on the text I have read. Its theme must be the love of man for God. Loving God, we shall conserve the interests of our own personalities and gain a divine value of our own worth to God and to the world. Loving God, we shall know the value of our brethren.

Do you suppose for an instant that men would have the audacity to publish declarations that they were only worth a paltry couple of hundred millions if they really loved God as God means they should? Do you suppose for an instant that they would boast that they can buy legislatures and judges and the government, if they loved God as Jesus loved Him? If we loved God as Jesus means we should, do you suppose that we would stand for child labor, with all its horrors and cruelties; for the saloon as it is, with all its fruitage of vice and crime and misery and poverty and despair? If we loved God as Jesus means we should, have you the slightest suspicion that we would permit women by the thousands to be sent into the brothel in economic self-defense? If men loved God, would it be thinkable that they would murder and rape, and steep themselves in drunkenness, in bestiality and crime? Do you think that if we could get men to love God, they would not have again a lively consciousness of His sovereignty as Edwards declared it, and of their free will to do the right as Wesley declared it, and of their personal responsibility as Finney declared it, and of their indebtedness to divine love as Moody declared it? I think not.

The new note of the church will be the love of men for God. For it is the second logical step in the scheme of redemption in Christ. God in Christ hath already loved men, and now loves them. It is for them to reciprocate His love. The new message must be the central truth of the kingdom of God on its onward side. We must lead men to love God. Then shall we reach them.

Getting men to love God, we shall transform the individual character; we shall regenerate society; we shall make wars to cease and all nations throughout all the earth to dwell in righteous and godly fraternal relationships. The task is great. But it is not impossible. The means and the method we shall discuss at another time. But when we shall have gotten men to love the living God, then shall we hear a voice out of Heaven saying unto us, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God."

Women Who Wear Well.

It is astonishing how great a change a few years of married life often make in the appearance and disposition of many women. The freshness, the charm, the brilliancy vanish like the bloom from a peach which is rudely handled. The maids are only a dim shadow, a faint echo of the charming maiden. There are two reasons for this change, ignorance and neglect. Few young women appreciate the shock to the system through the change which comes with marriage and motherhood. Many neglect to deal with the unpleasant pelvic drains and weaknesses which too often come with marriage and motherhood, not understanding that this secret drain is robbing the cheek of its freshness and the form of its fairness.

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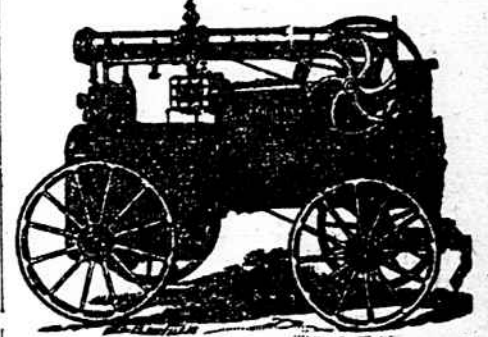
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