

acting and re-acting upon each other in methods and degrees that we utterly fail to trace. If the 'cure of souls' embraced a responsibility for the character, life, and destiny of those under our charge, it were an intolerable presumption for us to undertake it. But it does not. The words of Jehovah to the prophet of old, in Ezekiel xxxiii., define the limits of our duty and accountability with most precise and welcome distinctness. The 'watchman' has to answer (1) for 'seeing the sword come upon the land,' for vigilance and understanding; and (2) for 'blowing the trumpet and warning the people,' making known, distinctly, earnestly, widely, the peril which threatens them. And there his charge ends. 'Thou hast delivered thy soul,' whether 'the people take warning,' or 'forbear.'

"But this is enough, assuredly, more than mortal man can bear alone. 'Who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God.' Every part of the work of a minister of the Gospel, as we have said, is included under the title, 'the cure of souls.' Preaching to a multitude, however large, is designed to affect that multitude, not as a unit, but through the *individuals* of which it is composed. Each man who comes there, among his fellows, comes from and with his apartness from them, remains a distinct individual still. He is addressed in common with them, because each man alike has something in himself *like to*, but not *identical with*, something in each other member of the company. A congregation has no aggregate mind, or heart, or conscience, or will, but as many of these as are the human units of which it is composed. And the preacher addresses these separate individuals, though seated together, with a view to influencing their personal thoughts, feelings and conduct.

"This is undoubtedly the true ideal of public speech. Yet there is danger of its being forgotten. We personify these masses of men, as if they had a corporate unity of character and action; a nation, a city, a parliament, a church; and to a certain extent there is truth in this. Even in reference to lower matters, however, we only gain the body by gaining the several members of it. And in spiritual things the individual is paramount—is all.

"Were this more constantly remembered, there might be less of *aimless* preaching than we now fear there is. An ambassador for Christ is not appointed to pronounce discourses—however scriptural, orthodox, learned, eloquent, interesting, well ordered and well expressed—before the people, so that they may listen to him as to 'one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument.' Too often, alas! alike by preachers and hearers, is his function thus grievously misunderstood, to the unspeakable injury of both. But he is sent with a message from the King of Kings to His several subjects; a message on personal matters, to be personally delivered, to be received and acted on personally by those to whom it is addressed. They may receive it in the same time and place with scores, hundreds and thousands of other individuals addressed in a kindred strain, but it comes to each one apart, 'I have a message from God unto thee.'

"Nothing can be more odious than what is popularly known as 'personal preaching'—that is the public description and denunciation of individuals before a congregation, from that 'coward's castle' where the offender is safe from reply. This is an offence against good taste, good manners, good judgment, manly honour and Christian charity. But that is good preaching which makes many individuals at once in a congregation feel that the preacher is speaking to them, and even suspect—as we often hear—that some one has been telling him about them, while he may be utterly unconscious between the joints of whose harness the bow drawn at a venture has sent the piercing arrow. This kind of personal preaching I would most earnestly counsel my brethren who are entering on this work to addict themselves unto. Take aim. Try to hit somebody. Do not be absorbed in a subject, and let your whole endeavour be to do justice to it, to explore it thoroughly, to arrange it lucidly, to illustrate it vividly, the people standing by, only as interested spectators of these intellectual gymnastics or pyrotechnical displays, without a thought that it has anything to do with them except as an 'entertain-