

**PREACHING: WHAT TO
PREACH, AND HOW TO
PREACH. PRACTICAL
HINTS FOR THE CLERGY**

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WHAT TO PREACH, AND HOW TO PREACH.

Practical Hints for the Clergy.

BY THE

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CROSS," "SERMONS ON THE ATONEMENT," &c., &c.



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P R E F A C E .

THE complaints commonly made respecting the inferior quality of many of the sermons delivered from Church of England pulpits will be a sufficient justification for the appearance of this volume.

How far these complaints are justified must be a matter of personal opinion. It will, however, be admitted that the general run of parochial sermons are capable of improvement.

But, apart from this, so far as the writer is aware, no short and inexpensive treatise is extant in which the subject of Preaching is dealt with practically, and in such wise as to serve as a guide to a newly-ordained clergyman in, perhaps, the most difficult part of his work.

Whatever may be the value of the contents of this volume, they are, at least, the result of above thirty years' experience in country and London parishes; and the writer cannot help feeling that if he had had some book of the kind put into his hands when a deacon, it would have been the better both for himself and for his congregations.

A preacher has, as a rule, to buy his experience,

but his hearers have, to a great extent, to pay for it. It is in the interest of the latter, no less than of the former, that this volume is now issued.

It has been the custom of most writers on the subject of Preaching to lay great stress upon the importance of a clergyman who would affect his hearers for good, being himself spiritually minded, and instinct with love for those over whom he is set in the Lord. Very little is said upon this point in the following pages, for two reasons—(1), Because the fact is so very obvious; and (2), Because such remarks seem to cast an unnecessary slur upon the clergy in general by supposing that they are not, as a rule, spiritually minded, nor instinct with love for their parishioners. All this is taken for granted; and it is also supposed that every one in Holy Orders is a gentleman in matters of taste and conduct, and sufficiently cultured, or intellectually capable of sufficient culture, at least in his own branch of science, to justify him in standing up before a congregation as a teacher.

Yet, such a one may not know how to prepare and arrange his teaching, nor how to present it to his hearers in the most effective form. The purpose of the present volume is to throw light upon these points.

It will be seen that the aim of the writer has been to encourage his younger brethren to bestow as much time and labour and thought as possible upon the preparation of their sermons. A sermon upon which little pains have been expended, is, as a rule, worth something less than it has cost.

In Chapter III. a suggestion is made that, before beginning to construct a sermon, the preacher should collect a number of passages from Scripture bearing upon the subject in hand. This plan may be effectively employed with other books besides the Bible. The preacher will find it answer his purpose if, before beginning to write his sermon, he consults all the books which he possesses containing matter likely to be useful for information, illustration, or argument, taking notes with references as he proceeds. A good deal of this collected matter he will probably not use; but this is of slight importance, as the very fact of his having "turned out" these several subjects will gradually and insensibly enlarge his stock of general knowledge, and the residuum, if employed judiciously, will materially enhance the value of his sermon.

Again, it is curious to remark how few there are, comparatively speaking, who know how to use the index to a book, or who appreciate the value of making "cross references." Let the young preacher diligently employ indices in collecting his materials for sermons, and if he fails to discover what he requires under one heading, let him look whether under another and a cognate heading he can find what he needs in the way of suggestion or illustration. Textual indices are most useful to this end. The Scriptural indices in most of Isaac Williams' books are well done, and may generally be profitably applied to; but, perhaps, the most complete textual index which has been brought out of late years is that appended to Neale and Littledale's "Commentary on

the Psalms," a reference to which will rarely be wasted time. The principle of making cross references holds good, of course, with regard to other books.

There is another practical point of real importance to sermon writers, which must be mentioned.

A carpenter at his bench in the workshop takes care to have the tools that he is likely to want, either in a rack before him, or in a basket by his side. He can thus pick up what he needs without waste of time. The writer of a sermon has similarly a specific work to do, and in like manner requires his tools—*i.e.*, his books of reference—ready to hand. Of course he will have a reference Bible—by preference the "Variorum Teacher's Bible" (Eyre and Spottiswoode)—a Prayer-Book and a Concordance open before him, together with the "Revised Version," while preparing his sermon. But, besides these, there should be on his table, within arm's length as he sits at work, a row of volumes, embracing such books as a Hebrew Bible and a Greek Testament; Wordsworth's or Blunt's "Commentary"; Kitto's "Cyclopædia," or Smith's "Bible Dictionary;" Roget's "Thesaurus," as a help in composition; Neale's "Psalms;" "Ford on the Gospels;" Gray's "Biblical Museum;" one or two Scriptural Text Books (a useful, cheap one can be got at Houlston's, Paternoster Square, entitled "The Scripture Text Book and Treasury"); a good Dictionary of Quotations, like Bartlett's or Grocott's; a collection or two of Anecdotes and Illustrations ("The Dictionary of Illustrations," published by Dickenson, is as complete as any); a few purely Spiritual books, such as "The

Imitation," "The Spiritual Combat," and some of St. Francis de Sales' works. To these may be added the clergyman's own Common Place Book, and any other volumes which he thinks likely to be helpful. Perhaps the author may be excused for mentioning his own "Preacher's Storehouse," as embracing a wide range of subject matter, very fully indexed, and, therefore, easily referred to. It is practically of real importance that a good collection of some such books as these should be within arm's length of the sermon writer, for, when engrossed in his work, he will find it a great hindrance if he has to rise and go to his shelves for every book he requires, and he will be tempted to make anything that he has in his mind do, to avoid the inconvenience involved in searching for something better. By adopting the simple plan suggested, the sermon writer in minimising the above-named inconvenience, minimises, at the same time, the temptation to shirk painstaking.

Modern publications alone are mentioned in the above list, but this is only because their comparatively small size renders them capable of being arranged on a table in the manner described. Apart from this, the more a clergyman applies for his materials to the grand old tomes of patristic and mediæval writers, the more benefit will he himself derive intellectually, and the more freshness and value will he give to his pulpit teaching.

All that now remains to be said is, that the contents of this volume originally appeared in the *Church Times* during 1881, in the form of leading articles.