

convinced by the dogmas of orthodoxy; but if the truth be held forth in its clearness, fulness, and authority, conscience will stand forth to embrace and welcome it as the voice and image of God. Conscience is the preacher's best ally. He may be regarded as an enthusiast, as a fanatic, or as a fool; but conscience will always recognise in the faithful, earnest, self-denying preacher, the chosen and anointed servant of God. "We are made manifest unto God; and we trust also are made manifest in your consciences."

2. *The Mission to the Conscience has its Difficulties.* For although conscience in its most depressed and languid condition is always on the side of God, of truth, and of righteousness, and, on this ground, will ever supply the most convincing evidence of the reality of God's moral government, and of the certainty of an eternal world, yet the decisions of conscience are against man, who is a sinner. "There is none righteous, no, not one. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Now there is in guilt an instinctive shrinking from exposure. "Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind." Just as a culprit who, when pursued for crime, will lurk in secret to escape pursuers, so will a sinner act when confronted by his conscience. If he have slandered his neighbour, he can never meet the victim of his calumny but the retreating glance of his eye will betray the treachery of his spirit; if he have perpetrated a theft, every shadow that crosses his path will fill him with alarm; if he attempt to conceal his crimes by the cloak of religion, the mutiny within will bid defiance to such horrible stage-play. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." They try to create peace by bribing the conscience. The atheist would persuade himself that he is the offspring of chance; the infidel hopes to sleep for ever in the grave; the pagan tortures himself with bodily macerations; the Romanist takes asylum in the confessional; the Pharisee thanks God that he is not as other men; the worldling rushes to the counting-house, to the tavern, or to the theatre. These are some of the subtle and disastrous devices by which Satan endeavours to obscure the perceptions, to pervert the judgment, and to stifle the remonstrances of the moral sense; and all these refuges of lies must be stormed and scattered before we can present the truth in all its solemn and searching grandeur to the conscience.

3. *The Mission to the Conscience has its Responsibilities.* The conscience of man is the great judgment day in anticipation. To possess a faculty so wonderful in its structure, so quick in its movements, so stern in its decision, so terrible in its reprisals, and so indestructible in its instincts, is indeed a talent of overwhelming magnitude, and one for which we must render a faithful account at the bar of God. If conscience, with its powerful checks and stinging rebukes, were to be banished from the world, the earth would become a scene of universal lawlessness, cruelty, and crime. And yet every man who conspires to undermine the sovereignty of conscience is responsible for contributing to accomplish this frightful result. How momentous is the calling of those who are entrusted with a mission to the conscience! It is probable that no impression once made on the conscience by words, looks, or deeds, is ever wholly lost. Every such impression, whether for good or for evil, may be reproduced with all its original vividness. "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did," said the woman of Samaria. How often has the memory of a person whom you injured in days gone by called up your guilt? How often has a spot which was the scene of some folly in early life reminded you of the sins of your youth? How often has the death-bed been rather a life-bed: a sad and dismal scene, into which have been crowded the errors and crimes of a brief and wasted existence? The devout and faithful preacher of the truth would faint under the fearful pressure of his responsibilities, but he knows that the conscience of those who have slighted his counsels, neglected his warnings, and resisted his appeals, will acquit him in the last great day.

II. THE PULPIT IS A MISSION FOR GOD. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." God hath "made us ministers of the New Testament." "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The preacher is "the man of God," "the servant of the Lord," an "ambassador for Christ," a "steward of the mysteries of God," an angel of the churches, a watchman unto the house of Israel. It is in the sight of that God who has separated us to this vocation and anointed us to this work that we must fulfil our mission. If

we could more habitually and vividly realise the solemn inspection under which we prosecute our duties and endure our hardships, it would give greater purity to our motives, intensity to our convictions, clearness to our conceptions, concentration to our purposes, tenderness to our sympathies, constancy to our zeal, and steadfastness to our faith. But we must not only act under the searching scrutiny of the omniscient eye, but must refer everything which we do to God's approval. Our principles, plans, deportment, pursuits, and aims must be such as become those who are entrusted with a mission for God.

1. *The solemn inspection which is connected with the Mission of the Pulpit is a powerful motive to Fidelity in Preaching.* It will effectually check all levity, bullooney, self-confidence, and embarrassing fear of man, and make the preacher feel that his pulpit is the symbol of all that is precious in time and dreadful in eternity; that his audience is composed of God, of angels, of disembodied spirits, and of dying men; and that the echo of his sermon will be prolonged in the songs of the redeemed, or in the groans of the lost for ever. If we could realise with great vividness of conviction and intensity of feeling the awful fact that we are all in the very presence of the great and heart-searching God; that there are sinners in our midst who are the avowed enemies of the Lord Christ; that death is already aiming his dart at some who are carelessly listening to the Word of Life; that hell is even now moving from beneath to seize fresh victims of its endless horrors, surely we should be startled into a new experience of the solemnity and responsibility of our work. The solemn inspection of which we are now speaking extends to the pew as well as the pulpit. You are listening, while we are speaking, in the sight of God. Fidelity to the everlasting interest of your own souls should make you serious. This is not the place for thinking about the business of the week, planning schemes of pleasure, for indulging in vain speculations, for exercising a frivolous criticism, for bowing the truth out of your presence. Such conduct will not stand the glance of that flaming eye which is now fixed upon you. You are in the sight of God. Do not shun His face: do not despise the riches of His love; do not quench His Holy Spirit; do not trample under foot his beloved Son; do not sport with the thunderbolts of everlasting wrath. Such rash and thoughtless conduct cannot evade detection or escape retribution: "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

2. *The solemn inspection which is connected with the Mission of the Pulpit is a powerful motive to Patience in Trial.* This is a world of severe, complicated, diversified, and protracted trial. Every preacher has his share, arising from the common and inevitable ills of life, from a painful and humiliating consciousness of his infirmities and shortcomings; from the want of more frequent and extensive success in his ministry; from the unwatchfulness and instability of some who were once the object of his rejoicing and hope; from the worldly conformity and selfish lukewarmness of too many of his flock; from the feebleness and depression of Zion; from the combined opposition which is made to the truth and the sad dishonour which is put on the Saviour; from the ignorance, idolatry, wretchedness and suffering of so many hundreds of millions of our race who are still surrounded with the darkness of an unbroken midnight. It is under these circumstances that the mighty promise, "Lo! I am with you always," unfolds its wondrous consolation. The preacher knows that the awful strife between truth and error, righteousness and iniquity, purity and sensuality, heaven and hell, Christ and Belial, is not left to the caprice of a fickle chance or to the sweep of an inexorable fatalism; but that in the sight of God "all things work together for the good of them that love God." It was a calm and unfaltering persuasion of this glorious fact which prompted the German monk to say, "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would still go thither"; it is this which constrains the lonely missionary of the Cross when surrounded by habitations of cruelty and gigantic systems of ancient idolatry to say, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Adversities may darken around us, difficulties may menace us, men may frown, and devils rage; but with the eye of God upon us, and with the heaven of God before us, we shall be able to breast the storm and to seize the crown.