

LESSON XXXV.

LECTURE XXXV.

THE CONCLUSION: APPLICATIONS OMITTED, CONTINUOUS, AND COMPACT.

IV. THE intensity of the applicatory element in preaching, which we have seen to be intrinsic to the Christian theology, leads us naturally to an inquiry which forms the fourth general topic in the discussion of conclusions: it is, Ought truth ever to be discussed in a sermon without an application? Several things should be observed in reply to this question.

1st, Some apparent exceptions to the general principle are not real exceptions.

(1) A double sermon, in which the application is reserved for the peroration of the second part, is not a real exception. Rhetorically the two discourses are one. The application of the second is the application of both. At the bar or in the senate an equal amount of material would be spoken without a break.

But, even in double sermons, a partial application of the first is often practicable at the time of its delivery; and, if practicable, it may be desirable. The case will rarely happen in which it is logically necessary to dismiss an audience with absolutely no indication of the uses of the subject for something more than intellectual entertainment.

The same principle applies to serial preaching. Every

sermon in a series should, if possible, be a unit: its moral uses should, if possible, be developed at the time of its delivery. Round it off, and apply it on the spot, as Dr. Chalmers did each one of his discourses on human depravity. The best serial sermons are those in which the serial feature is latent. But, if this is not so, still the exception to the general rule in the delivery is only apparent. The whole discussion is a unit, and is applied at the end.

(2) Another apparent exception which is not a real one is that of a discussion which a preacher fails to apply through excess of emotion. This has been sometimes adduced as an evidence of the power of conclusions without applications. The preacher closes a sermon in tears, instead of words. Hearers weep in sympathy. This exception needs but a word in reply. The most powerful of all applications is made. The silence of suppressed emotion surpasses all eloquence. Speech then may be silver; but silence is golden.

(3) A third apparent exception which is not a real one is the case of a sermon closed with a prayer in place of an appeal to hearers. This is sometimes advanced as proof of the value of sermons without applications. But what does it prove? If it is not genuine, it is a piece of charlatanry. It impresses nobody to the purpose. If it is genuine, it is the equivalent of an application. It hints at the reserved power of truth. The preacher is overawed by his own vision. He feels truth so profoundly, that he turns from men, and throws back the work of admonishing them upon God. Are not ejaculatory prayers to God, if they are not profane, among the most affecting expressions of appeal to men? So of a closing prayer in a sermon: it may be, as an indirect appeal to hearers, like the cry of a drowning man for divine mercy.

It is evident that these are apparent exceptions only, to the general rule, which demands intense applications of truth in preaching.

2d, But a real exception occurs. When the subject of discourse is one on which solemn application is the usage of the pulpit, and when the discussion points to a hackneyed application as the only natural one, it may be well to omit all application.

(1) Some themes are most naturally treated in one way, and only one. They lead to one conclusion; they reach it by one avenue of discussion; they culminate in one strain of exhortation. Yet they are standard themes of the pulpit, and must not be ignored.

(2) Consequently the very announcement of such a subject predicts the whole story to the hearers. They know all that is coming. They have never been surprised by any variation of either the discussion or its uses. In such a case it may be breath wasted to reiterate the hackneyed application in their hearing. Disappoint, then, the expectation which renders that application useless. The value of the soul, the duty of repentance, the certainty of death are themes of this kind. Who ever heard a novel appeal on these themes? Who can make one? A hearer of good memory can recite as glibly as the preacher the one trite hortation by which these subjects are naturally applied. Close the discussion, then, without an application. Withhold the inference, the remark, the appeal. Assume that the hearer's conscience is preaching. Surprise him by your silence, since you can not do it by your originality. Excite the inquiry, "Why did not the preacher exhort me as usual?" Conscience often needs quickening by something that is not usual. Novelty itself, and because it is novelty, sometimes turns the trembling scale of motive.

Ed. Note: When reading this section, realize that at the time that brother Phelps was writing, most of his hearer were well versed in the Bible. This, however, is not true today for two reasons:

1. In the United States we are now (2011) in a post-Christian era when knowledge of the Bible is rare.
2. And in many countries, access to the written Word of God and to the preaching of it is very small because of the failure of most churches to carry out the command of God for them to take the Word of God “unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Therefore, the lessons taught by brother Phelps concerning making a hackneyed application, or not doing so, are to be taken with a “grain of salt.” Depending on your audience, is it one that has been under the preaching of the Word or is it the “normal” audience of today which has had little exposure to the Word of God and the preaching of it, what would have been a “hackneyed” application in the time of the textbook author would be today a “novel” one. Most people of today, even those who attend church, are woefully ignorant of the Word of God and, therefore, any biblical application would be, to most of them, a novel one rather than a hackneyed one.

It is the opinion of the editor, based upon the reasons given above, that an application should always be made; except on the rare occasion when one is preaching to a group that is believed by the preacher to be well versed in the Word of God. And such groups are extremely rare, even when preaching to preachers because so much heresy is rampant in most churches and is believed, and preached, by their preachers. In the case of those kinds of preachers, nearly as much as in most other cases, a true, biblical, application would be a novel one, not a hackneyed one, to their ears and minds. Therefore, use of an application should be the overwhelming norm when preaching to most audiences. Non-use of one should be extremely rare. Dr. VBK

(3) Conversion is often a work of great delicacy, as it respects the adjustment of means to end and of motives to action. Painters say that their art involves a delicacy of conception and of execution which they can not explain to a critic. It intermingles intuition with skill in a way which nothing but prolonged practice enables them to understand in themselves. Similar is the work of preaching, in that close encounter with the wills of men in which their conversion may hang on the utterance of a moment, or, as probably, on the silence of that moment. The law of the Holy Spirit's working often involves this intricate operation of his chosen instrument.

In powerful revivals, when sensibilities are wrought up by sympathy, and multitudes are hovering around the act of critical decision, the burden of one breath may win a soul, or repulse a soul. Then the absence of an appeal when an appeal is expected, and planned for, and forestalled, may be the one untried expedient which shall result in a soul's conversion. Rarely adopted, this expedient may transfer the work of the pulpit to the conscience of the hearer. A roused conscience never speaks a hackneyed word.

3d. These remarks suggest, further, that both the real and the apparent exceptions to the general principle before us depend for their impressiveness on the infrequency of their occurrence. They can not be genuine if they are frequent. Habitually employed, they take on the look either of trickery or of insensibility. Hearers receive them either as stolid expedients or as a solemn way of imposing on them.

For example, one of the most spiritless of all modes of closing a sermon is that which was common at one time in the pulpit of Scotland, and was imported to

Use of a doxology or benediction, or simply closing in prayer, is at the sole discretion of the pastor. There is no set formula except in the cases of some of the major denominations- all of whom inherited the propensity for using set formulae from their mother, the Roman Catholic Church and the other Catholic and Protestant Churches derived from the Roman mother.

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some extent into this country, — that of repeating the Christian benediction, or the doxology. This was closing with prayer. When this was an original, and of course a rare outburst of the preacher's emotion, it may have been often the culmination of power in a sermon. Rarely imitated now, it would be impressive. But some preachers have rarely adopted any other ending. Thus abused, the expedient becomes flat. Routine is in no other form so flat as in forms of prayer. Prayer is nowhere else so void of meaning as where it seems foisted in as a convenience. When it forms the stereotyped close of a sermon, it is only saying by indirection in a religious way what it would not be profane to say directly, — that the hour is ended. The Rev. Dr. James Wilson of Philadelphia used to preach just one hour by the clock, no more, no less. At the instant when the hour-hand pointed to twelve o'clock, he would stop short, and say, "Brethren, the hour is up. Let us pray." This was bald; but, as a uniform formula, it was not so unmeaning as the benediction would have been in its place.

I once heard the late Rev. Dr. Guthrie of Edinburgh preach a sermon which was to be followed by another appointment, for which his name was announced, in another part of the city. He was pressed for time. During the latter part of the discourse he frequently eyed his watch, and evidently preached in a hurry. At the close he had less than ten minutes in which to cross the city. He drew out his watch nervously, and, with watch in hand and his eye upon it, he exploded the customary formula of the benediction: "Grace be unto you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!" Almost before the last word had left his lips he shot down the pulpit-stairs like a rocket. I had

before seen a priest take his pinch of snuff in the midst of the celebration of high mass; but that was not so revolting as the benediction and the leap of the Scotch divine.

Here let us observe, in the way of an *excursus* from the topic now before us, the true office and significance of the benediction in the service of prayer. A special reason exists, in the very nature of it, for not using it as a form of homiletic conclusion. It is the only act of clerical prerogative, except the administration of the ordinances, in which the idea of clerical mediatorship is retained. The sacerdotal theory of it does no harm to either preacher or people. Let it be reserved as an act of clerical intercession for the whole service. There it is in its place. There it becomes often the coronation of the devout feelings of the hour.

I have said that the sacerdotal theory of it can do no evil. Looking at it with no bias derived from the history of the sacerdotal theory of the clerical office in other respects, I find in it a reality, which, call it what we may, meets a certain natural craving in the hearts of a worshipping assembly. Often the final effect of public worship, with its accompaniment of song and sermon, and rehearsal of God's word, is to excite a profound sense of dependence, of which a craving for the blessing of a "man of God" is the natural sequence. The intervention of a solitary human voice between the silent assembly and God, speaking in his name, and pronouncing his blessing upon them, becomes a relief to their wrought-up emotions. They feel the naturalness of it. They volunteer to clothe it with the authority of their own devotional desires. It is an act in which the preacher is not as other men. He is invested by the wants of the people with mediatorial

This line of thought is inherently dangerous because it leads, naturally, to worship of the pastor rather than worship of God. No matter if the people want it, as brother Phelps teaches here, it is a dangerous trail to allow the people to tread. The pastor should teach them a better path. This section may be true, but it is extremely dangerous to allow such beliefs among the people to continue without correction. Dr. VBK

office. He is an intercessor by divine appointment and by popular choice. The people will have it so. They are assisted by it in their own devotions, if no hereditary iconoclasm disturbs the natural working of their devout feelings. Did not the assembly at Enfield, under the preaching of Edwards, probably feel this? Have we not all been sensible of it in the services of the Lord's house, when they have been conducted by a preacher whose character as a man awakened in us the reverence which his office claimed? Has it not been a joy to bow the head, and receive a benediction from one whose office has given a unique significance to the act?

The popular nomenclature by which the clergy have been designated from time immemorial also indicates the genuineness of this view of them in the popular conception. Why is a minister of religion called a "divine," a "man of God"? Why is the title "Reverend" prefixed to his name? Why does the very dwelling in which he lives receive a name — "parsonage," "manse," "rectory" — not given to the dwellings of other dignitaries? Why does the popular taste, when not sophisticated by the ultraisms of democracy, always feel the propriety of some simple badge of dress, which shall make a clergyman always known as such? The idea of the separateness of the clergy from the rest of the world, and, in some sense, of their mediatorship between God and men, is expressed by these incidents to the clerical office.

Are these things relics of Romish corruption? Why, then, has not Protestant iconoclasm, admitted to have been extreme in some other things, succeeded in uprooting these tastes from the popular mind? If they had not some real basis in human nature, the fire to

which they have been subjected through three hundred years of polemic reform should surely have burnt them out by this time. Yet there they are, as fresh and as prompt to express themselves as they were when the people of Israel said to Moses, "Speak *thou* with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die."

Time has indeed wrought revolutionary changes in the ancient theory of worship. We will not ignore them. But it has not destroyed, nor essentially impaired, that instinct of human nature which exalts a teacher of religion above other men, and often invests his service with a mediatorial significance. The one thing in the public worship of the sanctuary in which our Congregational severity recognizes that instinct, and in which the people, if left alone to follow their religious intuitions, will cordially obey it, is this act of pastoral benediction. We are in no danger of an abuse of it in the direction of sacerdotal arrogance. We can not afford to spare it. It is not wise to sacrifice it to ecclesiastical theory. Human nature craves it, and in some form will have it. For the want of it, and some things kindred to it, Congregational and Presbyterian churches are losing their hold upon certain materials in the constituency of churches, which by hereditary affinities belong to them. Let us retain this clerical benediction, then, in the simple and natural form in which even iconoclastic democracy has left it. Let us not transform it from official benediction to mere intercession. Above all, let us not reduce its level in the popular esteem by making it a rhetorical expedient for the ending of a sermon. This, if done often, will often be done with a vacant mind; and in no other form of public worship can we more offensively take God's name in vain.

V. The fifth general topic in the discussion of conclusions is the inquiry, "Which is the superior, — the continuous application in the body of the sermon, or the compact application at the close?" The answer is involved in the following particulars.

1st, The compact application at the close is frequently demanded by the logical necessities of the discussion. We have before observed, that the logical necessities of an argument often forbid the weakening of a conclusion by anticipation of its materials. The same principle often forbids the dispensing with an applicatory ending for the sake of a continuous application through the body of the sermon. An argument incomplete often can not logically be applied to any thing of homiletic use. The practical uses of a syllogism may all lie in its conclusion, not in either premise. If, in such a case, the continuous application is attempted, the process will be forced. It will not be attempted by a logical mind.

2d, The compact application at the close is the more natural to any elaborate discussion. Be it argumentative or not, an elaborate discussion demands continuity of attention to the thing in hand. It is unnatural to break such a train of thought for the sake of an appeal to the sensibilities of hearers. If such an appeal be made, and be successful, what is the effect? The hearer's mind drops from the labor of intellectual tension to the luxury of emotional relaxation. The toil of thinking gives place to that which we so significantly call the "play" of feeling. So far the transition is easy; but how shall we secure the return to severe thinking which an elaborate discussion requires? "*Facilis descensus — sed revocare!*"

It is often said, however, in defense of the continu-

ous application, that intellect and sensibility are mutual tributaries. Transition, therefore, from the one kind of excitement to the other, is helpful to both. "Weave discourse, then," is the advice, "with both the intellectual and the emotive threads; ply back and forth from discussion to hortation, and from hortation to discussion, like a shuttle in a loom." The principle here involved is true only of the inferior kinds and degrees of intellectual and emotive excitement. Severe thought and intense feeling both tend to continuity, not to rapid interchanges. Severe thought is iron in its tenacity: intense feeling is iron red-hot. Neither is flexible like a thread of tow: neither can be woven as with a shuttle. Mental oscillation is natural, only when the mind is at play on the surfaces of thoughts. It is natural where feeling of no profound degree is concerned. An audience may be moved from mirth to sympathy, or from tears to smiles, all the more readily for the contrast, but never from anguish to ecstasy, or from ecstasy to anguish, in rapid oscillation. Edward Everett was once censured for even entertaining with an elaborate classical metaphor an audience assembled to provide relief for Ireland in the time of famine. Imagine that his offense had been an attempt to amuse the audience with a jest! An impassioned audience is in no mood for the play of contrasted emotions. Still less natural is oscillation between impassioned feeling and severe thinking. These run in grooves.

This view is confirmed by the structure of discourse adopted in the best examples of secular eloquence. A speech by Edmund Burke, by Lord Brougham, by Daniel Webster, may be enlivened by descriptions, by sallies of wit, by historic narrative, by classic illustration, but rarely by fragmentary and interspersed ap

peals. Argumentative appeals may occur; but persuasive application is reserved till the close. Such was also the Greek and the Roman ideal of the peroration.

3d, The compact application at the close is the more favorable to concentrated impression. Continuous application, whatever be its advantages, must have this incidental drawback, that it divides force.

(1) Delay often reduplicates the force of application when it comes. The resources of it accumulate by delay on the preacher's side: the recipient demand for it is intensified by delay on the hearer's side. The very calmness with which a preacher explains a stupendous truth, proves a fearful conclusion, illustrates an overpowering alternative, without a word expressive of its sway over his own sensibilities, — except the inevitable hints of his reserved emotion, which he can not repress, — will work, by the mere contrast of stillness with energy, upon the responding sensibilities of the hearer. Feeling will rise and swell, and gather volume, till at length an appeal from the preacher, urging to executive expression, will be welcomed as a relief.

(2) Further: concentrated impression is often the only possible impression. The pulpit is peculiar in the conditions of its work in two respects. It must address a vast amount of spiritually torpid mind; and its most necessary materials grow stale by repetition. From these conditions there is no escape. Concentration of force, therefore, is often the forlorn hope of success. Brief, sharp, condensed processes, from beginning to end, are among the only possible expedients of impression. Weight, not bulk of appeal, becomes the test of value.

4th, The compact application at the close is the

more secure against the danger of exhausting the sensibilities of hearers. Nothing else is so flat as an appeal which moves nobody. Hearers are often injured by applications of truth which fall upon exhausted sensibilities. Exhausted feeling, under such conditions, borders hard upon disgusted feeling.

This suggests an *excursus* from the topic immediately before us, on the duty of the pulpit to those who are repelled from its message by some of its methods.

Religious effort in all its departments has among its fruits an unwritten volume of disgust. This suggested to John Foster his celebrated essay on "The aversion of men of taste to evangelical religion." We know but a small fragment of that aversion within our own ecclesiastical borders. The apparent successes of ill-timed and unphilosophical expedients of usefulness we know. Success, or the resemblance of it, in any thing, trumpets itself. But we do not hear much of its cost in the deadened sensibilities, and disgusted tastes, and contemptuous judgments, and acrid enmities, and silent departures, which they occasion. Men thus affected by unwise policies of the pulpit go out from us, and that is the last we hear of them.

Say what we may of the weakness, or the guilt if you please to call it such, of those who permit themselves to be repelled from truth by such causes; yet they have on their side of the question some powerful allies. They are supported by those auxiliaries to conscience which high culture creates in the ultimate stages of civilization. The equipoise of a well-balanced mind, the intuitions of good taste, the instincts of refined sensibility, the craving of intelligence for thoughtful discourse, and that tendency to reticence which appertains to all deep emotion in strong characters on sacred

themes, — these are auxiliaries to conscience which Christianity itself develops, and without which it can not achieve its ultimate conquests. Yet these are all on the side of these disgusted ones, and plead for them when they go out from Christian churches, repelled by the vagaries of a weak or an ignorant pulpit.

An educated pulpit is inexcusable in a crude and rude policy towards these "Martyrs of Disgust," because it is filled by men who ought to study wiser methods of procedure. An educated ministry ought to be able to do, not only best things, but in best ways. They ought to be able to reach the lower classes of society without resorting to expedients which necessarily repel the higher classes. Their range of policy should be so broad as to cover the wants of all classes.

We should not content ourselves with wasteful ways of doing a little good. The cost of religious usefulness is to be taken account of, like the cost of any other human effort. Laws of spiritual success are as inflexible as those of nature. That is, therefore, a needless waste which aims to reach rude minds at the expense of repelling cultured minds. That is an unwise policy which strives to win ignorance and coarseness by methods of preaching which are intrinsically fitted to alienate learning and taste. Specially is that an uninstructed conscience which impels a man to modes of moving the sensibilities of inferior minds, which good sense pronounces repulsive to their superiors. The divine method of working involves no such separation of classes. It denies the necessity of the repulsion of one class for the salvation of another. It always looks towards, and in its practice works towards, the higher level rather than the lower. But it does this by methods which are intrinsically adapted to both classes, and which elevate both.

An illustration on a large scale of the neglect of this law of divine working is witnessed to-day in the pulpit of Germany. German religious assemblies are generally composed, in overwhelming proportion, of women and children. As a rule, not one person in six in such an assembly is a man. Multitudes of Germans have fallen into the theoretic belief that Christianity is fitted only to women and children. If the theory reflects upon their estimate of their mothers and wives and daughters, the German pulpit is largely responsible for it. Such a degrading conception of the aim of Christianity, and such glaring injustice to more than half the human race, could never have existed under the *régime* of a pulpit which did justice to either. The German clergy, as a body, have neglected what I have elsewhere termed "masterly" preaching. They have sacrificed strong thought, argument, doctrinal preaching, to the more emotive forms of religious discourse. They have indulged excessively in hortatory preaching. As a consequence, only the more emotive classes of society are usually found in German churches. Professor Tholuck foresaw this result twenty-five years ago. He said in 1855, that, of the pastors of German churches, not one in twenty retained his habits of study after obtaining his pastoral charge; and that German preaching, therefore, did not generally consist of the fruits of study. It was impossible, in the nature of things, he said, that such preaching should long command the respect of thinking men. He did not speak of the separation of the sexes; but this result is exactly that in kind which he foreshadowed.

History is constantly repeating itself in this thing, and proving that it is only on the foundation of strong preaching that preaching of feebler stock can sustain

itself. Only on the basis of learned preaching can ignorant preaching achieve success. Only by the support of argumentative preaching can hortatory preaching command respect. Only when surrounded and held up by thoughtful and tasteful preaching, to men of thought and cultured tastes, can emotive and crude preaching to the uneducated have any long or vigorous life. Only upon the labors of studious and hard-working pastors in their libraries, can itinerant evangelists in the pulpit command the hearing which they often receive from excited crowds.

Returning to the topic immediately before us, I would bring the weight of these fundamental truths to enforce the superiority of the compact over the continuous application, by the fact that it is less liable to the danger of exhausting, and thus disgusting, the sensibilities of hearers. This is the great peril of a hortatory sermon.

We are slow to believe that men have none too much power of feeling. No man has any sensibility to waste. Sensibility is not the ultimate faculty of our being. It is a tributary. It is the motive force to executive action. The supreme faculty is will. To work upon sensibility monotonously, leaving the will no chance to throw itself into executive duty, is the surest way to benumb sensibility. Pain itself becomes at last anæsthetic to tortured nerves. They die of pain. So the moral sensibilities grow torpid under extreme and rude appliances which do not leave them at the right moment to do their own work silently upon the will. A wise preacher, therefore, will be wise in this, using discreetly the sensibilities of an audience. He will apply truth, as a soldier fires who has but a limited amount of ammunition. Frequency of shot is less to be regarded than efficiency of shot.

This economy of sensibilities is also urged by another principle which enters into all eloquence. It is that a hearer is a participator in all eloquent speech. Powerful speech is always dramatic. An interested hearer engages in silent colloquy with the speaker. Thought responds to thought; feeling to feeling. Therefore a hearer's range and power of sensibility are as much to be taken into account by a speaker as his range and power of intellect. The moment a hearer ceases to respond to the appeals of a speaker, that moment he ceases to be a party in the case. He becomes a mere recipient. He is clogged; he nods. Lord Brougham accounts for the failure of certain parliamentary speakers on the ground that they shared nothing with their hearers. They were teachers, not orators.

For the reasons thus far advanced, we may conclude that, generally, the compact application at the close is preferable to the interspersed application in the body of the sermon. But the general rule is subject to exceptions.

5th, It should be observed, therefore, that certain forms of discussion may require, and certain other forms may admit of, the continuous application.

(1) Some discussions require the continuous application. A hortatory discussion, for instance, is nearly all applicatory.

(2) Some discussions, though not requiring, may admit of, the continuous application. An expository discussion which is not severely critical is one of this class. In such a sermon the train of thought is secured in place by the text. If dropped for the sake of an applicatory appeal, it may easily be resumed. A biographical or historical discussion admits of a similar freedom of interplay. Such a sermon will commonly

follow either the order of biblical narrative, or the order of time. Either of these, if suspended, is easily recovered. A discourse of peculiar intensity of practical bearing may branch out naturally into a succession of appeals. Instances occur in which practical application grows out of the very roots of a text or a theme. The applications are immediate, obvious, urgent. Not to make them would do violence to the natural uses of the subject. The oratorical instinct of the preacher allies itself with the instinct of hearing in the audience, to demand the utterance of them. The sermon is most naturally made up of a series of touches of discussion, alternating with touches of application. It is constructed like a Norway spruce, which is bearded with branches to the very ground.

6th, Exceptions to the general rule of compact application may be created by peculiarity of occasion. An occasion of unusual religious excitement may demand exception. A state of ebullient emotion on the part of an audience demands something responsive to such emotion from the pulpit. The principle always holds good, that existing excitement should be used. The iron must be struck while it is hot.

Hence it is, that, in revivals of religion, hortation will be useful in larger proportion than when a community is at a dead level. In revivals delicate junctures of influence abound. Critical moments occur in the delivery of a sermon, for which no premeditation can provide. The oratorical instinct must be largely trusted. A direct appeal in the midst of a discussion may then be the instrument of a soul's conversion. No theory of art in preaching must be permitted to tyrannize over the liberty of speech at such moments. The late Rev. Dr. Kirk once told me that he thought

he could commonly judge, by certain indefinable evidences, of the condition of an audience, when they were, and when they were not, moved responsively to the emotion of the preacher so as to invite or to reject interspersed appeal. Not every man's judgment can be implicitly trusted on a point of such delicacy; but one who has had experience in addressing assemblies under religious awakening may have a discernment which shall equal intuition.

7th, Exceptions to the general rule of compact application may be required by the intellectual character of the audience. An audience of children may need the continuous application. Why? Because they have little power of sustained attention, and almost no power of abstraction. On the same principle, an audience composed mainly of undisciplined minds may have the same need.

These remarks upon exceptions to the general rule suggest a threefold principle which obviously underlies such exceptions, and with the statement of which we close this part of the discussion. It is, that the less elaborate the sermon, or the less cultivated the audience, or the more emotive the condition of the audience, the more readily is the continuous application admitted or required.