

that function ; and however often he may preach, the times when he can command a full congregation—in most churches from forty to forty-six Sunday mornings in the year—are too few for any of them to be wasted in other work.

The occasional sermon—seldom more, often less, than semi-religious—had a certain fitness when people heard from a hundred to a hundred and fifty sermons in the year ; for two or three equally impressive religious discourses on the same day made a palimpsest of the hearer's mind, and it was the most devout members of a congregation who used to complain that the afternoon sermon blurred the impression of the morning sermon. But the day of rest and worship should not be suffered to pass without leaving for the people some solid portion of the bread of life, on which they may feed during the perhaps entire spiritual famine of the ensuing week. Did I attend a church where in every crisis of public affairs, or on every stirring item of intelligence, I was doomed to hear a sermon only constructively religious, I should feel starved out of my due ; and when I preach, I am sure that I have no right to leave the pulpit without having given a lesson in Christian truth or duty which my hearers may find worth taking home and brooding upon, and which may, if heeded, make them wiser, better, or both, as subjects of the divine government and invited heirs of heaven.

Equally little time or need is there for preaching about other people's opinions. There are in every congregation those who know more about what others believe than about what they themselves profess to believe, and who are glad, by controverting what they regard as falsities, to ward off acknowledged truth from their own consciences. In saying this, I would not be understood as disparaging doctrinal preaching. In an important sense I would have no other preaching. Truth is the sole basis of duty. There is no truth worth holding that has not its imperative Therefore. There is no duty which is not an imperative Wherefore of some truth that lies behind it. The best sermons are those which unite the two, which are—if I may use terms that are trite only because significant—both doctrinal and practical. A mere essay, however thoroughly religious and devout in its line of thought, leaves its hearers for the most part unmoved. A mere declamation, however eloquent and fervent, may produce excitement, but to no definite end and with no enduring benefit. Every sermon ought to be founded on some truth, law or principle, appertaining to man's spiritual nature, his religious life or his moral obligation. It will not be always, perhaps not often, a fundamental truth, a largely comprehensive law, an ultimate principle ; but if not, it should be one of the innumerable sub-truths, specific laws, principles for current application, comprised in and derived from the primary and essential elements of religious faith and ethical duty. Dr. Emmons, the last great cham-