

JUSTUS.

Justus has adopted a very simple style; he proves nothing, refutes nothing, explains nothing; he appeals to neither understanding nor affections, troubles himself neither about believers nor unbelievers; his line is that of simple affirmation. Things are so; *he* says it, and there is no need to reply. If you express doubt, he answers by a fresh assertion that he is right and you are wrong. If he reposed on the authority of Scripture, this might be justifiable; but what is wonderful is, that he supposes his simple affirmation possesses power to establish, refute or convince, though at every statement his hearers are ready to say; "How do you prove that?"

As in private conversation, Justus pursues exactly the same system as in the pulpit, I have yielded to the temptation, and said to him: "Very well, you say so, but give me your reasons." And he, utterly unmoved, without complaint, without

surprise, in order to satisfy me, recommenced his eternal affirmations. Wearied out, I let him proceed, and from my silence, he doubtless thought me convinced.

Do not suppose **Justus** acts thus without motive. Far from it; his system if not reasonable, is at least reasoned upon. He declares he but follows the example of Christ who “spoke with authority.”

My dear **Justus**, I might remind you that you are not quite so sure of your ground as was our Lord; and moreover that **Jesus** continually appealed both to the word of God, and to the consciences of his hearers : but perhaps I may say what is even more to the purpose.

When we are told that **Jesus** spoke with authority, does it mean that he uttered dogmatically a series of moral and doctrinal aphorisms? No; rather I believe there was innate in him, in his person, in his life, and consequently in his discourses, a divine nobility and power which won involuntary homage. Authority was less claimed by Christ than spontaneously yielded by his hearers; it sprung from their conviction of his holiness.

We too can only look for respect from our congregation, according as we lead a holy and christian life. But the more our daily walk becomes sanctified, the more humble we shall be, and the

less disposed to bring ourselves forward. Our discourses will then be intuitively effective. To advertise a right to command is the act of an usurper, and to affect authority is only to secure ridicule.

Do you tell me, Justus, that syllogisms do not convince; that man has not only a head, but a heart? Most true, nor do I at all pretend that you should have recourse to syllogistic reasonings. There are reasons, if not arguments, which are as conclusive to the heart and conscience, as syllogisms to the mind. It is such moral evidences as these that I ask you for. Instead of silencing me by your imperious affirmations, I wish you would condescend to depict something of your inner life, to let us understand your moral being, in a word, to manifest what is passing within. As our christian pastor, we should like to feel that you too long for pardon, for righteousness, for life, for eternity. You see I am not asking for propositions major or minor, but simply the account of what you, our fellow being have known and felt. You may call these, affirmations if you will; but how different from yours! Statements of what passes in your mind, can be verified by what we, who share your nature, find in ourselves. We are always happy to feel ourselves in unison with the preacher, we then sympathize with him because we sympathize with ourselves.

When my mind is in harmony with yours, I am ready to be drawn towards your conclusions. A chord touched in your heart will then vibrate in mine. All men, thank God, have at least one note in common, a moral A, which may be made the key note of concord. Why will you not try to sound it in yourself, and rouse a universal echo around? Is it beneath your dignity? You do not think so, at least, that is not your reason; but to speak thus, one must feel strongly what is expressed, and feel it at the moment of expression. Every thing must be lost sight of but the absorbing interests of the hour.

Let me say here what I might well have written at the foot of each one of these sketches.

What preachers generally most lack, is life; not animation of voice, gesture or style, but that electric fluid which ought to penetrate every word of our discourse, and make it, as it were, a living thing. This agent is invisible to the eye, but consciously felt by the soul; it has a warmth which is contagious, and which oratorical art can no more imitate, than the most perfect automaton can pass for a human being. If need be, this life can make up for every other deficiency, but no skill whatever, can supply its place. Warm with this life, the feeblest discourse has been ac-

cepted with sympathy by the audience; while without it, a fine sermon is a beautiful statue, a bad one, a corpse.

Whence proceeds this want of life in the pulpit? From want of piety out of it; it is best in keeping with our habitual lukewarmness. Strange indeed would it be if putting on a gown clothed us with fresh feelings, or if mounting some steps raised our spiritual frame? No; as is the man, so is the preacher. If the divine life within, be feeble during the week, it will certainly not spring into strength on the Sabbath.

Cicero's orator was to be an honest man; the preacher of the Gospel must be a converted man. I do not simply say he must be orthodox, I say he must be converted. It is not sufficient that he admit the necessity of conversion; he must himself know the transforming power of the Spirit. He must not only renounce open worldliness, but he must strenuously cultivate inward sanctification, communion with God, and love to the brethren. Like Peter, like John, like Paul, in the most complete and full sense of the word, he must be *converted*.

Without this, preaching is mockery, the pastorate, a mere official post. The distinction between the gown and the coat, the week day life, and the

Sunday life, is felt by pastor as well as people, but the deductions they draw are very different. The pastor readily supposes that his official character shields his natural one; the people on the contrary see the natural character even in the pulpit. They allow him to fulfil his task like any other functionary; indeed, they have a vague idea that somehow, his services are useful to the mass, but each one individually, refuses to yield the guidance of his soul to one, who has different measures for himself and for others. We may be quite sure our hearers will not appropriate more of the sermon than we do ourselves. If the subject is of no moment to us, it will be of none to them. They will listen to us just as they have listened to the prayers and hymns; it is part of a whole which they go through as a matter of duty. The service ended, all is over. We take off our gown, they leave their seats, and pastor and people are again in the world. Must we then wait for an advanced state of piety, before we again enter the pulpit, and postpone preaching for, possibly, several years?

Perhaps not. But it may be more decidedly affirmed that while religious feeling is yet feeble within, we should, in the pulpit as elsewhere, be perfectly sincere, not affecting more knowledge or experience than we have, but sincerely stating our

convictions as far as they go, and the channel by which we have arrived at them. Let us be sincere, both within, and without, even to tones and attitudes. This recommendation is not so superfluous as it might seem.
