

How often have we felt that we have failed in the object of our visit, because our people would not talk with us upon what was experimental. They may have listened to us respectfully, but they have been dumb in regard to what above all things we wanted to hear them speak. We have failed to elicit any information in regard to the state of their feelings. In view of this reticence, some have proposed that we approach them by a circuitous path, leading them out in conversation upon secular topics and gradually drawing them into religious conversation, affirming that in this way we are much more likely to succeed, and much less apt to offend. The experience of other ministers is, that they have succeeded much the best when they have gone directly at the subject of personal religion. Here we can lay down no invariable rule. Whatever our own experience has proved to be the best and most successful method for us to adopt, we are at liberty to pursue. Probably the less direct method may be the most expedient in approaching individuals to whom we are comparative strangers; but to ordinary hearers in our own congregation, who put themselves under our pastoral care, and who have confidence in our christian character and personal regard for their welfare, we would not usually fear giving offence by more direct, plain and affectionate dealing with them in things pertaining to their salvation. We freely confess that when we have commenced conversing on secular subjects, we have seldom been able to make the transition to the spiritual, and that we have been most successful when, with fewest preliminaries, and not fearing to offend, and with as much as possible of the *suaviter in modo*, we have dwelt plainly with our people in the matter of personal religion.

The subject we have thus imperfectly treated is an important one. Let it be our highest ambition to become good ministers of Jesus Christ, rightly dividing the word of truth. Our conversational talent may be small, but for that reason let us not bury it, but cultivate it. It is capable of vast improvement and will certainly be most remunerative in spiritual results. The prosperity of our churches in this Union will very much depend upon the attention paid to this part of ministerial work. In average preaching talent our ministers are certainly inferior to those of no other body in these provinces; yet we have no men of world-wide fame, who, like some of our honoured brethren in England and the United States, can draw crowds around them by the mere force of their eloquence. We must therefore employ the less ostentatious and speedy, but not less successful methods which God has ever honoured for the building up of His cause. We must be content to work to a large extent unseen, unheard, unpraised. But sure and stable will be the results, and blessed the reward.

We conclude by a quotation in point from a distinguished living essayist:

"By the conversion of the individual the world will be regenerated, and not otherwise. This does not make the church in its visible forms and appointments of slight importance, but it points out its grand duty, that of converting men, and shows the vanity of looking for a substitute for personal godliness in any mechanism or apparatus.

"The difficulty here presented is stupendous, but it is precisely the one which must be met. Easy were it to renew mankind and change the face of the world, if it could be done in a public way, by the devising of some magnificent and politic scheme of government; then indeed might the corner stone of the new world be brought out with haste, and indeed with shouting, for should not we have found it?