

advance. Political assessments came to an end, and every year the number of classified places under the law was increased. During President Arthur's administration 15,000 Federal office-holders were under the civil service rules. During President Cleveland's first term this number was increased to 27,000. President Harrison extended the action of the rules to include more than 43,000; and during his present term President Cleveland had brought up the number in the classified list to include 56,000 before making the extension which now practically includes the whole list. The spoils system, so far as the Federal Government is concerned, is at an end. The Outlook has urged, in season and out of season, the reform now accomplished, has believed in it from the beginning as in accordance with the genius of the American people, as essential to efficiency in Government service, and as necessary for the removal of a constant source of corruption in our politics. It is with the sincerest satisfaction and the profoundest thankfulness, therefore, that it records this final victory of a cause which has called to its support a group of the purest-minded and most disinterested men who have of recent years taken part in our public life. Twenty years hence the results of a reformed civil service will be seen in greatly increased efficiency of administration, in the purification of parties, and in the increased time and strength at the disposal of the chief executive for the consideration of questions of State policy. It only remains to complete the reform by the extension of the civil service rules to the consular service, and the adoption of the civil service principle in State and city administration throughout the country. When this is done—and it must follow as a logical consequence from what has already been done—a new and brighter era will open in American public life.

Dr. van Dyke's Yale Lectures

We began last week and continue this week the publication of four of the "Yale Lectures on Preaching" for the current year. These lectures we believe will command, as they deserve, the close and appreciative attention of the readers of The Outlook. The lecturer, Dr. Henry van Dyke, of the Brick Church (Presbyterian) of New York City, has chosen for his theme the relation of Christianity to the present age, which he denominates, accurately as we think, an age of doubt. The great value of these lectures is not in their analysis of prevailing conditions, although that is searching and just; not in their logic, although that is keen; not in their scholarship, although that is comprehensive; not in their literary style, although that is finished and charming; but in their deep and human sympathy and candor. Dr. van Dyke is devout and loyal to his faith, but he recognizes in a marked degree the sincerity and even value of honest doubt. He believes that "dubitation is the beginning of all knowledge," as James Howell once quaintly put it, and his cordial welcome to the man who finds himself in a questioning frame of mind dissolves at once the thin film of antagonism which so often separates the inquirer and the dogmatist. It is needless to say—for the lectures themselves say it—that Dr. van Dyke believes firmly in the supernatural revelation of religious truth. It is this faith coupled with his understanding of and sympathy with the inquiring spirit of the age which has filled his lecture-room at New Haven to overflowing, and which will command for his lectures, as they appear in The Outlook, and later in book form, a wide circle of readers. The limitations of space permit us to print only four of the lectures, and require us to omit certain passages in

those we print, but the entire series in completeness will be embodied in a book which will be issued at an early day by Messrs. Macmillan & Co., of this city.

A Hidden Treasure

We publish in another column a letter from a correspondent who presents very clearly a difficulty which unquestionably perplexes many minds. If we believe that the Bible is, in every book, chapter, paragraph, sentence, and word, equally inspired and authoritative, we are relieved from all necessity of exercising moral discrimination in reading it. Its infallibility relieves us from mental toil in its perusal. If we believe that it is a human book containing a revelation of God as a seed contains a principle of life within its husky covering, we are compelled to exercise discriminating judgment and mental toil in determining what is the divine principle of life and what is the human husk. This is undoubtedly a difficult matter, and if it were desirable to avoid mental toil, the new criticism, even if it were true, would bring with it some undesirable results. In point of fact, however, it is not desirable to relieve ourselves from mental toil. We grow morally strong, not by having moral truth given to us in perfect and infallible forms, but by being compelled to think on moral problems; to use the figure of the Bible itself, it is a mine in which silver is hidden. For this silver we must seek; we must search for it as men search for hid treasures. It is not coined, minted, and delivered to us with the King's stamp on it. The coining, the minting, and the separating of it from the dross are left for us to do.

To tell our inquirer how this is to be done, with all the amplitude of illustration which his letter calls for, would quite transcend the limits of a brief editorial. We can only suggest to him three principles which may guide him in this endeavor "to find and understand the word of God which is unquestionably there"—that is, in the Bible.

The first of these principles is the recognition of the fact that the Bible does not contain, and does not purport to contain, a revelation of all truth. It is a revelation or unveiling of God, and this revelation or unveiling of God is in and through human experience. Whatever is, or purports to be, a mere exposition of science, chronology, history, and the like, is not to be regarded as a part of the revelation. It is only God and our relations to God, and our duties to one another as they grow out of this relationship, that are unveiled in the Bible. In the second place, this unveiling reaches its consummation in the life, and especially in the character, of Jesus Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh. Anything which purports to be an unveiling of God which is inconsistent with the character and teachings of Christ may be safely regarded as in so far fallible, imperfect, human, erroneous. If, for example, Christ tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who spitefully use us, and we find in the Old Testament a psalm which pronounced blessing on him "that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones," we may be perfectly sure that the latter is not a true revelation of the divine spirit. It is rather a revelation of that spirit from which Christ has come to deliver us. In the third place, God makes a revelation of himself in our own spiritual consciousness. Conscience is in a true sense a word of God. God does not speak contradictory things. He does not give us one command in our own souls, and another and contradictory command through an ancient record. When these two seem to conflict, we must follow the command which he gives to us in our own souls; we

must so interpret what ancient men tell us they understood to be God's voice to them as not to make it contradict what God's voice plainly and clearly says to us. We may, indeed, hold our own moral judgments in abeyance; we may wait for further study and consideration; we often ought to do so; but whatever, after the fullest and most careful consideration we can give to the subject, appears to us to be our duty, must be taken by us as a divine direction, and whatever in the words of others contradicts this inward monitor we must either believe we do not understand, or else we must believe is erroneous.

In short, we are to take the Bible, not as the word of God—it is never called the word of God in its own pages—but as a record of the experiences of devout men who have recorded what seemed to them God's revelation of himself. The word of God is God revealing himself. The word of God is in the Bible, but it is not identical with the Bible. For this word, this revelation of God, we are to search as men search for a hidden treasure; and we are to measure this revelation by the two manifestations of God, which are supreme and confirmatory of each other—the life and character of Christ and our own conscience.



The Message of Christianity

We do not believe that the Gospel is losing its hold on humanity, but it is not so certain that the Church is not losing its hold on the Gospel. There are causes sufficient to account for such a loss, if it is really taking place. The age is materialistic in its life, and the Church always is influenced by the conditions of the society in which it does its work. A materialistic age is always pessimistic, and the Church cannot wholly escape the pessimistic atmosphere. The old forms of faith are unquestionably incongruous with modern forms of philosophy, and in a change of creed there is always involved some loss in faith, however great the ultimate net gain may be. Extremes meet; and the antithesis between the faith which believes in a supernaturalism which is universal and a rationalism which doubts or disbelieves it altogether is not so great as one might expect it to be. Finally, the first instinct of the preacher in such an age is often to try a short cut to reform, to preach command and penalty instead of hope and love, law instead of Gospel.

What is Gospel preaching?

If we want to get a direct answer to this question, we cannot do better than turn to the Book of Acts and read there the first Gospel sermons. They are, in brief, something like this: The Messiah long prophesied in Israel, long vaguely hoped for even in pagan lands, has come. His own nation knew him not, and put him to death. But he has risen from the dead, and attested his power over life by vanquishing the last enemy of life. His submission to death has demonstrated his love. His victory over death has demonstrated his power. If he had not died, he could not have proved himself the Messiah, because we should not have known his love. If he had not risen from the dead, he could not have proved himself the Messiah, because we should not have known his power. But now he has both died and risen again, and by his death and resurrection has proved his victorious love, victorious over sin and death. The hope long deferred need no longer make the heart sick. The World-Deliverer has come. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation of which the prophets spoke. Behold, the Bridegroom cometh: go ye forth to meet him.

Out of this proclamation by heralds and witnesses of a

fact grew an enthusiasm of loyalty the like of which the world has never seen. The fact transcended all facts in history; the enthusiasm transcends all enthusiasms in life. The slave looked with adoration on his Emancipator; the widow and the orphan with exultant love on the Deliverer who illuminated the sullen tomb with celestial glory; the ignorant serf with irrepressible love on the Divine Man who called him brother and told him that he was a son of God. There was at first no attempt to philosophize, to define, to put faith into philosophic forms. There was simply an acceptance, on the testimony of witnesses, of the pregnant fact of Christ's death and resurrection, and a great, undefined, exultant faith and hope and joy springing up to greet the One who lived such a life, suffered such a death, and experienced such a glorious resurrection.

Slow-footed thought followed after instant and instinctive reverence and love. The world worshiped Christ, then framed the definition "of one substance with the Father;" first followed Christ, then defined him as the perfect and sinless Man. Whatever we may think philosophically should be the order now, no one can read the sermons in the Book of Acts and not see that the order of spiritual life then was this: First, belief in the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah; second, reverence, love, adoration, enthusiasm of loyalty for him; third, definition, interpretation, philosophy, creed. First came Christianity as a fact, next as an experience, last of all as a theology.

That which was the Gospel still is the Gospel. Christianity is not a new system of ethics. Telling men with varied phraseology, Be virtuous and you will be happy, is not preaching the Gospel. That is a very old story; men are tired of it, even when they are not suspicious of it. Christianity is not a new philosophy. It is not a new theory of the universe. It is not a new series of definitions of God and his government. Christianity can no more be embodied in a creed than the fragrance of a garden can be distilled from a treatise on botany. Christianity is, first, the resplendent history of a suffering, a crucified, and a risen Christ, of patient love victorious over passionate iniquity; it is, second, a glowing enthusiasm, kindled and fed by the vision of that victorious love; it is, last, and we may add least of all, a scientific or philosophic analysis of the historical phenomena and the vital experience. Wherever Christianity is preached as a historic fact and a living enthusiasm, it awakens responses from human hearts. Christ still draws all men unto him when He is lifted up. The Church which really believes that the World-Deliverer has come into the world, that he has attested his love by dying, that he has demonstrated his power by rising from the dead, that he imparts his life to his followers, that, strong in his strength, they are able to vanquish sorrow, to make flowers of life bloom on the grave, to break the chains of every form of slavery and set all oppressed free, to illuminate the dark places of the earth and give education to the ignorant, to stem and turn back corruption from government, deceit from society, selfishness from commerce, and that the evidence of this power and the guarantee of this hope are in a risen and victorious Lord, whose resurrection and living presence are attested by eighteen centuries of history—the Church and the ministry which believe these facts, and possess this enthusiasm, and go forth in this spirit, and preach this Gospel of all-conquering faith and hope and love, never had so great a power as to-day. He who has this message to deliver, and this spirit in which to deliver it, whether his theology be ancient or modern, will find hearers eager for his message and life springing up in new enthusiasms responsive to it.