

The Call for an Adventurous Church

popular gifts to gain an audience, and at the same time lose a church; to lecture, rather than preach, on popular topics so interestingly and piquantly as to disappoint and, in the end, alienate those who come to church for spiritual reinforcement, teaching and comfort. He succeeds in attracting non-churchgoers, but he has lost that Christian community atmosphere which is his most powerful instrument for deepening and spiritualising that attraction. There is no other way of reclaiming a neglected child than by bringing it into a true family atmosphere. What it needs is a home; you cannot win it by remanding it to a workhouse and instructing the chaplain to give it weekly lectures on gentleness and affection. The preaching that merely gathers an audience must fail unless it has the spiritual family behind it. The preacher who does not build a church writes his message in water. He has a duty to his own people which no amount of enthusiasm for the unchurched masses can absolve him. His first task is to prophesy to the dry bones—to the conventional, worldly church members that are his cross; to break his heart over them, to spend upon them some of that passion and persuasiveness he is so ready to pour out upon those who are not of his flock. This duty does not interfere with the wider ministry to which he is equally called; on the contrary, to neglect it is the surest way to hinder that wider ministry. The Church has suffered more