

occasion; but we seldom speak of "inspiration" or "spirit-moving" in other connections, so that in the minds of the world at large we are supposed to attach some peculiar sanctity, some unusual superhuman agency, to the service of our ministers. In fact, I think that same feeling is widespread in our own Society as a result of just this use of formula instead of clear language. Such a feeling, I am persuaded, has robbed us of much good service in helping others to see truth from our standpoint. Many who see clearly and feel deeply hold back from expression of thought and feeling because they feel no supernatural prompting; however they may realize the importance of the subjects they have in mind, they turn aside from the God-given power within them and look for some external power to speak through them.

It should be clearly understood that *inspiration*, among us, means simply a clear view of a helpful truth, and that a call to speak is no more than a favorable time for passing such truth on to others. It is impossible consistently to draw a line between the ever-present directing power that guides all our actions and the power that guides this one action. Intelligent people must recognize the fact that any theory of verbal inspiration is false. All of us have heard sermons making such claim where the sermon itself proved the falsity of the claim. The one test for the hearer, as for the speaker, is in the truth conveyed. We know that our ministry is imperfect, and therefore that it is human; but we know too that divine truth sometimes shines through it, and therefore we recognize also its divine source.

This distinction may seem unimportant, but in fact no half view of truth is unimportant. The world outside, which is the raw material on which we must work, sees the absurdity of an assumption of perfection where perfection is not, and so fail to get the good that is really to be had. The effect of our own loyalty to our belief is wasted

if we do not make it plain what that belief is.

Another conclusion from this way of looking at the matter is that a clear view of a helpful truth is a necessary preliminary to a call to speak. It must be realized that silence and thought are the real basis of our meetings. No one has the right to break into that silence and that thought unless he has clearly in mind something that he feels will be valuable to his hearers. The responsibility of speech must be upon the speaker; a call to the ministry implies an ability to distinguish between a flow of ideas and a flow of words, and responsibility must not be shouldered off on a supernatural power.

This brings me to another point. It is a tenet commonly accepted among us that ministers should not prepare their sermons. This opinion does not seem to me to be well founded. While our thoughts come from that "Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness," the duty of expressing it is ours, and there can be no doubt that it will be better expressed in many cases if it is thought over in advance. Some have the gift of clear expression without effort; others always have a struggle with their vocabulary before an idea can be translated into words. In this latter case it would be more seemly that the struggle should take place in private. It will always detract much from the force of an idea if the mechanism of its expression is forced upon the attention of the hearer. I think the example of the founders of the Society of Friends sustains me in this view. George Fox did not prepare particular sermons, because his whole inner life was preparation for his ministry. His life was given up to impressing one great idea upon his generation—can we say then that he spoke without thought? The same has been true in varying degree of those who have upheld his standard. It is a curious conclusion from such examples that men whose lives are necessarily occupied for the most part in the cares and responsibili-