

What an infinite advantage has this been to the Christian pulpit! We shall not know the real hold which the pulpit has even upon the nominal church until it is brought into competition with many other popular institutions and attractions. This is the second thing which must be borne in mind in estimating the position of the pulpit. Not only has it had a day once a week to itself, it may be said to have had that day in many countries without even the appearance of competition. When the actor, the artist, the musician, and the showman have been banished from the field, it is hardly fair to say, "Behold how large an influence the pulpit is exerting on the popular mind!" This is simply unfair, and as a basis of estimate it is obviously absurd. Let the pulpit try what it can do on a week-day if it would know the real extent of its influence.

I venture to think that under competition the pulpit, with exceptions, no doubt, would be simply nowhere in the competitive strife. Preachers have enjoyed almost a monopoly of time. There are indications, however, that the monopoly is about to be broken up, and that preachers will only get the share of public attention to which they have entitled themselves by their divine message, and the delivery of that message with adequate intelligence and burning zeal. In view of this fact I have no hesitation in saying that the reconstruction of the pulpit has become an urgent question. Again and again I would insist that we have not the very congregations which sit before us, in any fast and binding sense; in many instances they are sitting before us because on the Sunday they have nowhere else to sit. I know of no greater impertinence of a social kind than that of a man standing up to preach who has nothing to offer but sundry inventions and perishable theories of his own. Why should one man try to play moralist in the face of another if the morality he preaches is only a passing phase and sense of righteousness of which he himself is the principal judge? To preach to another man is, at least apparently, to assume superiority over him. Hence in a superstitious degree the Christian minister has become a kind of idol, a divinely surrounded and divinely protected inventor and patentee of divers ethical conceptions.

It is clear that the Bible is the first source of authority upon questions which come within the sphere of revelation rather than the sphere of intellectual reasoning. There are certain great topics upon which preachers know nothing except what they have been told by the volume which they have accepted as inspired. Man knows nothing about God, Redemption, Immortality, and Destiny except what he has learned from the Bible. Biblical preaching, therefore, must never cease from the Church. Biblical teaching is very different from text-mongering. A sermon may be full of the spirit of revelation without having a text even at the beginning, in the midst, or at the end.

The second source of authority is Experience. We must not regard Electricity as a fact, and Experience as a myth. The one is at least

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