

## EXCEPTIONAL PREACHERS.

It is true that there are examples of men who seem to exert an extraordinary power, especially in awakening and converting souls, but in whom we find few, if any, evidences of great mental gifts, who would at once acknowledge their ignorance of the varied phrases of modern scepticism, and not only confess their inability to deal with them, but their belief that they are to be met by a more emphatic affirmation of the truth in its most simple form. Their strength seems to lie in a rare spiritual power, which it is not possible to describe or analyse, but whose reality is attested by its influence on certain classes of mind; but it is a power which is peculiar to themselves, which, however, available only for exceptional occasions, cannot be relied upon for the continuous work of the ministry, and which, above all things, is not to be grasped by men who copy its modes and methods without possessing any of the spiritual weight and force which are necessary to make them effective. We do not underrate the work which these exceptional men may do, if we assert that if our ministry is to be a power, they must not regard them as its types. There may be a class of evangelists divinely qualified for a special service, but these are not competent to discharge the duties of pastors and teachers.

## WHAT IS PREACHING THE GOSPEL?

The preaching of the Gospel is a much greater and broader thing than some of the representations which are given of it would lead us to believe. It is the repetition of the old truth that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" it is the constant renewal of the old proclamation, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" it is the continued representation of that wondrous revelation that "God is Love;" and where these elements are wanting there can be no true preaching of the Gospel. But to preach the Gospel completely is more than this. If this be made all, may we not be in danger of nourishing the idea (surely not far removed from superstition) that if the formula of truth be accepted, if belief in Christ as the Saviour be expressed, and especially if accompanying it there be a certain amount of religious emotion there is religion even though there be no turning of the heart to God, no purifying of the conscience, no zeal for good works, no love to men, the evidence, as it is the best fruit, of the heart's true love to God? Men do not need to be assured of the pardon of sin only, but to be stirred up and guided continually in the pursuit of holiness, to be warned of the deceitfulness of sin and the sophistries and hypocrisy of their own treacherous hearts, to be fortified against the suggestions of doubt, and inspired to resist the subtle approaches of worldliness. To break the slumbers of an indifference, engendered partly by familiarity with the truth, and rendered deeper by the opiates which sceptical speculation has administered, to lay hold of minds sharpened, if not always well cultured, by their study of science or literature; to break down the prejudice created by the notion that religion is a mere idle sentimentalism, which strong minded men despise; to lend freshness to the exhibitions of the old truth, and exhibit its harmony with all true science; to contend against that mighty power of worldly thought and association which exercises so lowering an influence on the spiritual life even of those whose ideal is highest—all that needs great power; and, as it is on the ministry we must chiefly rely for its development, it should be our anxious care to increase the real efficiency of that ministry.

## THE CHURCHES AND THEIR MINISTERS.

There are many works which we have to do; but none, I venture to say, so important as this, for if we fail in this department, success in all others will profit little; whereas success here means force in the mainspring which will make itself felt through all parts of the machinery. The reconstruction of our places of worship is a great work; but the elevation and extension of the power of our ministry