

How to be Always Fresh.

To hold his power as a writer or a speaker on religious topics, a man must be fresh, if not original; bright and striking in his forms of statement, if not absolutely novel in the truth he presents. He can not long keep up the interest of his hearers or readers if he gives them nothing but the tritest sayings, or the merest commonplaces of thought; or if he is continually repeating himself in his own little round of personal opinion and fancy. How to be always fresh on religious themes, is therefore an important question to preacher and teacher and editor, and hardly less so to parent and friend. It is worth considering by every Christian.

To be always giving out that which is fresh, a man must be always taking in that which is fresh. No mental cistern will hold a life supply of the waters of knowledge. Communication must be kept open with an ever-flowing fountain, to meet a never-ending demand as the spigot. When the incoming of the waters is cut off, the end of their outgoing is not far away. Indeed, the distributing-pipes cannot empty themselves when they lose the pressure of a new supply from their original source; hence, as soon as a man stops learning, he inevitably stops teaching—to any real advantage. The original source of religious knowledge is the Bible; that, in fact, is the only source of such knowledge; and without a continual re-supply of his mental furnishing from the Bible no man can retain freshness as a religious writer or speaker or thinker. To this rule there are positively no exceptions; there never was one. Just so surely as God knows more about religion than all mankind put together, just so surely the book which God has written on that subject has more in it than all other books put together; and just so surely the man who gets his knowledge of religion directly from that book, and who keeps up getting such knowledge, from the same unfailing source, has the best knowledge, has it freshest, and can use it to greatest advantage. No other man is so sure as he to be always fresh and striking and forceful in his presentations of religious truth.

If ever there was a preacher, or a teacher, who had a right to draw on his own resources, and to limit himself to his own ideas of religious truth it was Jesus of Nazareth; yet he was pre-eminently a Bible student from his earliest to his latest ministry on earth, and his preaching and his teaching from first to last gave evidence of his close and ever-fresh acquaintance with the already existing Scriptures, even while he was himself preparing added Scriptures for his followers. The one glimpse given to us of his boyhood finds him a scholar in a Bible school; and his declaration concerning his occupation of them was that he was about his "Father's business;" the very best business in which it was possible for him to engage. The beginning of his public ministry was in an exposition of "the book of the prophet Isaiah" in his home synagogue at Nazareth. His very latest earthly discourse was in a talk with two of his disciples on their way to Emmaus, after his resurrection, when "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." He did not tell those disciples what he thought, or what he knew, about the Messiah; he told them what God had said on the subject; and that was just the freshest and the best thing that could be said on it; just the thing surest to make their hearts burn within them as they heard it. When Jesus was tempted of the Devil, he battled his adversary with Scripture; and all the way along his life, in his public and private teaching, he was pointing his disciples to the truths of the Scriptures, and enjoining it upon them to search those Scriptures for themselves, if they would have knowledge of comfort or hope. Even after

Jesus was again in heaven, and was sending back messages to his churches by the Patmos preacher, his words were full of references to the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus was the model preacher and the model teacher; and unless a preacher or a teacher claims to have more knowledge about divine things, and more original thought upon religious subjects, than Jesus had he had better keep as close to the Bible as Jesus did, in his religious teaching and preaching, if he would be always fresh, always wise, always accurate, and always effective.

But the method of Jesus as a teacher and a preacher is not the method most common among those who speak or write in his name. There are comparatively few who realize that they can find fresher thoughts on religious themes in the Bible than outside of it; that they can be more striking and more pointed in their preaching and teaching by the unexpected use of Bible declarations than by anything which is original with themselves. Quite too many have the idea that Bible phrases are threadbare, but their own are fresh and novel; that the contents of the Bible are already familiar to the world, while the contents of their minds are a treasure yet inexhausted, if not inexhaustible. More persons are prompt to tell what they think about a Bible theme than are careful to ascertain reverently what God knows—and has declared—about it. As a Hartford pastor recently put it: "Many people come to the study of their Bibles, saying, 'Hear, Lord; for thy servant speaketh.'" Or again, those who really believe that the truths of the Bible are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, are often readier to stand over the mine of precious ore and deliver a discourse on the value and uses of gold, than to dig into the mine and bring up specimens of the ore to tempt the eyes and to satisfy the longings of those whom they address. It is only the worth of the gold which gives any worth to a lecture on gold. When the gold itself can be had in abundance, the lecture on its preciousness can be fairly dispensed with. He who scatters the gold with a free hand will surely have the lead as a benefactor of the poor in contrast with him who talks about gold with the glibbest tongue. He also, who brings out of the Bible its hidden treasures, will be a fresher and a more effective speaker or writer than he who tells of the abundant treasures which the Bible contains; or than he who proffers any other treasures as a substitute for these.

To-day there is no book in all the world which comprises such a wealth of unused thought, and such stores of novel material for practical use in writing and speaking, as the Bible. Nor is there any human mind which can gain from all sources outside of that book such freshness of thought, such richness of new illustration, such startling novelty of pertinent and pungent application of important practical truth to every conceivable condition of life, as may be obtained through a closer and longer continued study of that Book of books. Preachers, teachers, and parents—the wisest and best of them—have yet a great deal to learn from the Bible. If they neglect the study of that book, they will grow dry and stale in thought, and in expression, from whatever else they are seeking to learn. If they are constant in prayerful and expectant study of the Bible, they will be fresher and fuller, brighter and broader, in their mental and spiritual acquirement and activities, than otherwise they possibly could be.

Let, then, this be the prayer of every child of God as he comes to the book of God: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The wondrous things are there. He who finds the most of them shall be ever the freshest teacher of the truths of God.—S. S. Times.

The Negroes' Missionary Meeting.

There are those who often speak disrespectfully of the negroes, and ridicule their religious zeal; but, with a little application, the whites might learn something from them. The one below is a lesson to the point:

At a missionary meeting among the negroes in West India, it is related the following resolutions were adopted:

Resolved, That we will all give something.

Resolved, That we will all give according to our ability.

Resolved, That we will all give willingly.

At the close of the meeting, a leading negro took his seat at the table with pen and ink to put down what each came to contribute. Many advanced to the table and handed in their contributions, some more, some less. Among the contributors was an old negro who was very rich, almost as rich as the rest combined. He threw down a small silver coin. "Take dat back again," said the chairman of the meeting; "dat may be 'cording to de first resolution, but not according to de second." The old man accordingly took it up, much enraged. One after another came forward, and all giving more than himself, he was ashamed and again threw in a piece of money on the table, saying, "Dar, take dat." It was a valuable piece of gold, but it was given so ill-temperedly that the chairman answered, "No, sir; that won't do. Dat may be 'cording to de first and second resolutions, but not 'cording to de third." The old man was obliged to take it up again. Still angry with himself, he sat a long time, and nearly all were gone, and then he advanced to the table, with a smile on his countenance, and laid a large sum on the table. "Dar, now, berry well," said the presiding officer, "dat will do; dat am 'cording to all de rizations."

This narrative contains in a nutshell the whole formula of benevolence. The first duty is to give; the second is to give according to your ability; the third, which is equal to that, is to give willingly.—Brethren at Work.

The Dreaded Jews.

The *London Spectator*, in substance says, that "the dread which the Jews are awakening in Eastern Europe almost equals the dread felt for them in Western Europe six hundred years ago, and is based on the grounds. They display a wonderful talent for accumulation with which Christians cannot compete, and which tends to make of them an ascendant caste. It is gravely asserted in the Roumanian Parliament that the true difficulty in the way of allowing them the equal rights which were secured by the Treaty of Berlin, is the certainty entertained by Roumanians and Servians that they would gradually oust the peasantry till they possessed the whole land. In Hungary it is asserted, even in Reuter's telegrams, that they have purchased so many estates as to make an alteration in the Constitution needful and in Germany, literature is full of the success of the Jews in ousting the ancient families.

Their remarkable success in politics, and their instinct for acquiring pecuniary control of the Press, are observed in all free countries, and have recently called forth pamphlets, and even books, penetrated with a most energetic hate. Considering that a hundred years ago the Jews were a despised caste, their rise into a dreaded order has been singularly rapid—too rapid, some imagine, for them to be perfectly safe in their new position.

The explanation of their success is, we presume, that their peculiar capacity exactly suits the conditions of modern life, and their best defense would be this—that in the country where they are most perfectly free,

France, they are least hated or distrusted."

Likely other people could be equally successful were they to apply themselves with as much diligence. A true Jew is not ashamed to be a Jew. Let Christians also learn to be Christians, and act like Christians, and many of them will get along much better. It is acting like the world, that causes so many professing Christians to degenerate. All this might be explained were it necessary.

Tact.

Many people are so ignorant of all the conveniences and proprieties of life that they have no other idea of tact than as a species of hypocrisy, and never fail, on opportunity, to characterize it as such. But to the mind capable of the least discrimination the two are as wide apart as are the north and south poles. For hypocrisy is the dumb-show of lying, but tact is rather a method employed to avoid lying. Hypocrisy says, "There is no pit here," and skips gayly across; but tact, saying nothing at all about the pit, cries, "Ah, how pleasant it is in the other direction; let us go that way!" Hypocrisy never hesitates at a lie; tact never allows occasion for one.

Tact is, in fact, the great lubricator of life; it oils the machinery, smooths away trouble, looks far ahead, perhaps, to see it, and turns things into another channel. But however tact avoids the necessity of falsehood, it does not suppress the truth; it simply prevents reference to the facts; it has a sort of self-respect which does not consider itself as using deceit when merely keeping its own business in its own breast.

Tact has, moreover, a way of surmounting difficulties that no other power has. Hypocrisy, so to say, burns its ships behind it; it puts it back against a lie and fights, but tact always keeps its retreat open, and always has forces in reserve. Tact seldom makes the assault; it never conquers; it wins without battle. "When we would show any one that he is mistaken," PASCAL declares, "our best courage is to observe on what side he considers the subject—for his view of it is generally right on this side—and admit to him that he is right so far. He will be satisfied with this acknowledgment that he was not wrong in his judgment, but only inadvertent in not looking at the whole of the cause." And tact never had a higher exposition. Yet tact is as different from cunning as it is again from falsehood. Cunning goes about seeking devious ways; it feeds on itself; it becomes a disease; it deceives itself and debases itself all the time that tact is moving on serenely in a loftier atmosphere—loftier, at any rate, since tact is at least the child of intellect, while cunning is often the offspring of mere idiocy.

There is nothing more useful in a family, as a cushion to every fall, a buffer to every blow, than this agreeable tact; it always knows the right thing to say, the exact thing to do; it knows how to lift the pleasant hand at the very moment for smoothing ruffled plumage; it knows no debatable questions how to put others into such good humor that in can carry its point; it never alludes to a forbidden subject; it turns conversation from dangerous approaches; it never sees what is best unseen; it does not answer to that which requires a scathing reply if heard at all; it remembers names and faces; it has the apropos anecdote; if it does not go out of the way to blame; where it can not praise it is silent, and it never consents to mortify any.

Thus tact, it would appear, is a species of kindness, a dislike to wound as well as a desire to give pleasure; perhaps also a species of selfishness in its automatic shrinking from crying, quarrelling, and discomfort of any kind.

Once in a while, when some great

blunder is made that no tact even quite repairs, we are led to wonder what the world would be without it. Somebody once said that without hope the world would be naught, for, destitute of that, we should not perform the simplest operations of life; we should not go out of the door lest we should fall down; we should not lift our hand to our head lest it should remain there. Quite as badly off should we be without tact; all the flavor of life would be crude as some undisguised acid; there would be a perpetual recoil among the atoms of family and social life as of oil and water; every sharp thing would hit and hurt; peace, harmony, enjoyment, would be things of no existence. Certainly it must be conceded that tact is to our nerves what beneficence is to our morals. It is, moreover, a thing easily cultivated; its presence is one of the sure signs of gentle breeding; and its absence always leads us to believe people sprung from clouds; for, save for the awkward exceptions always acknowledged to prove the rule, where people of culture and of gentle behavior are to be found, there is tact to be found with them.—*Bazar*.

Charles Lamb on Wine Cup.

"The waters have gone over me. But out of the black depths could I be heard, I would cry out to all those who have but set a foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth to whom the flavor of his first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life, or the entering upon some newly-discovered paradise, look into my desolation and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will—to see his destruction and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself; to perceive all goodness emptied out of him, and yet not be able to forget a time when it was otherwise; to bear about the piteous spectacle of his own self-ruin—could he see my fevered eye, feverish with last night's drinking, and feverishly looking for this night's repetition of the folly; could he feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feebleness and feebleness, outcry to be delivered—it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation.—*Cynosure*."

"We are stepping on far and fast. The signs of the times are all around, and they who list may read. The handwriting is on the wall; the fiat has gone forth; the ancient empire shall be subverted; the dominion of superstition, already decaying, shall break away, and crumble into dust; and new life being breathed into the confused and chaotic mass, it shall be clearly seen, that from the beginning there has been no discrepancy, no incongruity, no disorder, no interruption, no interference: but that all the events which surround us, even to the furthest limits of the material creation, are but different parts of a single scheme, which is permeated by one glorious principle of universal and undeviating regularity.—*Henry T. Buckle*."

—When I hear a person who has broken the laws of the land, railed at, and hear people cry, "Oh, he is a vile wretch; he deserves his sentence; for my part I can't throw a stone at him, but I see that if God were to leave me to myself, I should commit as foul crimes, and a thousand times worse."

—Do not allow yourself to rest satisfied while you can point to nothing valuable that your hands produced, nor anything which you can call your own, bought with money earned by your own labor.

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