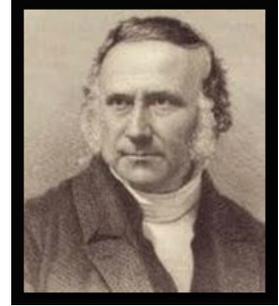


## *One Word to a Sinner*



I have known few seasons of greater coldness and less promise in respect to the prosperity of religion, than was the time when a young woman called upon me, to ask what she should do to be saved. Her call somewhat surprised me. I had not expected it. I had never noticed any particular seriousness in her. But now, she was evidently very much awakened to a sense of her duty and danger, and was evidently in earnest in seeking the favor of God.

After some conversation with her, and giving her such instruction as I thought adapted to her state of mind; I asked what it was that had induced her to give her attention to the subject of religion now, any more than formerly. She replied, “it was what you said to me one evening, as we were coming out of the Lecture-room. As you took me by the hand, you said, ‘Mary, one thing is needful.’ You said nothing else, and passed on; but I could not forget it.” I had forgotten it entirely, but it had fastened one thought deep in her mind.

The sermon, which I had just preached, and to which she had listened, had been of no avail to her; but she could not forget the personal address to herself, “Mary, one thing is needful.” She is now, as I trust, in possession of that “one thing.”

How much more efficacious is a message than a proclamation—a personal than a public address—a letter than a newspaper. The one is to the heart, but the other scarcely appears designed for it. The one is to us, peculiarly, especially; the other to everybody—to us indeed, as we form a part of the multitude, but that is very seldom what the heart wants or

likes. One word to a sinner is often more effectual, than a score of sermons. Indeed, the secret of convicting sinners lies just in this—leading them to a personal application of the truth.

Yet let us not despise sermons. They are the appointment of God, and the great means of conversion. The sermons, which Mary had heard, were probably the very things which prepared her to be awakened by a private word, and without which, that word, probably, would have been in vain. Still, it is quite probable that the sermons would have been in vain without that private and personal admonition, “Mary, one thing is needful.”