

instances of the adoption of something like preaching. But so far as is known preaching remains, both in origin and history, a peculiarly Christian institution.

§ 1. IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING AND DIFFICULTY OF PREACHING WELL.

The great appointed means of spreading the good tidings of salvation through Christ is preaching—words spoken whether to the individual, or to the assembly. And this, nothing can supersede. *Printing* has become a mighty agency for good and for evil; and Christians should employ it, with the utmost diligence and in every possible way, for the spread of truth. But printing can never take the place of the living word. When a man who is apt in teaching, whose soul is on fire with the truth which he trusts has saved him and hopes will save others, speaks to his fellow-men, face to face, eye to eye, and electric sympathies flash to and fro between him and his hearers, till they lift each other up, higher and higher, into the intensest thought, and the most impassioned emotion—higher and yet higher, till they are borne as on chariots of fire above the world,—there is a power to move men, to influence character, life, destiny, such as no printed page can ever possess. *Pastoral work* is of immense importance, and all preachers should be diligent in performing it. But it cannot take the place of preaching, nor fully compensate for lack of power in the pulpit. The two help each other, and neither of them is able, unless supported by the other, to achieve the largest and most blessed results. When he who preaches is the sympathizing pastor, the trusted counsellor, the kindly and honored friend of young and old, of rich and poor, then “truths divine come mended from his

lips,” and the door to men’s hearts, by the magical power of sympathy, will fly open at his word. But on the other hand, when he who visits is the preacher, whose thorough knowledge of Scripture and elevated views of life, whose able and impassioned discourses have carried conviction and commanded admiration, and melted into one the hearts of the multitude, who is accustomed to stand before them as the ambassador of God, and is associated in their minds with the authority and the sacredness of God’s Word,—when *he* comes to speak with the suffering, the sorrowing, the tempted, his visit has a meaning and a power of which otherwise it must be destitute. If a minister feels himself specially drawn towards either of these departments of effort, let him also constrain himself to diligence in the other.

Religious *ceremonies* may be instructive and impressive. The older dispensation made much use of these, as we employ pictures in teaching children. Even Christianity, which has the minimum of ceremony, illustrates its fundamental facts, and often makes deep religious impressions, by its two simple but expressive ordinances. But these are merely pictures to illustrate, merely helps to that great work of teaching and convincing, of winning and holding men, which preaching, made mighty by God’s Spirit, has to perform.

It follows that preaching must always be a necessity, and good preaching a mighty power. In every age of Christianity, since John the Baptist drew crowds into the desert, there has been no great religious movement, no restoration of Scripture truth, and reanimation of genuine piety, without new power in preaching, both as cause and as effect.

But alas! how difficult we find it to preach *well*. How small a proportion of the sermons heard weekly