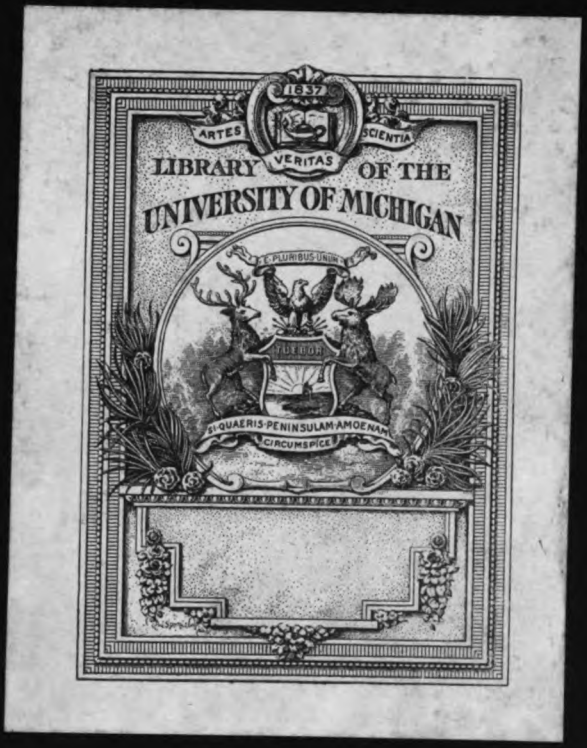

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THE

THEORY OF PREACHING

LECTURES ON HOMILETICS

BY

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PREFACE.

Two methods of discussion are practicable to an instructor in homiletics. They are called, not very accurately, the *practical* and the *scientific* methods. These terms are open to the objection, that, on a theme like this, a scientific treatise must be infirm, if it is not also practical; and a practical treatise must be equally infirm, if it is not also scientific.

Yet these terms do convey a hint of the elements which preponderate in the two modes of discussion. By the one, homiletics is treated chiefly as a science, and is developed chiefly by scientific analysis, and in its relation to kindred sciences. The resulting treatise is valuable to a student mainly as a means of mental discipline. It would be formed, ultimately, on the model of Aristotle's system of rhetoric. By the other method, homiletics is treated, not unscientifically indeed, yet with regard chiefly to its practical uses. The German theologians, with greater accuracy of terms than that of our American nomenclature, consider it a branch of "practical theology." Such it undoubtedly is. Thus defined and developed, it would form a treatise valuable to a student chiefly as a practical guide and help to the

work of the pulpit. The one of these methods of treatment is the more apt to the study of the *science* for the purpose of liberal culture only: the other is the more necessary to the study of the *art* in a professional seminary.

For reasons quite obvious, I have chosen the second of the two methods here indicated, in the construction of the present volume. Very soon after I began to lecture in the department, I formed the habit of preserving manuscript notes of the inquiries of students in the lecture-room and in private conversations. Those notes soon grew upon my hands immensely. Answers to those inquiries constitute nine-tenths of this volume. Whatever value my work may possess is due largely to the fact that it is a *growth* from such practical resources, suggested by practical minds, eager in their youthful outlook upon the most practical of the liberal professions, approaching it with intensely practical aims, and prompt to put the instructions they might receive to immediate practical uses. It would have been difficult to engage such hearers with any enthusiasm in listening to a purely scientific treatise, orally delivered, on such a theme. Of all subjects for the lecture-room, literary criticism pure and simple is the most inert. It must fall flat, even from the lips of genius.

I have carried the subordination of scientific to practical inquiry so far, that I have often used the analysis of a sermon as a line of suggestion to which to attach matter of practical moment related to the theory of preaching, yet not strictly a part of it. From this liberty of discussion has arisen the feature of *excursus*, which will be observed in the structure of these lectures. In this, also, I have followed the lead of the actual inquiries of my pupils.

By retaining the forms of oral delivery in the publication of this work, I have aimed to make it (though necessarily with large omissions and condensations, especially of illustrative material) as nearly as possible an exact transcript of the work of my lecture-room. As such it is offered, with very kindly recollections, to those who are still living of the more than twelve hundred students, who, in the course of thirty-one years, have given me their patient and attentive hearing; of whom I gratefully record the fact, that not a solitary exception has ever given me occasion for rebuke or admonition.

While thus constructed primarily for professional readers, this volume will be found to contain much, I hope, which will be of interest to thoughtful laymen. My hearers in the lecture-room will bear me witness that I have never lost sight of that large and increasing portion of our laity who have very pronounced ideas of their own of the true theory of preaching, however little they may know or care for its scientific forms. I have recognized the fact that to their experienced judgment my own work must be ultimately submitted in the life's work of my students; and that no theory of a sermon can be worth discussion, which does not succeed in adjusting preaching, as a practical business, to the large common sense of Christian hearers.

It is due to Professor M. Stuart Phelps that I should acknowledge his vigilant and scholarly aid in the revision of my manuscript, especially in making the necessary eliminations of material, and in otherwise editing the present work.

ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
March, 1881.

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THE

THEORY OF PREACHING:

LECTURES ON HOMILETICS.

LECTURE I.

THE SERMON: ITS GENERIC IDEA.

HOMILETICS is the science which treats of the nature the classification, the analysis, the construction, and the composition of a sermon. More concisely it is the science of that of which preaching is the art, and a sermon is the product. What, then, is the relation of homiletics to rhetoric? Homiletics *is* rhetoric, as illustrated in the theory of preaching. Rhetoric is the genus: homiletics is the species.

I. What is the generic idea of a sermon? It may be expressed in cumulative form in the following theses.

1st, A sermon is an *oral address*. It is something distinct from an essay or a book. If well constructed, it has peculiarities of structure adapting it to oral delivery, and in some respects unfitting it for private reading. In this respect a sermon illustrates the radical idea of all true eloquence. It must be conceded to the advocates of exclusively extemporaneous preaching, that the extemporaneous ideal is the true one of

perfect public speech. A perfect orator would never write: he would always speak. The mutual magnetism between speaker and hearer would bear him on, without the aid of manuscript or memory. The custom of preaching written discourses grows out of mental infirmities. In any form of speech, be it written or oral, we make but an approximation to perfect oratory; and the true policy of the pulpit is to combine the weight of material which the pen commands with the ease, the versatility, the flexible expression, and the quickness of transition which belong to good extemporaneous speech. The ideal sermon aims to blend the qualities of the essay with those of the speech. That is like mingling the properties of a solid and a fluid: but in the paradoxical union, the fluid has always the ascendency. The sermon is a speech before it is any thing else. Nothing else should deprive it of the qualities of speech. The oral elements of a sermon usually grow, in a preacher's estimate, with the growth of his experience. Dr. Archibald Alexander of Princeton abandoned the pen entirely in his later years, when time had given him command of accumulated materials, so that he could always extemporize from a full mind. He once said, that if he were on trial for his life, and his acquittal depended on a single effort of his own, he would trust to his lips rather than to his pen.

2d, A sermon is an oral address *to the popular mind.* It is distinct from a scientific lecture, from a judicial oration, from a harangue to a rabble, from a talk to children. The best test of a good sermon is the instinct of a heterogeneous audience. That is not good preaching which is limited in its range of adaptation to select audiences: be it select intelligence, or select ignorance, t matters not. The pulpit permits no selection. It

exists not for the few, not for the many as distinct from the few, but for all. No other variety of public speech is so cosmopolitan in its freedom from provincial limitations as that of the pulpit. To a good preacher his field is literally the world: it is the world of real life, not the world of books alone, not the world of the streets alone, but the world as it is in its completeness and range of character and station. He finds his audience wherever he finds men and women and children. No order of mind is above him, none beneath him. This popular element in the ideal of a sermon is so fundamental, that it should be incorporated into every definition of the thing.

But is not this a degrading idea of a sermon? Do we not let down the intellectual level of the pulpit by insisting upon its cosmopolitan mission? Is it not, at the best, a condescension of intellect to usefulness, when a preacher addresses his whole life's work to the necessities of promiscuous assemblies? Is it not a nobler thing to do to preach to select hearers, whose culture shall give scope to a preacher's loftiest intellectual aspirations? These queries are fundamental to the usefulness of the pulpit. A false theory respecting it is secretly embarrassing and depressing many a preacher in his life's work. It is a sad thing for a man to labor all his life long under the weight of a conflict between professional usefulness and personal culture. Yet such, if I mistake not, is the secret consciousness of many pastors. In some it amounts to a sense of intellectual degradation. Daniel Webster, in the closing years of his life, expressed a profound sense of personal humiliation in having been, through his whole career, so largely engaged in the delivery of electioneering speeches. If he had followed the bent of his tastes, he would never

have spoken in public outside of the United States Senate or the Supreme Court Room. Something akin to this feeling weighs upon the spirits, and depresses the self-respect, of not a few most useful pastors.

Let us see, then, how this matter stands. Is the popular character of the pulpit, in the Christian ideal of it, degrading to it as a representative of intellect and as a stimulus to intellectual culture?

(1) It must be conceded that the affirmative is sustained by the notions current among many literary men. Multitudes of literary men deny to the pulpit the dignity of literature. In their view, it stands below the level of literary criticism. Nothing else fares so severely at the hands of popular critics, nothing else is criticised so flippantly, nothing else is doomed so often by foregone conclusions, or so surely "damned with faint praise," as a volume of sermons from a living and useful pulpit. We are all infected with this disease of critical judgment in the conceptions which we often mean to express by the phrase "popular preaching." "He is a *popular* preacher," we say, with an inflection which means that this is the least respectable thing about him. "Is he a man of talents?"—"Oh, yes! of *popular* talents. He takes well with the multitude; he draws an audience; women weep, and children listen, when he speaks; he can always be sure of a hearing; but"—and so on. A reverent reader of the Scriptures, it is true, will be reminded of Him whom the common people heard gladly; yet the tone of literary disparagement will linger a long time in our ears, notwithstanding. A positive stiffening of self-respect is often needful, that a pastor may hold his head erect against the flings of criticism. Such criticism is literary cant.

(2) This leads me to observe, that the great excellence of a sermon, considered as a specimen of literature alone, is that it sways mind without distinction of class. So far as this aim is reached, it is, in kind, the grandest thing in literature. To make the deep thoughts of theology intelligible to all orders of mind, and impressive to them all, so that the same truth which instructs the ignorant, and quickens the torpid, shall also move the wisest, and command the most alert, is a masterly work of mind. Not a tithe of the standard literature of the world achieves any thing so profound or so brilliant. Plato could not have done it, but St. Paul did it. The profoundest discoveries of ethical science were made intelligible, and, what is vastly more important, were made regenerating forces of thought in the minds of fishermen, by the Sermon on the Mount. Yet all the philosophy which the world reveres bows before the originality of that sermon to-day. Was there intellectual degradation in that? As much as in the humblest labor of a successful pulpit.

Much to the purpose here is an opinion which Guizot has recorded of the nature of genius. In his criticism of the English drama, he expresses his idea of genius in words which are true, without abatement, of the Christian pulpit. He says, "Genius is bound to follow human nature in all its developments. Its strength consists in finding within itself the means of satisfying the whole of the public. [It] should exist for all, and should suffice at once for the wants of the masses and for the requirements of the most exalted minds." What is this, but preaching the gospel to every creature, becoming all things to all men, doing in the simplicity of faith that which every successful preacher does in the result of his life's work? This, then, we pronounce

the intellectual dignity of the pulpit. Why not, as well as of the drama? Considered as the subject of philosophical criticism, the genius of the pulpit corresponds to the genius of that poetry which is world-wide and immortal. A good sermon is a popular production in the same sense in which a good drama is a popular production. A good preacher is a man of the people in the same sense in which Racine and Shakespeare were men of the people. Any thing which grows out of scholastic culture alone, valuable as it may be, is still below the genius which sways the people from the pulpit, in the same sense in which Aristotle was below Homer, and Locke below Milton.

(3) From this view it follows that the sense of self-denial which preachers sometimes express in adapting their sermons to all classes, instead of ministering to a select intelligence, has no virtue in it. Says one of twenty pastors of like mind, in a private letter, "I am throwing myself away in this shoe-town." Very well. he probably could not make a better throw. If he saves a "shoe-town" morally, he lifts it up intellectually to an immense altitude. In the process of doing that, he lifts his own mind to a level of culture and of power which no conservatism of refinement ever rises high enough to overlook. Do not the first ten inches of an oak from the ground measure as much in height as the last ten of its topmost branch? When will the ministry learn that the place where has very little concern with the intellectual worth of the work done? The uplifting anywhere is essentially the same, but with the chances of success all in favor of lifting low down. To the mind of Christ the whole world is a "shoe-town" intellectually. To give it a lift everywhere is the intellectual glory of the pulpit. Deliver

ance from the pettiness of a select ambition is essential to the power to lift it anywhere. If a man is swaying a promiscuous assembly every week, albeit they have waxed and grimy hands; if he is really moving them, educating them, raising them by the eternal thoughts of God up to the level of those thoughts, - he is doing a grander literary work, with more power at both ends of it, than if he were penned in and held down by the *élite* of a city, or the clique of a university. He is plowing a deeper furrow, and subsoiling the field of all culture. The reflex influence of his work upon his own development is more masculine. He is a nobler man for it in intellectual being. There is more of him in the end. He has more to show for his life's work, and more of himself to carry into eternity.

Doddridge speaks with dolorous magnanimity of the effort which it cost him to discard from his style certain words, metaphors, constructions, which his literary taste tempted him to use, but which his conscience rejected as unsuited to the capacities of his hearers. This was mourning the loss of useless tools. Such condescension is in the direct line of scholarly elevation. A man grows in literary dignity with every conquest of that kind which he achieves over himself. It ought not to be suffered to put on the dignity of a self-conquest: it should be the intuition and the joy of a cultivated taste.

(4) An appreciation by the ministry of the dignity of popular success in preaching tends to elevate the intellectual culture of the people. The popular mind grows under any ministry which respects it. Mental strength grows under ministrations which are addressed to mental strength. Treated as if worthy of respect, the common people become the more worthy. Such preaching

always creates a wakeful, thinking commonalty. No matter how low it begins in the social scale, it always builds upward. Historians of the American Revolution express astonishment at the extent to which the most profound principles of government were familiar to the reasonings of the common people of New England at that period. Otis and Adams and Ames never could have argued as they did with a people who had not been trained by a ministry whose pulpit had laid out its strength on the people. They knew no "high" and "low" in the aims of their preaching. They acted on the principle of common sense, that, in building up any thing, the building process is as valuable at the bottom as at the top, and that the bottom may be the more vital to the stability of the structure. Thus acting, with no consciousness of literary theory, they hit upon one of the axioms of literary taste; that the most useful thing for its purpose is the best thing of its kind. Therefore their congregations were what they were, — the foundation and the pillars of a State.

Viewed thus in every light of which it is susceptible, the true ideal of a sermon is reflected back upon us as a production which is popular in the sense of being independent of class, and therefore as belonging to the first rank of literature. Let us admit this; let us model our preaching upon it. As builders of men, let us respect ourselves, and respect our work, in building low down, and in using the tools which our business requires. Let us count that as the most perfect literature, which is most perfectly adjusted to the most perfect ends by the most perfect uses of the materials and the arts of speech. Let us cultivate in this respect the literary taste of Christ. Can you conceive of him as laboring under the burden of literary enthusiasm to

improve and polish the Sermon on the Mount, or the Beatitudes, or the Lord's Prayer, by adapting them more tastefully to the upper classes of Judæa? Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

3d, A sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, *upon religious truth.* This is too obvious to need further remark than to observe two things. One is, that this quality distinguishes a sermon from secular lectures. Political, historical, scientific, literary discourses may be popularized in their materials and form, and may be orally delivered: the religious theme and discussion are necessary to constitute the sermon. The other is, that nothing is a sermon which is out of the range of the religious necessities of the people. Usefulness of discourse does not make preaching. Theodore Parker once discoursed, on a Sabbath morning, upon the "Prospects of the Democratic Party in America." It may have been a truthful and useful oration, but it was not a sermon. It was not religiously useful. No religious necessities of his audience called for its delivery.

4th, A sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, upon religious truth, *as contained in the Christian Scriptures.* Truth is contained in the Bible by expression and by implication. In either mode it has the biblical sanction. Inspiration recognizes sources of religious knowledge outside of itself. A sermon, therefore, may follow the line of biblical recognition as well as that of the inspired record. A special significance appertains to this alliance of the sermon, in every form and theme of it, with the word of God. This will be evident from observing that natural theology is best adjusted to the uses of the pulpit when it breathes most heartily the biblical spirit. Only

when Christianized in spirit and in form does the religion of nature become on any large scale the power of God unto salvation. The most corrupt civilizations the world has ever seen have existed in the midst of its most impressive natural scenery. A temple of Venus, the scene of the most revolting orgies of Pagan *cultus*, stood in one of the most exquisite valleys of Southern Italy, where, if anywhere, one would suppose that nature would have led men to a spiritual worship. This is a symbol of the fate of natural theology everywhere, when it is left alone to contend with the depravity of the human heart. Be it ever so true or so pure, abrasion with depravity wears it dim, and wears it out, except when it is delivered in its biblical forms, and supported by its biblical auxiliaries. God in Christ, or no God at all, is the alternative suggested by the religious history of mankind.

The identity of a sermon with scriptural types of thought is emphasized, also, by the fact that preaching owes its existence to revealed religion. It is a remarkable fact that the religion of nature isolated from the Scriptures has never been preached on any large scale. Sporadic cases are of no account. Natural religion creates philosophers, and founds academies; it produces priests, and builds temples; it pictures and carves itself in symbols and ceremonies: but it has no churches, no pulpits, no preachers. Vinet says very truly, "There is no Mohammedan church, nor Brahmanical; and certainly there was no church in the religion of Homer." Natural religions all end where Christianity began. They create the temple, the symbol, the priest, the ritual, the choir, in a word, all the functions and the paraphernalia of the *cultus;* and there they stop. Beyond that, they have no growth, and no power

of conversion. Among the masses of mankind they do not arouse intelligent thinking enough to create the material on any broad scale for a preacher to work upon. They do not create the desire to be taught, reasoned with, persuaded, preached to, on religious themes. They do but imitate Christianity, when they employ preachers for their propagation. Gibbon speaks of the pulpit of the caliphs. Omar is represented as a preacher; but that conception of Mohammedan oratory was borrowed from the Christian vocabulary. The oral addresses of the caliphs were military harangues, nothing more. Alexander and Napoleon on the eve of battle were as truly preachers as Omar; and their aim of discourse was as really a religious aim as his. Only by a figure of speech, and a delusive one, can Mohammedan discourse be termed "preaching." Of all human systems of thought which have made nations in history, Mohammedanism contains the least material for preaching. It has no subjects for the pulpit. The system is fatalism pure and simple, the most brazen assault upon the common sense of mankind which stands recorded in history. It can not be consistently urged upon the convictions or the sensibilities of men by oratorical persuasion. The Mohammedan is not a proper subject of persuasion. He is not a reasoning being. Fate drives him in grooves. Hence the argument of Mohammedanism is the sword. Preaching, therefore, I repeat, is both theoretically and historically Christian. It owes its existence to the Christian Scriptures; and nothing but the spirit of biblical religion keeps it alive.

This view of the relation of the pulpit to the Bible is confirmed by the fact that retrograde tendencies of the Christian Church from its primeval purity are always tendencies to the disuse of preaching. A slid-

ing scale might be constructed, by which one might gauge the degree of corruption in the Church of the middle ages by the progressive decline of the pulpit. No matter whether the Church succumbed to Paganism or to philosophy, the result was the same: the pulpit succumbed proportionately. While the symbols of Christian worship multiplied in number, and increased in splendor, the symbol of Christian thinking and persuasion sunk into imbecility. When the Church lost its faith in the Bible as the only inspired source of knowledge, then sacerdotalism took the place of religious teaching, and the priesthood became too ignorant or too indolent, or both, to be preachers. Christianity became only a religion of the altar, a *cultus*, just as Paganism had been before it. There is no evidence from the history of Christianity, that worship, however spiritual and intelligent at the outset, can keep itself pure by the working of its own elements. The preservative from putrefaction, the disinfectant of moral disease, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, is the preaching element.

Reformatory struggles in the Church point to the same truth. They have always been aimed at two things which they have kept nearly abreast with each other One is the restoration of an uncorrupted and unfettered Bible; the other, the revival of the pulpit. The early Waldensian movement in Italy, that of Huss in Bohemia, that of Wickliffe in England, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, we have only to name these, to recall the two great instrumentalities which they exalted, — a free Bible and a free pulpit. The conflict of the Puritans with Queen Elizabeth was waged chiefly around the same two *foci* of the religious thought of England, — the Bible in the homes, and a free pulpit

in the sanctuaries of the people. The Puritans contended for liberty to preach the word of God, and for multiplying the number of priests who could preach it. The papal party in the English Church decried both, and denied the necessity of either. The recovery of the biblical spirit to the piety of England was due to the Puritan prophecyings.

Does not history perpetually repeat itself, in this respect, in our own day? Revivals of religion go hand in hand with a deepened reverence for the Scriptures, and a multiplied use of the pulpit. A dying or a dead Church thrives, if at all, externally on its form of worship. Of evangelical denominations, those which exalt the pulpit above worship have the most vital sympathy with religious awakening among the people. The genius of revivals is germane to them. Those which exalt worship above preaching only tolerate such awakenings, as they feel the distant refluence of them from surrounding sects. In brief, the more exclusive the popular reverence is for the Bible as the only sacred book unrivaled by books of prayer, and catechisms, and confessions of faith, and the more intense the spirituality of the popular interpretation of the Bible unperverted by the love of forms, so much the more exalted is the respect of the people for the pulpit, and so much the more vital is preaching to their religious faith. Such is the law of religious life as evolved from the history of the Church. Account for it as we may, somehow the pulpit and the Bible go together. If the one sinks, it carries down the other: if the one drops out of the popular faith, the other dies. Neither is ever resuscitated alone. It is not, therefore, a narrow conception of a sermon, if we incorporate into its very definition the fact of its dependence on a revealed religion, and that, the religion of the Scriptures.

LECTURE II.

THE SERMON: ITS GENERIC IDEA.

5th. Continuing the discussion of the generic idea of a sermon, we notice a fifth thesis; namely, that a sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, upon religious truth as contained in the Scriptures, *and elaborately treated.* A sermon must be distinguished from certain forms of religious discourse, from which it does not differ except in point of elaboration. A religious exhortation, for instance, is not a sermon. A part of a sermon it may be; but hortation standing alone is not preaching. Informal remarks in a meeting for religious conference are not a sermon. Woven into a sermon they may be; but isolated they are not preaching. A sermon is a structure: it is something put together with care. It has unity, coherence, proportion, a beginning, a middle, and an end. As a literary production, it has a philosophical construction as truly as a tragedy or an epic poem.

How is this theory of the essential elaborateness of a sermon to be reconciled with the apparent power of spontaneous preaching? Dr. James Alexander repeats the experience of every pastor, when he expresses his surprise at the failure of his most costly efforts as compared with his extemporaneous effusions. How is this to be reconciled, can it indeed be reconciled, with the

theory here advanced of the necessary elaborateness of all pulpit discourse?

(1) I answer, by observing that the power of spontaneous preaching is often overrated. Often it is not true that such preaching has great relative power. We are all liable to a delusion in our judgment of this, and none more so than the preacher himself, who has every possible inducement, every temptation I may say, to see evidences which do not exist of effects from such preaching. Some subtle infirmities of human nature are gratified by the conviction that such preaching does accomplish the work of the pulpit. The temptation it presents is very insidious to dignify by the name of Christian simplicity that which is commonplace in thought, shallow in feeling, and ephemeral in effect. Let us, then, be honest with ourselves, and see this thing as it is. In the pulpit, as everywhere else, the presumption is always against the efficiency of any thing which costs the producer little. The facts of life confirm this presumption. Preaching, which is really the fruit of a mind at ease, does not end in powerful results. Profound impressions do not come from such sermons. Permanent impressions do not. Impressions formative of character do not. Impressions upon the strongest characters are from no such preaching. I speak now of the law of the pulpit respecting this thing, not of anomalous exceptions.

Much is often said and made of weeping in an audience. We overrate this. Tears are not evidence of the profoundest emotions. They are not more so in religion than in other things. They are sometimes nothing but a nervous luxury. They are not wholly beyond the stimulus of the will. A man weeps less easily as his sensibilities deepen with time, and his char

acter sloughs off self-delusions. Old age is very apt to be tearless. The dying almost never weep. In a public speaker tears are an infirmity to be got rid of, never a gift to be vain of. Audiences which are habitually moved to the weeping mood are not those in which the most healthful piety is forming under the ministrations of the pulpit. Their religious experience is in danger of settling into a routine of theatric sensibility. I once saw a German audience weeping under an exclamatory sermon such as would scarcely be tolerated in an American conference-meeting. The greater part of that audience, I was informed, were present at the theatre in the evening of the same day. It may be reasonably doubted whether such would have been the case, if the sermon had given them any thing to think of, instead of the luxury of a few tears.

The criticism of men of the world upon the habits of religious people is worth reading, if not heeding. A critic in the "Saturday Review" thus discourses: "The assumption that a ready command of lachrymal secretions is a sign of virtue is very common among a large class of people. . . . They find a sweet relish in comparing their own sensitiveness with the aridity of other folk. . . . This worship of demonstrative sensibility is one of the most silly and mischievous superstitions of modern times. . . . The fact is, that the sort of sensibility which is very close upon crying is in great degree constitutional. Some people are born with weaker nerves and softer susceptibilities than others, as some are born with red, and some with black hair. The fact has no moral significance either way. Hearts worn upon the sleeve are not the most delicate and sensitive." Such is the strong and rather stern good sense which the pulpit must encounter among

men of the world. It is not apt to be very tolerant of moist preachers and paralytic audiences.

(2) The genuine power of spontaneous preaching is very largely a reflection of the power of elaborate discourse. The first owes its existence to the second. You will not have been very long in the ministry when you will discover the worth of your own history in the pulpit. That which you say there you will find interpreted by that which you have said. That which you do will be received with the weight of that which you have done. That which you preach will go to the people with the momentum of that which you have been found to *be*. Your character will energize your words. This history of every preacher, and of his pulpit, is always to be taken into the account in judging of the efficiency of single sermons.

Apply this principle, for a moment, to the spontaneous sermon. The effect of such a sermon often indicates only that the preacher's present effort carries the weight of his history. One great sermon will overshadow and protect many small ones. Still more successfully will strong preaching as the rule bear up weak preaching as the exception. The truth is, that any great art, to be sustained in its weak points, must have its strong points. In all varieties of power there is a class of petty, one may almost say frivolous, instrumentalities which seem to have more power than they have, because of this secret suction of strength from richer resources. They can never be wisely depended on, to the neglect of those richer resources. They can not be even what they honestly are, without the cultivation of those resources. They are scintillations which can not have even their momentary glare, without the solid, massive, heated globes from which they emanate. As

there can not be a parody without a poem, so there can be no preaching impromptu without elaborate sermonizing to keep the pulpit alive, and to make preaching respectable enough to command a hearing for its inferior effusions.

(3) Another view of the subject of spontaneous preaching remains, which is the most vital of all. It is, that apparently spontaneous trains of thought are often the result of the most severe elaboration. Frequently that which seems to be preaching "offhand" is any thing but that. It is preceded by most laborious, and, as related to the subjects in hand, most masterly, mental processes. Years of culture are behind it. It is the ripened fruit of thoughts which struggled into the mind's life years before, and which have been mellowing there ever since.

Two classes of these ripened materials are observable in sermons of the kind now in question. One is that of strong thought, which has lost its appearance of elaboration through the long familiarity of the preacher's mind with it. He has revolved it, and dissected it, and pursued it into lateral relations, and experimented with the uses of it, till he knows it all, around and all through. The choice aspects of it he recalls on the instant. The lights and shadows of it are all pictured in his mind's eye. Fragments and connections of it which are useless for popular impression he knows, and therefore he knows when to let them alone. His perception of it now has the quickness of intuition; but was it intuition at the first? His use of it now has the spontaneity of genius; but was it genius originally? His preaching of it now has the facility of nature. There seems to be no science, no art, no study, no toil, about it. The truth seems just to flow to him and

through him by natural inspiration. Verily he has "opened his mouth and taught them, saying." But was he always inspired thus? Not at all. He has reached his present mental possession of that truth by some of the most elaborate mental processes of his life; but the elaboration is out of sight, perhaps forgotten by the preacher himself. The delving and the boring and the blasting are finished; and now the fountain gushes out, the freest and easiest and freshest thing in nature, just because the vein has been struck. It is only a play upon words to exalt such preaching as opposed to or different from elaborated sermons.

But often there is another element in such preaching, more valuable than any intellectual fruitage, yet indicative of elaboration of the severest and profoundest quality. It is that of thought which has grown rich in the mind of the preacher through his own long experience of it in his own character. No other elements of truth are so thoroughly at a man's command as elements like these. If he is a true man, he is living them every hour. The preaching of such truths is the nearest approach one can make to the discourses of Christ. No wonder that it is has power. But is there no elaboration lying back of such power? The most intense and the most intricate elaboration of truth is involved in those mental processes by which character is formed and consolidated. As no other product of thought equals character, so no other discipline is so severe or so complicated, so ingenious or so artful, as the hidden discipline by which character matures. No matter whether the preacher has derived his experience of the truth from the stimulus of books or not, the essential point is that his mind has gone through the process of revolutionary struggle in coming to its present com-

mand of the truth he preaches. He is but a half-formed man, if he has not discovered this, and if he therefore decries elaborate sermons as something unlike his own. If his is not elaborate preaching, there is no such preaching.

You can all easily test the truth of the views here advanced, by your own experience, real or probable. Suppose that you were driven in an emergency to preach without present preparation. You are on a journey. On the Sabbath morning you are placed in circumstances in which you must preach, or be cowardly, through fear for your reputation. You have no written sermon which is accessible: you must preach extemporaneously. You have only the time in which the devotional services are in progress to cast your thoughts into order, and choose a text. What sort of a text will you certainly choose in such an exigency? what kind of subject? what train of thought? Will they be text, theme, thoughts, wholly novel to you, unexplored, untried, undigested? or will they be materials which are familiar to you? Most surely, if you are a man of sense, they will be the latter. You will instinctively select a channel in which your mind has been used to flowing, and in which, therefore, it flows easily and naturally. You will, in other words, choose a theme on which your mind has a history, an experience either of intellect or of heart, or of both; and that history, if it is worth any thing to anybody, has cost you something. You have toiled for it; you have struggled for it; you have given time to it; you have suffered mental failures about it: in short, you have elaborated it. When, therefore, at the close of the service, you see evidence that good has been done by your preaching, perhaps a soul awakened or converted, do

not set it down to the credit of simple preaching as opposed to intellectual preaching. Do not be beguiled into a lazy ministry. Rest assured that such preaching is truly useful just in proportion to its cost in previous labor. Up to the extreme border of your own hard-bought experience, you can preach thus with power. beyond that border, such preaching is the weakest of all possible dilutions. When it ceases to be an experience, and becomes an imitation, it wins no hearts, because it commands no respect. The pulpit which then depends upon it for results dies out, and no man mourns. For the reasons thus given, we insert into the very definition of a sermon, as belonging to the generic idea of the thing, that it must be a structure, and therefore the fruit of elaboration.

6th, A sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, upon religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated *with a view to persuasion*. This assigns the sermon to the loftiest form of rhetorical discourse. It distinguishes preaching, also, from two species of composition from which it is not otherwise entirely distinct.

(1) One of these is poetry. Poetry and preaching may have numerous resemblances. Both may be orally delivered. Homer chanted the Iliad. The poetic drama is constructed primarily with reference to oral utterance. Both may be addressed to the popular mind. The ballads of all literatures are thus addressed. Italian improvisators address their poetic effusions to the populace. Both may be upon religious themes, upon biblical themes, upon themes elaborately treated. For all these qualities, Milton hoped for the "Paradise Lost" an undying fame. Madame de Staël, in "Corinne," represents some of the ephemeral productions of the im-

provisators as finished specimens of literature. A poem, then, may possess every feature which has been remarked as essential to homiletic discourse, except one. Poetry and preaching differ in the conscious aim of the speaker. All forms of poetry differ from all forms of oratory in the fact that a preacher always consciously aims at the persuasion of the hearer, while a poet never does so. The essential idea of poetry is a vexed theme of literary criticism. After all that has been said and written upon it, I find the essential idea of poetry in the spontaneity of its utterance of truth in rhythmic forms. Popular criticism very nearly hits this principle, when it speaks of poetical productions as poetical effusions. Poetry floats in an element of emotion. It flows unbidden: it comes into life in speech because it must come. Being the expression of a soul so full of its thought that it utters the thought for its own sake, poetry represents no consciousness of design to move the will of reader or hearer. Hence in the ancient criticism the poet was the creator: he wrought only for self-expression. Something of the unconsciousness of inspired seers clings to all the ideas which the ancient critics had of the genius of poetry.

To this view it may be plausibly objected, "What of certain popular ballads which have moved masses of men to a purpose? What of revolutionary ballads like the Marseillaise Hymn? What of certain battle-songs like that of Gustavus Adolphus?" These have so thrilled and moved to action armies and nations, that they rank among the most persuasive powers in literature: is there, then, no persuasive aim in their construction? I answer, none, so far as the consciousness of the poet is concerned in the act of composing. The recorded experience of poets confirms this theory. Such

productions never come into life by conscious design: they always burst upon the world as a surprise,—as much a surprise to their authors as to any one else. No man ever creates such a hymn who sets about it with conscious aim. This theory is confirmed by the history of the best specimens of religious hymnology. The choicest hymns of all languages, which have lifted the Christian Church to heaven in the service of song, have not been created with any such conscious design. Their moving of the world was in the divine purpose, not in the human purpose, of their construction. They all breathe an atmosphere of solitude. Intense individualism in communion with God characterizes them. "*My* faith looks up to *Thee*" is the keynote of their production. Listening and sympathizing and participating and obedient audiences are as much out of mind as out of sight, when such immortal hymns come to their birth. Only the Spirit of God then moves upon the face of the waters.

On the other hand, the least impressive fragments of all our hymnological literature are the expostulatory and comminatory hymns. They are not poetry: they are only preaching in meter. A perfect taste rejects them. In the nature of things, an exhortation to repentance is not meant to be sung. A multitude of our religious melodies, popular in revivals of religion, come under this condemnation. A perfected spiritual taste, and a perfected æsthetic taste as well, eschew them. The time is coming when our hymn-books for use in the public service of song will be expurgated of every thing which is not a spontaneous outflow of some form of communion with God. A hymn-book limited to the loftiest songs of worship would be as perfect in poetic quality as in spiritual experience. In both

respects it would be a reproduction of the Psalms of the Old Testament, in which but one solitary instance occurs of expostulatory threatening. Since these pages were written, I have been confirmed in the views they advance of the nature of true poetry by discovering an expression by Goethe on the same subject. He says, "Poetry is the spontaneous effluence of a soul absorbed in its own inspirations."

What, now, is the distinctive feature of oratory as compared with poetry? It is the ascendency over every thing else of that which does not exist at all in poetry; namely, the conscious aim at persuasion. In poetry, the audience is nothing: in oratory, the audience is every thing. In poetry, therefore, persuasion finds no place: in oratory, it commands every place. Preaching, therefore, excludes every thing which is not either persuasion, or a tributary to persuasion. In the consciousness of the preacher in the act of preaching, and in the consciousness of the hearer in the act of listening, this aim at persuasion is everywhere and always felt. Nothing is preaching of which this is not true: nothing is eloquence of which this is not true. Eloquence is always an aim at a mark, never a solitary self-expression. As Daniel Webster defined it, it is "always a progress on, right on, to an object." That object in the end is always the same, — persuasion. In true preaching, therefore, argument is never used for the sake of the argument; illustration, never for the sake of the illustration; ornament, never for the sake of the ornament. These are always means to an end, and the end is persuasion. The more elaborate they are, if true to their purpose, the more faithfully tributary they are to the one end, and the more powerful is the impetus they give to the movement of discourse towards that end.

The broader the sweep of the circle, the more irresistible is the momentum of the descent, and the more concentrated the unity of the blow struck.

(2) The second of the two species of composition from which the present thesis distinguishes preaching is that species of prose composition in which the only object is either intellectual or emotive. Some compositions there are which combine every requisite of a sermon except this, of aim at the will of a hearer. Some discourses in the pulpit are purely instructive in their aims: knowledge is communicated for the sake of the knowledge, and nothing more. Others are purely imaginative: feeling is wrought upon by imaginative art, for the luxury of the feeling, and nothing more. The question arises, then, Are these productions sermons? The answer, strictly speaking, must be in the negative. The immediate object of a sermon may be instruction, or the excitement of emotion, or both; but the ultimate object is neither. True eloquence, and therefore true preaching, always foreshadow the persuasion of the hearer as their final aim. They may not disclose the thing to which he is to be persuaded; but they must disclose the fact of something to which he is to be persuaded. In a series of sermons, for instance, the applicatory persuasion may lie at the end of the series; but its beginning and middle will breathe the spirit of the coming persuasive process. That is living in the consciousness of the preacher, and the whole line of the discussion will vibrate with it. The discussion exists for it and for nothing else.

Herein lies the vital distinction between the pulpit and the stage. Theatric discourse, in its purest and most lofty purpose, stops short of the persuading of a hearer. It may amuse, it may instruct, it may rouse

emotion, it may play indefinitely back and forth between intellect and sensibility; but it does not persuade. It is busy with the intellectual faculties, it plays with the sensibilities; it riots among the passions; but there it ends. It does not move upon the will as the grand point to be carried by dramatic appeal. Just here the pulpit and stage are at antipodes to each other. On the stage, the will of the hearer is nothing; the intellect and sensibilities every thing. In the pulpit, the will is every thing; the intellect and sensibilities nothing but tributaries.

Yet this distinction condemns certain varieties of discourse which are often heard in pulpits. Some discourses are essentially theatric in their aim. They instruct, and that only; they sport with the imagination, and that only; they play with the feelings, and that only. Specially in certain forms of argumentative discourse is the theatric quality obvious. It marks the chief distinction between two classes of argumentative preachers. One preacher discourses as if he felt, and he makes his audience feel, that his argument is the all in all. He argues for the sake of the intellectual treat; he communicates the knowledge for the sake of the knowledge; he tasks the intellect for the sake of the strain; and that is the whole of it. The being of God, and the necessity of an Atonement, he proves as Agassiz would have lectured on an Amazonian fish or the glacial theory. Another preacher will appear to feel, and will make his audience feel, that his argument is a preliminary; his use of the intellect is an instrument; the whole argumentative process is a means to an end; and the whole discourse is alive and tremulous with the consciousness of that end. He proves an Atonement as he would build a raft, or man a life-boat, for drowning

men. This eager on-looking to the end in all the intellectual processes of the pulpit is to preaching what the circulation of the blood is to the vital powers of the body. If it languishes, life languishes: when it ceases, life goes out. Therefore the persuasive aim enters into the very definition of a sermon.

LECTURE III.

THE SERMON: CLASSIFICATION, ANALYSIS.

II. THE generic idea of a sermon, then, is that of an oral address to the popular mind, on religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated with a view to persuasion. Proceeding with this generic idea of preaching, we are prepared to consider sermons more specifically as subject to certain varieties of classification.

1st, Homiletic classification is founded, either in practice or in theory, upon seven different principles. They are the following.

(1) One is the mode of delivery. On this principle, we recognize, in practice, sermons as delivered from manuscript, from memory, and extemporaneously. This, obviously, is not a rhetorical classification. The same principles of rhetoric apply to an extemporaneous as to a written discourse, if both are orally delivered. Relatively this is not an important classification. No vital principles of discourse are concerned with it: still, in practice, it is a convenient classification.

(2) A second classification is founded upon the occasions on which sermons are delivered. This, again, is a superficial arrangement of discourses: relatively it is unimportant; strictly it is not rhetorical. Still it is often a practical convenience to classify by occasion.

We therefore speak of "ordinary" and "occasional" sermons; and occasional sermons we subdivide indefinitely.

(3) A third classification is founded upon the subjects of sermons. Schott classifies sermons mainly by subject. He terms them "doctrinal," "practical," "historical," and "philosophical." But the distinction between "doctrinal" and "practical," as applied to sermons, is mischievous. Schott is apparently sensible of this; and he therefore tones down the distinction by terming the one class "doctrino-practical," and the other class "practico-doctrinal." This is keen analysis, and very necessary in practice, if the primary distinction is retained. It hints at the relative proportion of doctrinal discussion to practical application in the two classes of sermons.

Again: classification by subject is not a rhetorical method. As a rhetorical structure, a sermon is independent of subject; that is, its rhetorical peculiarities do not depend on its subject. Still it must be conceded that classification by subject is a practical convenience Preachers do and will arrange subjects, rather than discourses. This may often take the place of more philosophical arrangements. It is impossible to reduce to a brief series all the themes of sermons; but, on this principle of division, the most important classes consist of sermons upon doctrines, upon duties, upon persons, upon events, and upon institutions.

(4) A fourth classification is founded upon the character of the audience addressed. This is not rhetorically significant of the differences of sermons. What matters it to the essential structure of a discourse, whether it be an argument addressed to learned hearers, or an argument addressed to the illiterate? An

argument is an argument; and this fact is the thing which determines its rhetorical character. Still the distribution of sermons by reference to the audience addressed is a practical convenience. Pastors often designate their discourses, and arrange the proportions of their preaching, by the questions: "Is this a sermon to Christians? to the unconverted? to parents? to children? to young men? to the aged? to the afflicted? to merchants? to clergymen? to Sabbath schools?" and so on indefinitely. Valueless as this method is for the purposes of rhetorical science, it has a large place in the habits of pastors.

(5) A fifth classification suggested by Dr. Campbell is founded upon the different faculties of mind to which sermons are supposed to be addressed. Dr. Campbell thus distributes the discourses of the pulpit into those addressed to the understanding, those addressed to the imagination, those addressed to the passions, and those addressed to the will. The ingenuity of this arrangement is unique. It would appear to be a neat, complete, philosophical distribution of all possible discourses. Yet it is remarkable for its unpractical character. We may safely believe that no man ever used it in adjusting the proportions of his preaching. Neither is there any rhetorical principle in this method of classification. Rhetoric does not go out of the discourse itself to find the principle by which to classify it. It analyzes the thing heard, not the hearer, to discover what that thing is.

(6) A certain anomalous classification, which is a peculiarity of homiletics, is founded on the use made of the texts of sermons. I term it an anomaly because general rhetoric does not recognize it. Oral discourse as such need not have a text. Outside of the pulpit

it commonly has none. Yet in the pulpit the text is a necessity, and the classification of sermons upon the use made of the text is convenient and of great value. Though an anomaly in rhetoric, we may accept it as homiletic. The anomaly grows out of the necessities of the pulpit. On this principle, sermons may be arranged in four classes, — the topical, the textual, the expository, and the inferential. The topical sermon is one in which a subject is deduced from the text, but discussed independently of the text. The textual sermon is one in which the text is the theme, and the parts of the text are the divisions of the discourse, and are used as a line of suggestion. An expository sermon is one in which the text is the theme, and the discussion is an explanation of the text. The inferential sermon is one in which the text is the theme, and the discussion is a series of inferences directly from the text: the text is the premise, a series of inferences is the conclusion.

As these distinctions are of great practical value in the labors of the pulpit, let me illustrate these four classes of sermons by examples in which the same text shall be employed in the four methods here indicated. The text is Phil. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." From this text we may deduce the subject of the "Sovereignty of God in the Work of Salvation," or the subject of the "Activity of Man in Regeneration," or the "Duty of Earnestness in seeking Salvation." Either of these themes might then be discussed independently of any further use of the text, and we should thus have a *topical* sermon.

But we might make the text itself the theme of dis-

course, and might follow its line of thought by remarking: 1. The duty enjoined in the text, "Work out salvation;" 2. The individual responsibility for the soul's salvation implied in the text, "Work out your own salvation;" 3. The spirit with which salvation should be sought, "With fear and trembling;" 4. The dependence of effort to be saved upon the power of God, "It is God which worketh in you;" 5. Dependence upon God for salvation is the great encouragement to effort for salvation, "Work, *for* it is God which worketh in you." This train of thought developed would constitute a *textual* sermon.

Yet again we might make the text the theme, and let the sermon consist of an explanation of the text, by inquiring: 1. In what sense is a sinner commanded to achieve his own salvation? 2. What is the spirit of fear and trembling in the work of salvation? 3. In what sense does the text affirm God to be the author of salvation? 4. What connection does the text affirm between the earnestness of the sinner and the agency of God? An answer to these inquiries, devoted to the language of the text, and designed to evolve the force of the text, would constitute an *expository* sermon.

Once more: we might consider the text as the theme, and assume, that, as a well-known passage, it does not need much explanation. Explain it briefly, if you please, give in a paraphrase the result without the process of exposition, and then let the body of the sermon consist of a series of inferences drawn directly from the text. 1. That salvation is a pressing necessity to every man. 2. That every man is responsible for his own salvation. 3. That every man who is saved does in fact achieve his own salvation. 4. That dependence upon God is a help, not a hindrance, to salvation.

5. The guilt of trifling with religious convictions. 6. The unreasonableness of waiting in impenitence for the interposition of God. 7. The uselessness of lukewarm exertions to secure salvation. 8. The certainty that every man who is in earnest to be saved will be saved. This line of thought developed would be an *inferential* sermon. Its characteristic feature is neither topical, nor textual, nor expository discussion, but independent yet direct inference from the text.

(7) A seventh method of classifying sermons remains to be considered. It is a classification founded on the mode of treating the subject of discourse. This method is preferable to all others for several reasons. In the first place, it is a strictly rhetorical classification. It does not go outside of the discourse itself to find the character of the discourse. What is it that chiefly distinguishes one sermon from another? Not the subject, not the occasion, not the audience, not the method of delivery, not the faculty of mind addressed, not the use made of the text: it is the method of discussion. By this we must necessarily characterize any discourse as a rhetorical structure. Moreover, this is a practically convenient classification. The practical as well as the theoretic differences of sermons arise chiefly out of diversity of method in the treatment of subjects. Nothing else creates so wide a difference, or so many varieties. Again: this is a comprehensive classification: it covers all varieties of sermons. No variety exists in the usage of the pulpit, none is conceivable in homiletic theory, which it does not reach. Furthermore, it is no peculiarity of homiletics: it covers all varieties of oral address. The principle threads every thing known as public discourse, and does it naturally, without forced connections. Ask, respecting any kind of public speech,

what is its method of discussion, and you classify it instantly as a rhetorical structure, upon a principle which combines philosophical accuracy and practical convenience with comprehensiveness of application. Upon this principle of division, sermons may be arranged in four classes, — the explanatory, the illustrative, the argumentative, the persuasive.

Explanatory sermons, as the name indicates, include all sermons the chief object of which is explanation. It may be an explanation of a text; then the discourse is technically an expository sermon. It may be an explanation of a doctrine; then it is one kind of doctrinal sermon. It may be an explanation of a duty; then it is one kind of ethical sermon. It may be an explanation of a ceremony; then it is one kind of sermon on a positive institution. The rhetorical feature which characterizes all these discourses is the same, — the process of explaining what the thing is.

Illustrative sermons, as the name betokens, comprise all sermons the chief object of which is to intensify the vividness of truth; not to originate the knowledge of truth, but to realize conceptions of it already known; not to explain truth, though often it is an incident of illustrative discourse that it does explain; not to prove truth, though often it is an incident of illustration that it does prove. The prime object is to impart glow to truth, to make men feel the reality of what they know It is literally to *illustrate*, to make truth lustrous, and therefore impressive. This class of sermons includes, you will perceive, descriptive discourses, sermons imaginative of biblical scenes, historical and biographical sermons, also a large class of discourses upon acknowledged doctrines, duties, virtues, the force of which lies dormant in the popular faith. The range and signifi-

dance of such preaching in nominally Christian lands are obvious at a glance. Not explanation, not logic, not hortation, but pictorial imagination holds the place of pre-eminence in such preaching among the conditions of ministerial success.

Argumentative sermons, as the title signifies, embrace all sermons the chief object of which is proof. They are aimed primarily at the intellect of the hearer. They propose either to create conviction where none exists, or to change conviction where the false exists. The prime element in such a discourse is logic pure and simple. The syllogism is the framework: belief is the result aimed at. This class comprises, therefore, a large proportion of so-called doctrinal sermons, also many ethical sermons.

Persuasive sermons have an infelicity in their title. It has been affirmed that all preaching has persuasion for its ultimate object, even that nothing is a sermon which is not aimed at persuasion. It is a misfortune to restrict the term "persuasive" to any one class of discourses; but no other one word designates the thing by which a certain class of sermons are distinguished. It includes all those sermons the *immediate* object of which is persuasion. The key-note of the persuasive sermon, technically so called, is urgency to present action.

2d, Before leaving this topic of the classification of sermons, several *memoranda* deserve mention.

(1) The classification here commended does not limit discourse to any one rhetorical method. The preponderance of one method, not the exclusion of others, gives character to every class. We pronounce a sermon explanatory, if explanation leads the discussion. Illustration, argument, hortation may all exist in it, but

only as subordinates. So each element, in its turn, may lead the discussion; and the sermon is classed accordingly. A classification which should leave no room for this intermingling of rhetorical elements would be practically useless. Practice would leap over it. In all good preaching the standard elements of composition are constantly interchanged, but always with subordination of the majority to one. Rhetoric and practice in this respect exactly tally. Use and beauty require the same thing.

(2) The four elements of discourse recognized in this classification cover every variety of oratorical composition. Explanation, illustration, argument, persuasion are all that exist of rhetorical material and method with which to deal. One or more of these four things must be done in all good discourse; and in such discourse nothing else can be done. When you have exhausted these four elements of speech, you have exhausted all the resources of speech. This classification, therefore, includes all the variety of which rational discourse is susceptible.

(3) The proper classification of sermons is fundamental to the subject of unity of discourse. A sermon can not be pointed in its aim, if it has no oneness of rhetorical character by which to classify it. The same qualities which adjust it to its class give it unity as an individual. If you have a clear idea of the kind of discourse which you purpose to frame, that localizes your sermon where it belongs, and at the same time goes far to unify it as a rhetorical structure. Oneness of impression results from the same process by which you gain oneness of construction.

(4) The proper classification of sermons is equally fundamental to the subject of proportion in preaching

In a ministry of ten years, the proportions of preaching depend more on the adjustment of the four grand methods of rhetorical discussion than on all things else combined. No variety of subject, of text, of occasion, of audience, will save you from monotony, if you always do one and the same thing with subject, text, occasion, and audience. Always explain, or always prove, or always paint, or always exhort, and versatility of impression is impossible, though you range the universe for themes. Construct your sermons for ten years so that you have symmetrical proportions of argumentative, of illustrative, of explanatory, and of persuasive materials, and you have symmetry of impression, without the possibility of monotony or of distortion. Be the impression strong or weak, it will be rounded. It will leave no blanks and no excrescences.

III. We have thus far considered the sermon in its generic idea and in its fundamental varieties. We have now to consider the analysis of a sermon. What are its constituent parts?

(1) In reply, let it be observed, that by the parts of a discourse are not meant portions necessarily visible as such to the eye in the manuscript. They are not apartments in the area of a sermon. Some of them are visibly distinct in the writing, and audibly distinct in the delivery, but not all of them.

(2) By the constituent parts of a sermon are not meant parts all of which are essential in every discourse. Nearly all of them are so, but exceptions exist.

(3) By the constituent parts of a sermon are meant those features of discourse, which, in the process of its construction, must engage the attention of the preacher. If sometimes one or more of the parts of a discourse

are unnecessary, still a preacher must consider them, that he may decide intelligently that they are unnecessary. Is an introduction superfluous in a given sermon? Perhaps so. But the preacher must consider whether or not it be so.

(4) Philosophically regarded, the number of the parts of a discourse depends on the limitation of terms. This accounts for the diversity in the analyses of discourse adopted by the ancient rhetoricians. Thus Aristotle reckons four parts only, the introduction, the proposition, the proof, the conclusion. Of these, he affirms that only the proposition and proof are essential to the rhetorical completeness of a discourse. Quintilian enumerates five parts, the introduction, the narration, the proof, the refutation, the conclusion. Yet there is no material distinction between Aristotle's proposition, and Quintilian's narration; between Aristotle's proof, and Quintilian's proof and refutation. The narration in Quintilian's analysis referred specially to forensic address: it was a lawyer's statement of his case. This corresponds to what Aristotle meant by the proposition. Proof and refutation also are parts of one process, which Aristotle, with a sharper analytic eye than Quintilian, discerns as such, and calls by one name. Does Aristotle, then, fail to recognize the introduction, when he pronounces it non-essential to the completeness of a rhetorical structure? Not at all. In a proposition he would in that case include all that is requisite to a skillful enunciation of the subject. The proposition thus extended would commonly comprise an introduction.

(5) It follows, then, that the question whether we shall adopt a condensed or an extended analysis of a sermon is chiefly one of convenience in criticism. For

purely scientific theory, the more condensed analysis is the more finished; but, for convenience in practical criticism, the more extended subdivision is the superior. I prefer, therefore, to enumerate the parts of a sermon as follows: namely, the text, the explanation, the introduction, the proposition, the division, the development, and the conclusion. Is the text a necessary part of a sermon? Yes, or no; on the same principle on which Aristotle in one view admitted, and in another rejected, the introduction. Doubtless a complete rhetorical structure on a scriptural theme may be formed without a text. The text may also be theoretically regarded as an incident to the proposition, and involved in the process of announcing a subject. But in practice preachers have a text: it is in practice commonly distinct from the proposition. Important homiletic questions concern it as a text, and a text only: therefore it is convenient to treat it thus in homiletic theory.

IV. We recognize, then, seven principal parts of a discourse for the pulpit, under the titles above named. It will be the object of the subsequent lectures to consider them in their order. Before doing so, however, I wish to forewarn you of several things which may otherwise occasion you some disappointment as we proceed.

Let me ask you to observe, first, the necessity of minute criticism in our discussion of these parts of a sermon. Many things must receive attention which may appear to you trivial. Relatively to some other things, they are trivial, considered singly; but in the aggregate they are not so. Preachers err egregiously who trust to the excellences of discourse to weigh down minute defects. Multitudes of clergymen suffer under a contracted usefulness, because their sterling virtues

are blocked by numberless little impediments which reduplicate the amount of friction. A commanding genius is required to force the way to results through deficiencies in themselves so small that genius despises them. But that which a genius can do successfully, I can not; probably you can not. Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, may be useful in spite of violations of taste which would bury in oblivion a pastor of wooden speech. Besides, it is the inferior genius which contemns inferior excellences. The very first order of mind does no such thing. Michael Angelo did not think it beneath him to execute one of the consummate marvels of his genius in the carving of a peach-stone. So the most exalted style of manhood in the ministry will count no excellence too minute to subserve the objects of the pulpit. Some of the processes of preaching are of such a character, that no genius can force them. They must be performed warily, gently, scrupulously. They are like the movements of a watch: only a few grains of sand are needed to clog them; and the more perfect the movement, the more easy its arrest.

A second preliminary suggestion is that of the necessity of profuse illustration in the discussion of the parts of a sermon. Mr. Dickens says that criticism in literature of any kind "is not worth a farthing without innumerable examples." This is doubly apt in application to homiletic criticism. The mere statement and eulogy of principles, however minute, form the most useless kind of discourse on such topics as must come before us. By far the most difficult part of the process needed is the discovery or the invention of pertinent illustrations.

A third suggestion, preliminary to the work before us, is that a defect in preaching often needs to be made

ludicrous to excite our repugnance to it effectually. A curious phenomenon in literary history is this, that the pulpit has tolerated faults which literary taste endures nowhere else. The seriousness of the work of the pulpit seems to have acted as a shield to deformities which good taste feels to be intolerable elsewhere. There is no remedy for this shelter of the pulpit from robust criticism, except that preachers should therefore be more severe in their criticism of themselves. No other fault is so hurtful as one which is sanctified by its surroundings. Honest good sense may see it, but can not get at it through fear of irreverence. We must subject ourselves to healtful criticism in such a case. If we can fix in mind a vivacious caricature of such faults, put them into the dress of a clown, we do ourselves a good service. Blessed be the man who invented caricature! We are compelled to practice this adroitness on our own minds to spur them up to an instinctive repulsion of a fault which we shall tolerate otherwise on the plea that we have a pious object. Set that down as the plea of mental indolence: it is nothing else. The proper antidote to it is ridicule.

The fourth preliminary remark is that in these lectures many things must be observed the necessity of which you will outgrow. Homiletic discipline is sometimes undervalued heedlessly as a preacher advances in his profession, because he finds, that, in some respects, he leaves the need of it behind him. His own good sense teaches him some of its lessons so thoroughly, that he begins to doubt whether the time ever was when he did not know them by heart. But homiletic discipline does its work for a man, if it expedites his experience. A young man receives a great boon in any thing which economizes expenditure of his early manhood. Homi-

letic lectures, therefore, should in my view be aimed at the early years of practice in the pulpit. Their immediate object is to teach a man how to begin his work. They are valuable just in proportion to their power to diminish the inevitable waste of early effort to its minimum. That a young preacher quickly outgrows them is the best evidence that they have been effective. That discipline in every thing which we outgrow the need of is the discipline to which we are the most deeply indebted. Literature contains no other one thing to which we owe so much as to the Roman alphabet.

These remarks suggest a fifth preliminary: it is that homiletic instruction can never make a preacher. Unreasonable expectations often defeat the very object of homiletic discipline. Men often come to it, not as to discipline, but as to a process of accumulation. They expect to be put in possession of a new power of speech. They expect homiletics to give them pulpit eloquence, as history gives them the opinions of the past, and dogmatic theology those of the present. This is absurd. Preaching is a business. Every business must be learned in the main by the doing of it. The theory can give you principles to start with, can forewarn of perils, can set up defenses, can disclose existing faults in culture, can reveal abnormal tendencies of mind, and disproportion of mental character, can do all that theory does for a man in any thing which is a practical business. In brief, it can make the business practicable; but it can never create the doing of it. A man must work the theory into his own culture, so that he shall execute it unconsciously. This he can do only by his own experience of the theory in his own practice till it becomes a second

nature. This is the work of time. We learn how to live by living: so we learn how to preach by preaching. Yet law, principle, theory have as valuable a use in the one case as in the other. Vinet says that the "homiletics of the study should leave room for that of the temple and the parish." Not so: the homiletics of the study *is* that of the temple and the parish. So far as it becomes a part of the preacher himself, he will be constantly emitting it from his own culture in expedients of usefulness which will be the legitimate fruits of it, but which will seem to him to be the spontaneous production of the hour

LECTURE IV.

THE TEXT: HISTORY, USES.

THE first thing which attracts the attention of a critic of pulpit discourse is the custom of founding it upon selections of inspired words. It will aid us in obtaining the true theory of the text as a part of pulpit discourse, to consider, in the first place: —

I. Some notices of the history of the custom of employing texts. The sources of information on this topic are not fertile. Objections to the custom are almost wholly of modern origin. At least, if objections existed in the early Church, they have not lived in historic records of opinion.

1st, We may observe, first, the Jewish origin of the custom. It had its birth, unquestionably in the old Jewish reverence for the letter of the word of God. What, then, was the position of the text in the Jewish idea of a religious discourse? In the earliest Jewish worship the text was the chief part of the discourse. Being originally a direct communication from God, it absorbed all the interest of a hearer in itself. When first revealed, it must have stood alone, without enlargement, without comment. The very words of God, and no other, were the first sermon. Large portions of the Scriptures of those times were chosen as the themes of meditation in the temple. Preaching, other than the

reading of the law and the prophets, can scarcely be said to have existed. The nearest approximation to it was simply the interpretation of the passage which had previously been read. In the Jewish idea, the inspired text is the sermon; comment upon it, an appendage More than this prevailed subsequently in the later worship of the synagogue. Our Saviour and some of the Apostles made the reading of the law in the synagogue an occasion of extended expósition and hortation. Their doing so excited no surprise among the Jews, it being already an established usage among them. Still, the central idea of preaching was exposition. The inspired text was the center of interest.

2d, Observe, secondly, the transfer of the custom of employing texts, from Jewish to Christian usage. Apostolic usage was not uniform. The Apostles often preached without texts. An evident reason for this is found, as in the case of our Lord himself, in the fact that they were themselves inspired teachers. But we find no trace of preaching without a text among the immediate successors of the Apostles. The instant that inspiration ceased, the Jewish reverence for the inspired records was revived, and the only model of preaching known for some centuries was the homily; that is, as we should call it, a practical exposition, or, as the Scotch clergy would term it, an expository lecture. Sometimes several homilies were preached on one occasion, each occupying from six to twelve minutes. The etymology of the word "text" suggests very nearly the ancient idea of its relation to the homily: it was *textus* (woven in), the warp and woof of the whole production.

3d, Observe, thirdly, the Romish corruption of the custom of employing texts. In this period of the his-

tory of the custom several things are noticeable. The allegorical principles of interpretation applied to the Scriptures by Origen and others after him destroyed the legitimate force of the custom. It destroyed logical connection between text and homily. A text which is torn from its connections in inspired usage, or to which an imaginary sense is given, is no text. This was largely true of the use of texts in the time of Augustine. It was the taste of the age to make a text mean any thing that was convenient, or fancifully attractive, or more especially any thing that should seem to support the dominant philosophy of the times. The Protestant pulpit owes nearly all the puerility, and the unscholarly license which it tolerates in the interpretation and uses of texts, to that period in which grammatico-historical exegesis was abandoned, and the mystical interpretation took its place.

Moreover, the unsettling of the inspired canon at that time corrupted the sources of texts. The consequence was that sermons were often preached upon passages from apocryphal sources. The reverence for philosophy also weakened the clerical reverence for texts of the Scriptures. In many instances it was deemed a matter of indifference whether texts were chosen from inspired sources or not. Melanchthon says that they were sometimes taken from the ethics of Aristotle. This was perfectly natural. A forced interpretation of inspired language brings it into conflict with the common sense of men. In such a conflict, no language can hold its place in the reverence of the human mind. When it had become the usage of the pulpit to employ a biblical text as no other language would be seriously employed by a sane mind, it was an improvement to turn from St. Paul to Aristotle, whose language had not

yet undergone distortion. As a consequence of the corruption of texts, some of the Fathers preached without a text. This, too, was a natural result. Here and there a vigorous thinker would revolt from the puerility of the schoolmen, and throw off all trammels upon free discourse. Some of the sermons of Chrysostom were preached without a text. Augustine preached over four hundred sermons without texts.

During this period the topical sermon came into existence. For the first twelve centuries of the Christian era, the restriction of the text to an isolated verse, or fragment of a verse, of the Bible was unknown. The topical sermon, therefore, was an innovation. Originally the Christian sermon was an exposition, and only that. In England it was called, for some centuries, "postillating." The only kind of preaching which varied from it was that of preaching without a text, and which was called "declaring;" that is, the preacher "declared" his subject and discussion without explaining any text.

The assertion that the use of texts met with no important dissent is not true of such a use of the text as the topical sermon creates. The restriction of the text to a verse, or a fragment of a verse, which is common in the modern topical discourse, met with very strenuous opposition for two hundred years. It originated about 1200 A. D.; and the older clergy of that date contested it stoutly. Among others, Roger Bacon wrote against it with great severity. He prayed God to "banish this conceited and artificial way of preaching from his Church." The notion of the topical sermon which he entertained was a singular one. It lets us into the clerical life of the times significantly. He writes, "The greatest part of our prelates, having but little knowledge in divinity, and having been little used

to preaching in their youth, when they become bishops, and are sometimes obliged to preach, are under the necessity of begging and borrowing the sermons of certain novices, who have invented a new way of preaching, by endless divisions and quibblings, in which there is neither sublimity of style, nor depth of wisdom. . . . It will never do any good." Thus judged one of the wisest men of his age, of a style of preaching which has been the predominant one in this country, and specially in New England, for two hundred years, and in which are to be found the most valuable contributions to theology which this country has produced. To the foregoing facts should be added, that preaching itself, during the period of the Romish decline, gradually fell into disuse. Indolence in the priesthood, and superstition in the Church displaced the pulpit, and exalted the altar.

4th, The modern period in the history of the custom of employing texts dates from the Reformation. It is characterized by three features which deserve mention.

(1) We find a return to the ancient usage respecting the sources of texts. The unanimity of the reformers in this regard is remarkable. I have met with no evidence of a solitary instance in which any other than a biblical source was acknowledged by them in the choice of a text. The religious vitality of the Reformation is indicated in no other one thing so signally as in this backward spring from human to inspired authorities, in the search for a preacher's texts.

(2) Another feature which characterizes this period is a similar return to the ancient simplicity in the interpretation of texts. This movement was more gradual, and not universal. But the tendency of modern scholarship for three centuries has been to settle the interpre-

tation of texts on the same principles of grammatico-historical exegesis by which common sense interprets the language of any other ancient volume.

(3) A third feature by which this modern period is characterized is a variety of usage respecting the objects for which texts are employed. The etymological idea of a text is not now universal in the usage of the pulpit. Modern sermons are more than homilies. Discussion of subjects independently of texts has grown upon modern usage immensely. As familiarity with the Scriptures is extended among the people, the effect must necessarily be to throw the pulpit forward upon more elaborate discussions for the materials of sermons. Still we have not reached any uniformity of usage in reference to the objects of texts: it is to be hoped that no such uniformity will be established. We need the present diversity to meet diverse wants of the popular mind.

II. We proceed now to observe briefly some of the objections to the custom of employing texts. Of these the following are the chief. It is claimed that the custom tends to attenuate the material of a sermon. Voltaire, for this reason, expressed the wish that Bourdaloue had banished this custom from the pulpit. It is urged further that the custom tends to create pedantic methods of preaching. Sismondi, in his "History of the Italian Republics," attributes the decay of secular eloquence in Italy to the loss of clerical eloquence from the pulpit, occasioned by the priesthood in preaching from texts. Moreover, it is said that the custom tends to contract the range of the subjects of the pulpit. Vinet, in urging this objection, says very truly, "Experience is a book. Experience furnishes texts." The question is a fair one, then, Shall a preacher cramp his

experience to bring the themes of his pulpit within the range of scriptural texts? Again: it is objected that the custom tends to isolate the pulpit from the usages of secular eloquence. It is a fair inquiry, Why do not secular orators employ texts, or their equivalent? May not the proverbial dullness of a sermon be attributable, in part, to an unnatural separation between the pulpit and the bar, or the Senate, in this respect? Might not something of the vivacity of the platform be given to the pulpit, if the formula of a text were abandoned?

This suggests a further objection: that the custom tends to stiffen the routine of the pulpit. Claus Harms, in his work on "Practical Theology," expresses the opinion that this custom has been prejudicial, "not only to the perfection of preaching as an art, but also to Christian knowledge, and, what is more serious, to the Christian life." It is a reasonable query, What is to prevent the use of a text from degenerating into an utterly lifeless form? Is it not often like the address and subscription of a letter, — a form which the hearer feels to be void of meaning? If so, is it not all the worse for its inspired origin? Finally, William Lloyd Garrison urges against the custom its tendency to antiquate the pulpit. He claims that it assumes antiquity to be synonymous with authority; that it promotes silence upon existing forms of sin on the plea of fidelity to an ancient type of thought and of religious experience. In a word, it tends to give to the past a moral ascendency over the present, to which nothing in the experience of the past entitles it, and which is not commended by the example of Christ and the Apostles.

Respecting all these objections, I can not but think that something must, in candor, be conceded to them. Vinet puts the case fairly when he imagines a stranger,

unacquainted with the usages of the pulpit, and knowing only its object, as listening for the first time to a sermon, and learning that this entire department of eloquence is subjected to the rule of developing, not the idea of the speaker, but a text clipped from a foreign discourse. Would the usage, to such a stranger, appear to be a natural one? If there were not opposing advantages attending the use of texts, or even if the abuses indicated by objectors were inevitable, the custom would not be worth defending. It is not enjoined on the pulpit by inspired authority. It must exist, if at all, on its intrinsic merits. The revulsion of some minds from it is not unnatural in view of the puerilities to which it has often given rise. Still the custom will be found to be defensible on the ground that its abuses are not unavoidable, and its uses are of surpassing moment.

III. In defense of the custom of employing texts, we proceed, then, to consider the positive uses of texts. These demand consideration in a twofold aspect. They are advantages supporting the custom of employing texts: they are also objects to be aimed at in the selection of texts. That is the best text which secures the largest number, and the most vital, of the objects of having a text.

1st, Of the positive uses of texts, may be named, first, that of giving inspired authority to the sentiments of a sermon. This is the prime object of a text. This is a use which the best class of texts always does secure. This, doubtless, is the radical idea which lies at the foundation of the usage.

(1) This use of a text outweighs much objection to the custom of preaching from texts. It answers abundantly Voltaire's objection. An inspired thought is

not likely to be the material of an attenuated discourse. If the sermon be diluted, the defect is not, probably, in the text. Voltaire did not fail to appreciate the value of a pithy saying of genius as a motto of discourse. Why may not inspiration claim at least as much respect as the utterances of genius? Very much of the reverence which is silently paid by the popular mind to the pulpit is probably due to the secret educating power of this custom of the pulpit.

Again: this use of a text answers Mr. Garrison's objection. If the Bible be an inspired volume, it is inspired for a purpose. If inspired for a purpose, it is divinely fitted to that purpose. If fitted to that purpose, it is a compend of the truths most necessary to the world in all time. Distinctions of past, present, and future do not destroy its pertinence as a whole. Much more inspired truth has been uttered to men than the Bible contains. The Bible is God's selection from the accumulated archives of inspiration. Its histories, its biographies, its liturgies, its psalmody, its doctrines, its precepts, its prophecies; its pictures of character, divine, angelic, and human; the secret life with God which it portrays; and its disclosures of the eternal worlds, — all are selected fragments, put together for a purpose, like a mosaic. Such a book, framed for such a purpose, can never, as a whole, be antiquated. It can contain nothing, which, for the purposes of such a volume, can ever be obsolete. The world will always need it, and will need the whole of it. As a unit, it will be as fresh to the last man as to you and to me. This, then, is the strong point in the claim which the pulpit asserts to reverence for its usage in preaching from texts, — that they give divine authority to the sentiments of the pulpit. Yield this, and you revolutionize

the pulpit in less than one generation. The instincts of infidelity are very keen in scenting out and worrying down, if possible, a clerical usage like this, which is the most vital exponent the pulpit has of its own faith and of the popular faith in inspiration.

(2) Further, this use of a text as an inspired authority is of special value in the preaching of obnoxious doctrines. On the doctrine of future punishment, for example, it is not the argumentations of the pulpit which hold the popular mind to the truth most rigidly: it is the downright and inevitable authority of a few texts. He would be a very unwise man who should throw away his advantage in advancing to the discussion of such a doctrine under the cover of a divinely spoken word. It is more than the protection of a masked battery. This protective bearing of a text is specially assisted by the position of a text in the construction of a sermon. The text usually heads the discourse. It predisposes a reverent hearer to listen with a docile temper, if a preacher advances behind inspired leadership. Divine words first, the human teaching in the sequel: this order of thought tends to secure reverent assent.

(3) But does not this very subjection of the human to the divine, as has been suggested, hamper the freedom of the pulpit? Not at all. For we notice, further, that this use of a text encourages a regulated freedom in the pulpit. Some subjects, it is true, are not expressed in any scriptural text; but, if they are not expressed, they may be contained in a principle which is expressed. Some principles, it is true, are not affirmed in a declarative form; but they may be implied in a narrative, a parable, an act, a character which is recorded. Some subjects, it is true, are not logically contained in any such text; but they may be rhetori-

cally suggested by a text, and the text may be used by a manly accommodation to the theme. Here, we contend, is all the freedom that the pulpit needs, all that a preacher of a revealed religion has any right to desire. If a subject is not expressed in any scriptural passage, and is not contained in any scriptural principle, and is not implied in any scriptural narrative, parable, event, character, and is not, by any manly association of thought, suggested by any scriptural language, the preacher of a revealed system of truth will not waste much time in defending such a subject against the poverty of the Bible in not furnishing a text for it. It is a healthful corrective of idiosyncrasy in a preacher, that if he proposes, as an ancient pastor of the Hollis-street Church, Boston, once did, to preach on "The Morals and Manners of the Marquis de Rochefoucault," he should find himself driven out of the Bible, as the preacher was, and compelled to preach without a text.

(4) This view suggests, further, that this use of a text tends to put a preacher in his true relation to divine authority. The real character of a preacher as a minister of God, speaking for God, uttering God's words, unfolding God's thoughts, is silently kept before his own mind, and before that of his hearers. The tendency is to impart a most vitalizing spiritual influence to both, — to him, in giving; to them, in receiving. If secular orators had an inspired collection of secular themes of discourse, nothing but depravity would prevent their using it as the clergy use the Scriptures. Upon all the principles of high art in public speech, they would be dolts if they did not use it.

A curious phenomenon is observable here in secular eloquence; it is that it has, in fact, invented for itself expedients which are in some respects equivalent to the

texts of the pulpit. What is the object of indictments and other legal forms, the reading of which precedes forensic addresses? What is the object of resolutions and bills, the reading of which introduces legislative speeches? As related to secular oratory, they are designed to put the speaker at once in position with the business in hand and with his audience. When Daniel Webster rose to reply to Gen. Hayne in the United States Senate, he answered in a breath much of the harangue of his opponent, and put himself in position before his auditors, by saying, "Mr. President, I call for the reading of the resolution before the Senate." This was no more nor less than taking a text.

2d, Of the positive uses of texts, and the objects to be aimed at in their selection, the second is that of promoting popular intelligence in the perusal of the Scriptures. It is not a small benefit to a people to have a hundred passages of the Bible expounded every year from the pulpit with the aid of the latest scholarship in exegesis.

(1) Observe especially that this use of a text grows naturally out of the preaching of a revealed religion, and that the popular knowledge of such a religion will be proportioned to that of preachers in their use of texts. The popular mind obtains unconsciously its principles of interpretation from the usage of the pulpit. As the one is, so is the other. Clearness in the pulpit is good sense in the pew. Mysticism in the pulpit is nonsense in the pew. The absence of exposition from the pulpit is ignorance of the Bible in the pew. Like priest, like people. The Sabbath school, Bible classes, family instruction, under a vigorous ministry, will in the long run take character from the pulpit. The key which will wind up and keep in

movement the whole machinery of popular growth in a knowledge of the Scriptures is the handling of texts by a skillful preacher.

(2) Importance is added to this use of a text by the fact that the exposition of texts is the exposition of the choicest passages of the Bible. Well-chosen texts are the gems of scriptural thought. They represent fundamental doctrines, and vital principles, and essential duties, and central characters, and critical events, and thrilling scenes, and profound experiences. They are the dense points of revelation, at which light is most vivid. The Bible is dotted over with them. To see them is to see the whole firmament of truth in which they are set. They are constellations in a cloudless sky. An intelligent and scholarly explanation of a thousand texts might indoctrinate a people in the whole system of biblical truth.

3d, A third use of a text, and object in its selection, is to cherish in the minds of hearers an attachment to the language of the Bible. In the popular notion of religious truth, words very easily become things. Never is language more readily consolidated into a living thing around which the reverence of a people will grow, than when that language is long used to express their religious convictions, or their religious inheritance from their fathers. Therefore, if reverence be not cherished for the scriptural forms of truth, it will be for uninspired forms. The popular mind will have it for something. We are suffering to-day from a morbid attachment, in some sections of the Church, to uninspired standards of religious thought. A reverence is cherished for technicalities of theological science, and for certain forms of truth expressed in ritual and liturgic service, which nothing should receive but an

inspired production. It has been believed by more than one of the lovers of the Book of Common Prayer, that its authors and compilers were under the guidance of inspiration in their work. Views of divine superintendence have been advanced in behalf of the Westminster Confession, which involve a subordinate degree of the inspired gifts in the leaders of the Westminster Assembly. Similar ideas have been expressed concerning the works of John Wesley. A very intelligent Baptist clergyman once inquired of me if I did not believe that something very like apostolic inspiration was imparted to Robert Hall.

Why does a most excellent missionary society report its labors in a destitute section of Pennsylvania, as consisting of a distribution of Bibles and Testaments to the number of five hundred and thirty-nine, and of prayer-books three thousand two hundred and seventy? Why is it, that, in our own communion, that phraseology in theological controversy which is most hotly contested, and is deemed most sacred, because most essential to truth, in the view of the contending parties, is *not* scriptural phraseology?

This leads us to a further fact, which is that some truths can not be concisely presented to the popular mind otherwise so clearly as by the exact scriptural forms of them. The statements of the doctrine of the Trinity in many of our standards — are they not notorious failures? It has cost the pulpit infinitely more labor to explain and defend them than it would have done to explain and defend the Scriptures on that doctrine. Some such truths it will not do to define to the popular mind as we should to the scholastic mind. A definition which is metaphysically true may be practically false The connection of the race with Adam,

and the character of infants it is unwise to attempt to define to the popular comprehension beyond the very limited notices taken of either subject in the Bible. We are almost certain of coming into conflict with the necessary beliefs of men, if we make the attempt, — a thing which the Scriptures never do. Let us have this instinct of popular reverence, then, in its legitimate uses. Let us so treat uninspired formularies as to subject them, in the habits of the popular feeling, to the inspired standards, no more, and no less, and no other.

This view meets the objection to the custom, drawn from its abuse by pedantic preachers. Sismondi may have been reasonably disgusted by the pedantry of the priesthood of his day; but a scholarly care for verbal exposition of an inspired book is not pedantry. An inspired production deserves a minuteness of exegesis of which no other production is worthy. The words of the Scriptures are to the popular mind like the words of a will by which an inheritance is conveyed. The presumption is that any and every word is important, and may be emphatic.

4th, A fourth use of a text is to facilitate a hearer's remembrance of the truths presented. The best texts are brief statements of truth. They are easily remembered. Moreover, the best texts contain a comprehensive view of the whole scope of the sermons founded upon them. The most felicitously chosen texts are the sermons in miniature. The sermons are in them like an oak in the acorn. To recall them is to recall the train of thought which the sermons develop. Further: inspired language, other things being equal, impresses the memory the more strongly for being inspired. It is authoritative language. Memory is assisted by reverence for authority. Inspired language is usually of un-

common raciness. The Bible is the most brilliant book in the world, in respect of style. It abounds in sententious utterances of truth. It is a book of axioms. Its imagery is fascinating. Its style pulsates with life. It has a wonderful power to fasten itself in the human memory. The first missionaries in the South Sea Islands found that their most ignorant converts to Christianity were attracted to the Scriptures often, when they seemed to get no pleasurable or even connected ideas from "Pilgrim's Progress" or from "Robinson Crusoe."

LECTURE V.

THE TEXT: USES, SOURCES.

5th, Continuing the discussion of the positive uses of texts, we notice, in the fifth place, that a text aids in the introduction of a subject of discourse.

(1) Upon this it should be remarked, that the pulpit without texts is inferior to other departments of public speaking in facilities for introduction of themes. A speaker before a legislative body has a theme pre-announced by the bill or the resolution before the House. A speaker at the bar has a similar aid. Occasional speakers, too, have assistance in the introduction of their themes, in the fact that an occasion is usually, in some sort, a preparative to an audience for the kind of theme and of discussion which are becoming to it. But a preacher has no such facilities in any degree proportioned to the frequency of his discourses. His range of topics is almost unlimited. He is constantly addressing one audience. His hearers can have no specific preparation of mind for one religious theme rather than another, until he creates it. The danger of formality, or of sameness, therefore, in his approaches to his themes, is very great, unless he has a singularly inventive mind. Here the custom of preaching from texts comes to his aid.

(2) Moreover, the brevity of a sermon renders facility

of introduction peculiarly needful in preaching. Usage rarely tolerates more than forty minutes to a sermon, generally less than that. Utility certainly requires restriction within that time. Whitefield said that there were no conversions after the first half-hour. Yet the subjects of the pulpit demand time for discussion. A preacher often wishes that he could have the three hours of a lawyer in a court-room; and on some themes what would he not give for the nine hours which Edmund Burke once occupied, or for the four whole days which he filled in Westminster Hall at the trial of Warren Hastings? The preacher has no time for leisurely, circumlocutory approach to his theme. Anything which facilitates brevity of preliminaries is valuable. A text does this.

(3) But how does the use of a text aid in the approach to a subject? I answer, Often a text *is* the subject. When it is not such, it may suggest material for an explanatory approach to the subject. When it needs no explanation, it may suggest the best material for an introduction proper. Remarks not explanatory of the text, and yet suggested directly by the text, may lead to the theme quickly, and in a way which shall stimulate attention. Again: a text itself may be such as to awaken interest in a subject. The Rev. Horace Bushnell, D.D., late of Hartford, often insured the interest of an audience through a whole discourse by the ingenuity of his selection of a text. The instant inquiry of a hearer was, "What will he make of such a text as that?"

6th, A sixth use of a text is to promote variety in preaching. Vinet remarks, that, "in general, a text is an originality ready-made."

(1) The Bible is full of diversified original forms of

truth. It contains every variety of style known to literature. If the prime object of the biblical revelation had been to prepare a book of texts for the pulpit, a more copious variety of fresh thought could hardly have been collected in any other form. Let a preacher stamp upon his ministry the biblical impress by representative texts, unfolded by sermons which are true to their texts, and he has an absolute guaranty of a symmetrical pulpit.

(2) This leads me to remark that inspired thought often presents in a single text original combinations of truth. One of the peculiarities which a student of biblical texts first discovers in them is that their ideas do not seem to have come together at the bidding of science. No inspired author seems to have aimed at the building of a system of any thing. If a metaphysical truth is stated, it seems as if it happened to be where it is: perhaps it stands side by side with a gleam of poetry. Pure intellect and pure emotion play in and out, often, in the structure of a text, with the artlessness, yet without the incoherence, of dreams. Passages in the Epistles of St. Paul and of St. Peter, and in the visions of Isaiah, remind one of a tropical grove, so free is the growth and the undergrowth of ideas, and so versatile is the play of that which, in any other production, we should call genius. It is a sequence of this characteristic of inspiration, that biblical texts frequently present combinations of truth which are full of surprises. A single text will often be a picture in its combinations. If a preacher is sensible that his mind is exhausting itself, and that he is falling into a dull round of repetitions, which make the Sundays like the steps of a treadmill to him, let him set about the study of the Scriptures more earnestly; let him study his

texts, and select rich texts, and then preach textual sermons for a while. It will make a new man of him.

(3) This suggests, further, that the usage of preaching from texts promotes versatility of habit in a preacher's mental culture. If mind grows by what it feeds upon, a preacher's mind can not habituate itself to thinking in scriptural lines of suggestion without acquiring some degree of scriptural versatility in its own lines of thought. What it originates will resemble the stimulus it has received. The preacher's sermons will become as picturesque as his texts are.

7th, But this consideration of the use of the text in promoting variety suggests a correlative object of the custom: it is to aid in the preservation of unity in a sermon. It is true that many texts appear to be heterogeneous in material: they are not a single thesis. But, on the other hand, the large majority of texts are logically one in their structure. They invite a strictly synthetic discourse. If a paragraph of a chapter does not, a single verse may: if a verse does not, a portion of it may. It is optional with the preacher to select more or less of the inspired record. A multitude of texts give a preacher no opportunity for rambling remarks. He must abandon them utterly, if he wanders out of their logical range. They are as rigidly one as a syllogism.

But, further than this, many texts are rhetorically one which are not logical theses in form. Vinet says that there are two kinds of unity; one logical, the other psychological. The psychological unity is the unity of soul in the text as an utterance of its author, and a corresponding unity of impression on the minds of hearers. A multitude of apparently heterogeneous texts have this psychological unity. The text — "The

fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law" — is intensely one in the spirit which animates it. A preacher can not appropriate into his own mental working the aim of that text, and yet ramble into a centrifugal discourse on love, and on joy, and on peace, as themes of independent discussion. There is an aim in his text which steadies his aim in the sermon.

This suggestion is enhanced in significance by the fact that intensity of aim is characteristic of inspired thought. Intensity of aim is singleness of aim. An eager mind thinks in right lines: so an inspired mind thinks with a vigorous tension of intellect, and always for an object. Rambling thought is the work of an idle mind. The Scriptures have none of it. Hence paragraphs of inspired thought often develop the point of unity when a verse does not. A chapter may develop the point of unity when a paragraph may seem to have none. Even in those passages in which inspired emotion overflows into seemingly redundant parentheses, as is so often the case in the writings of St. Paul, we find, after all, a "*lucidus ordo*," which threads the whole. The intellectual tension which is incident to the inspired state often gives to the scriptural style a ring which reminds one of the twang of a bow-string. Fidelity to the spirit of texts in preaching, then, will secure unity of aim through the force of the sympathy of a preacher's mind with the intensity of inspired thinking and feeling.

To these views of the point before us is to be added the fact that any collection of inspired words which have neither rhetorical nor logical unity is not a text. It can not be woven into a continuous discourse. For

example, turn to the first three verses of the fourteenth chapter of Proverbs. They read thus: "Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands. He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord; but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him. In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride; but the lips of the wise shall preserve them." Here is a continuous collection of biblical utterances; but they are not a text. They are independent proverbs. They have no unity, logical or rhetorical. They were not intended as a unit of thought by the inspired writers. No sensible preacher would force them into the attitude of a text.

The custom, then, of preaching from texts must be regarded as always tending to unity of discourse. We have no occasion to apologize for textual sermons, as Mr. Jay does. Sermons true to texts will have as real a unity as sermons on a logical thesis. Texts will invite unity of sermon, and to a good preacher will necessitate it, just as they promote variety. Variety in unity, unity in variety: this is nature, and this is the rhetorical drift of the influence of texts.

Such are the most important of the uses of the custom we are considering, and of the objects to be aimed at in the selection of texts. From these considerations it is obvious that the selection of texts is of vast moment to the power of the pulpit. It is to the pulpit what the work of adjusting the range of guns is to a battery. A false range, or a range at random, is equivalent to none. It is not an exaggerated indication of the importance of texts, that sometimes a text itself is the occasion of the conversion of a soul. This occurred under the preaching of Whitefield. In powerful revivals it is no uncommon occurrence.

The study of texts, also, which is essential to intelligent selection, is of itself one of the most healthful moral preparations to a preacher's mind for the work of constructing a sermon. It enriches his emotive nature. The tendency of it is to subdue unhallowed emotions, and to bring a preacher, as a messenger of God, into sympathy with his work as the work of God. Have we not all learned the importance of cultivating habits of mental intensity in our religious experience? The most perfect example of such intense experience that we have on record, next to the life of our Lord, is found in the working of inspired minds. That is a most wonderful law of inspiration by which thought direct from the mind of God comes to us in solution with the religious emotions of the human soul chosen for its utterance. It comes in such form, that often you can not separate the divine thought from the human feeling which embodies it. The moral individuality of the man is as intense as the truth which is communicated through him. Hence we are never sensible of distance, or of conflict, between the intellect and the heart of an inspired writer. His intellect is never chilly: his heart is never empty.

An experience closely resembling this is practicable to every preacher. It creates the perfection of preaching. The prayerful study of texts is one of the direct means of acquiring it. I think that preachers of earnest piety are more frequently sensible of intuitions which seem to them to be direct from the Holy Ghost in their selection of texts than in any other portion of their preparation for the pulpit. Whitefield, Summerfield, Edwards, Payson, — all of them recognized such hints from the Holy Spirit in their ministerial experience as of frequent recurrence. In many less celebrated in-

stances it is not so much a theme which unfolds itself richly to the mind, as it is the suggestion and opening of a text, — often sudden, and by no laws of association which the mind can detect. You will be sensible of this in your own pastoral experience, if you are eager biblical students, and intensely prayerful men. As the rainbow often gives a reflection of itself, so the promise of Christ to his disciples will seem to have a secondary fulfillment in your life: "The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."

If the business of selection, then, be so important to the management of texts, it may seem natural to proceed to lay down rules of selection. But we experience a difficulty in practice as soon as we attempt to subject ourselves very rigidly to rules on a subject like this. I prefer to consider the principles of selection under the general title of *inquiries*, rather than *rules*, respecting the choice of texts. This is the precise form in which the subject comes before a pastor's mind practically. It is, "Shall I choose this, or shall I choose that, for a text?" With very few exceptions, principles will require diverse applications in different cases, and our practice will often overleap them, if we have suffered them to stiffen into rules.

IV. The most important inquiries respecting the selection of texts group themselves naturally into four classes.

1st, The first of these classes relate to the sources of texts.

(1) And of these, the first is the query, May we select and use as a text an interpolated passage, or a mistranslation?

In reply, it should be observed that plausible arguments are often given in the affirmative of the question

The convenience of such texts is frequently urged in defense of them. The text (1 John v. 7), "There are three that bear record in heaven," is a very convenient proof-text for the doctrine of the Trinity. The passage in Prov. viii. 17, "Those that seek me early shall find me," is a very useful text for a sermon on youthful piety. If homiletic reasons alone should control our usage, we should deem it a misfortune to part with these passages. Yet the first is an interpolation, and the second is a mistranslation. The latitude adopted by opponents of evangelical truth in their use of the Scriptures is also urged in vindication of such uncanonical texts. We can not afford to be scrupulous, it is said, while our opponents are not so. The failure of audiences to detect the error, if we use these texts, is further alleged in their support. Why may we not use their ignorance for their own good? Said one preacher, "In using this ignorance of my audience, I am only doing that which God does with us all. The use of human infirmity to the extent even of a deceptive silence concerning human ignorance is a principle very largely wrought into the divine administration of this world." The ostentation of correcting the accepted Bible of the people is also adduced in behalf of the larger liberty in using such passages. The Bible of the people is the English version, not the private though unanimous reading of the schools.

It is further affirmed that evil is done by disturbing popular associations with biblical language. The Bible of the people, again, it is affirmed, is King James's translation. Their faith in the whole may be impaired by the loss of their faith in a fraction. The reverent lady who declared her faith in the narrative of Jonah, saying, that, if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed

the whale, she should have believed it, might not have borne complacently the loss of the celebrated Trinitarian interpolation in the First Epistle of St. John. We must concede, even on the ground of the largest liberty, that it is a misfortune that Christian scholarship has lost from the Bible the only literal declaration it was once thought to contain of the triune existence of the Godhead. Other passages, too, are so enshrined in the reverent associations of the people, that the loss of them would be like the loss of the ancient hymns of the Church. So strong is this feeling, — prejudice, if so you please to call it, — that Noah Webster and his successors, in the editing of his dictionary, though revolutionizing the orthography of every other kindred word in the language, did not venture to exclude the spelling of the word "Saviour" with the "u," as they should have done if they had been self-consistent. They have yielded scholarship, as they regard it, to popular reverence for a single letter. This inherited popular feeling is so powerful, that, in the judgment of many, if the reverend and scholarly authors of the "New Version," now in progress, should decide to abandon the closing ascription of the Lord's Prayer, the Church of the people probably would not accept the scholastic decision in a thousand years. Why, then, it is plausibly asked, should we be punctilious about a few uncanonical texts?

This strain of reasoning leads us to observe that some concession to the affirmative of this question is but reasonable. For instance, it is reasonable that a preacher should not needlessly obtrude the scholastic correction of these passages upon an audience. We should never go out of our way to encounter and rebuff the popular faith in them: we may be justified

in going out of our way to avoid such an encounter. A profound principle was that of our Lord respecting the tares and the wheat: it has innumerable variations. Truth bears an immense amount of association with error with less evil than human nature suffers from the convulsions necessary to a rapid rectification of the wrong. Our Saviour was an adroit preacher: he knew when to hold his peace. So may we, upon occasions, let these questionable texts alone: to do so is no violation of Christian simplicity. Further: it is obviously reasonable, that, under any circumstances, we should not *commonly* choose for texts passages which need correction. So much is to be conceded to the affirmative of the question.

But, when we are driven to face the question, the negative argument is conclusive; and this for imperative reasons. The license of using such texts without correction injures the moral and mental habits of a preacher. Whatever may be said in defense of it, it does involve an untruth. It imposes upon the faith of an audience. The audience will never know it? Perhaps so; but the preacher must know it, and, if it injures a preacher's moral tone, it must also injure his intellectual habits. Few things are so debilitating to intellect as special pleading. No man can afford, as a matter of mental discipline, to tamper with his own sense of truth.

An equally conclusive argument against the use of these texts is the hazard to a preacher's reputation. It is not true of all hearers in every audience, that they will not detect such liberties in the pulpit. It would not be safe to preach to any audience in New England on the text, "There are three that bear record in heaven," without disclosing its true character. If the

majority did not know it, an individual here and there would know it. You can bear a weak spot in your reputation as a scholar at any other point more securely than at this of biblical scholarship. One of the ablest laymen in Boston, the parishioner of one of the most scholarly pastors of New England, once turned away from him to seek direction elsewhere in biblical studies, because he had lost somewhat of his faith in his pastor's biblical scholarship. A scholar in every thing else, he was not a scholar in this; and the keen parishioner had found it out.

A third reason for the rejection of the class of texts in question is the fact, that, in an enlarged view, it is not an evil that popular ignorance of the English Scriptures should be enlightened. The mind of the Spirit is the Word, and nothing else. The inspired record is the Word, and no other. The genuine translation is the Word, and nothing different. Cautiously and reverently, but faithfully, we should transfer, if possible, the misplaced reverence of the people. Let it be affixed to the exact word of God, not to the most useful substitute; to the exact word of God, not to the interpolations of monks; to the exact word of God, not to the wisdom of King James's translators. Scholarly commentators have reason for their complaints of the pulpit in this respect. De Wette speaks the feeling of all candid commentators, in saying of the German pulpit, "It is unpardonable that preachers adhere purely to the version of Luther, so often faulty, especially in the Old Testament; and they thus preach upon a pretended biblical thought which is found nowhere in the original."

(2) A second inquiry of the class now before us is, May we select as texts passages the sentiment of

which is not inspired? These passages are of three kinds. One consists of the false sayings of wicked beings. The record is inspired of the sayings of Cain, Ahab, Saul, Herod, Judas, Satan. A second consists of false sentiments of good men. The complaints of Job, some of the arguments of Job's friends, the skeptical reasonings of Koheleth, are specimens of these. The third class consists of true sentiments uttered by men not inspired. The historical and biographical parts of the Bible abound with such passages.

These uninspired passages are a good source of texts. A good source, I say; not that they are all good texts. They constitute a large portion of the Scriptures. They are in the Bible by inspiration of record. They therefore hold a rank which an interpolation and a mistranslation do not. One who has not investigated the matter would be surprised to find how great a proportion of the Scriptures is inspired only in record. It is largely an inspired record of uninspired sentiments. These passages are a good source of texts because of the intrinsic value of the truth which many of them contain. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" was a truth uttered by men, who, in the same breath, charged our Lord with blasphemy. "Never man spake like this man" was a truth affirmed by men who had just returned from an attempt to arrest him for his destruction. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" was said by one before whom an Apostle was on trial for his life. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief:" "Lord, teach us to pray:" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,"—these, and a multitude like them, are the utterances of infirm minds struggling into truth, and for that reason may be the more valuable for the purpose of a preacher.

Again: these uninspired passages are many of them confirmed by others which are inspired. Why not prefer those inspired passages as texts? Because those which are uninspired except in record may have rhetorical advantages which the others have not. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief:" compare this with the text, "A bruised reed shall he not break." Might not the first of these be preferable as the text of a discourse to the weak in faith? Words from the lips of a doubting disciple may carry more weight than even inspired words addressed to such a disciple.

Furthermore, many of this class of texts are valuable specimens of the working of uninspired minds. Confirmation of inspired truth may spring from uninspired sources. The "Meditations" of M. Aurelius Antoninus are the more valuable for the tacit tribute which Paganism pays in them to the spirit of Christianity. "I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God," was a truth exploded by conscience from the lips of a demoniac spirit; and for that reason, used as a text, it may be the more impressive. On the other hand, it is an honor to the truth of Revelation to see how falsely men will often reason for the want of it. The theory of temporal suffering advanced by Job's three friends is a grand text to illustrate the danger of illogical working in minds devoid of divine illumination.

Still further: the class of passages under consideration contain valuable specimens of unregenerate character. "Let us eat, and drink; for to-morrow we die:" where shall we find another so fit a text for a sermon on the abuses of the certainty of death? Yet it is not inspired, and it is false in sentiment. Atheism is concentrated and exploded in it. What would the

pulpit do without the text from the troubled conscience and the trembling faith of Felix: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee"? "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" — where is to be found another so apt a text for a sermon on the truth that "the extreme of wickedness is the extreme of meanness"? Nothing else discloses the theory of sin like examples of it from real life. The Scriptures would be less valuable than they are for homiletic uses, if they did not abound with such extracts from the real experiences of sin. Yet they are inspired records of uninspired falsehoods.

Certain cautions, however, should be observed in the selection of texts from this source. One is that we should never use them as proof-texts of doctrine. Job, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, Ahab, Saul are no authority for revealed truth. They often contradict each other: they commonly contradict the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit. You make a hazardous concession to infidelity, if you use such texts as proof-texts. We must employ this whole class of texts for just what they are, and no more, — an inspired record of uninspired beliefs.

A second caution is that we should not give to this source of texts an undue proportion in our sermons. The history of a ministry of ten years might surprise some preachers by its disclosure of a disproportion between inspired record and inspired sentiment in their preaching. It is one of the most insidious of the temptations of this world that sin is so attractive in its forms of speech. Wicked men are very apt to be fascinating men. Periods in history occur in which the most charming literature is infidel literature. The reading public of England ran wild over the productions of Byron, Shelley, and Thomas Moore, when their

Christian contemporaries, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, could scarcely command a hearing. The press could not supply the demand for Lord Byron's "Don Juan," while Coleridge's "Christabel" was circulating in manuscript. Even intrinsically considered, sin is racy in its utterances. Not only do its sentiments please depraved minds; but its style is apt to allure scholarly minds, and, among the illiterate, bright minds. The most popular wit in the world is blasphemy. To the mass of men the most forcible style is profaneness. Nothing else is so sure to command a round of applause on the platform as an oath.

This element of power in the style of speech adopted by sin runs into its utterance in the Scriptures. If, therefore, we pay no heed to our choice of texts, we may find ourselves unconsciously attracted by the raciness of sin to an undue proportion in our choice of the sayings of wicked men and even of other wicked beings. One preacher I knew, who seemed to have a mania for the character and doings and words of Satan. Preaching upon them was to him a safety-valve through which he let off a secret accumulation of the profane impulse. Very many preachers discourse upon the biblical expressions and illustrations of sin more frequently than upon the utterances and examples of holiness. Set a watch upon this peril in your own ministry. Preach rather on holiness than on sin; more often on God than on man; on the rewards of piety more frequently than on the doom of guilt; and choose texts accordingly. Valuable as many of these uninspired passages are, the richest texts in the largest profusion will be found to be the direct expressions of the Holy Spirit.

A third caution respecting the passages in question is that generally, when they are employed as texts, the

fact should be named that they are not from inspired sources. This need not always be done in express terms: something may be said which implies it. It need not always be done at all. Some texts, like the words of Felix to St. Paul, would never be mistaken for inspired sentiments. But in the majority of cases these passages are on neutral ground. Their sentiment and structure do not disclose whether Solomon is the author, or Zophar. In these cases the text should not be left neutral in the minds of hearers.

LECTURE VI.

THE TEXT: FORMS, PERSPICUITY.

2d, THE second class of inquiries respecting the selection of texts relate to the form of texts.

(1) Of these the first is, Must a text be a grammatical sentence? That is, must its grammatical structure be complete, so that all its words could be parsed? Good taste responds "Yes," as the general rule. It has the look of affectation to choose for a text language which grammatically considered has no sense. "Beginning at Jerusalem" was the text of a pastor in Philadelphia. Beginning what? who begins? what for? what of it? Imagine the announcement of such a fragment as the theme of a secular speaker! "As in Adam all die; —" why retain the first word, which, torn from its connections, has no meaning? Omit the first word, and have you not the more tasteful text? It is an emphatic, grammatically finished proposition. "Pastor Harms" has published a sermon on the text, "A little while." Vinet does not object to it. But I venture to place it side by side with the theme of another sermon on the text in full, by a preacher in Philadelphia, and let each speak for itself. This is the plan of the German pastor: "1. These words are cheering to the afflicted — "a little while;" 2. They maintain joy in joyful hearts — "a little while;" 3. They arouse

sluggishness — "a little while;" 4. They disturb carelessness — "a little while;" 5. They sustain those who are combating — "a little while;" 6. They strengthen the dying — "a little while." From the text in full, "A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me," the American preacher presents this subject: "Some of the lessons to be derived from the absence of our Lord from us, and its brief duration." By the side of this what becomes of the "little while" of "Pastor Harms"? Imagine St. Paul on Mars Hill as sentimentalizing on "a little while"!

Any thing can be caricatured; the best things the most ludicrously. Yet only by caricature can we picture to the life this method of dawdling over fragments of inspired words. Imagine, then, a full-grown man, for a half-score of Sundays in succession, quiddling over the following texts, all of them inspired fragments: "The precious ointment that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard;" "Alexander the coppersmith;" "Bowels of mercies;" "The great and noble Asnapper;" "The shaking of a spear;" "A piece of the nether millstone;" "The eyelids of the morning;" "The little owl and the great owl;" "Peter's wife's mother"!

But exceptions exist, in which ungrammatical texts are admissible. They are cases in which the fragments chosen are very weighty in thought, and so well known, that they instantly suggest the complete idea. Why do we say, "The greater the truth, the greater the libel"? Why do we say, "Like people, like priest;" "Waste not, want not;" "No pains, no gains;" "Handsome is that handsome does"? These are not grammatical structures, yet good taste does not vote

their proverbial abbreviations. Why? Because of two elements in them, — their pith of sentiment and the instantaneousness with which they are understood. The thought is racy, and at the same time complete, though the form is not complete. Because of the raciness, it is pleasing to have it in a nutshell, provided that we have the whole of it.

On the same principle of taste we are pleased with certain exceptions to the general rule against fragmentary texts. Certain fragments of inspired speech are of striking significance, and at the same time so well known, that to utter them is to suggest to hearers instantly the complete idea. Such fractional texts are the following: "The glorious gospel of the blessed God;" "Without God in the world;" "Our Father, which art in heaven;" "The precious blood of Christ." These are good texts, because of their very striking significance and the instantaneousness with which they are completely understood. Their significance alone would not justify them; their completeness of idea alone would not: but the union of these two elements puts them into the same category with abbreviated proverbs. A delicate sense of propriety will enable a preacher to distinguish these exceptions, though they are somewhat numerous. The number of these exceptions suggests a caution, that, in doubtful cases, the entire passage should be cited with a repetition of the textual fragment. This is admissible in all cases, and required in some.

(2) A second inquiry concerning the form of texts is, Can any principle regulate the length of texts? Obviously no rule can be of any value on a point like this. Yet on few of the expedients of the pulpit do preachers differ more widely. All that criticism can

wisely say of it is contained in a few *memoranda*. One is, that long texts have advantages which are sometimes conclusive in their defense. They familiarize the people with the Bible. The Book of Common Prayer is justly commended on the ground that it introduces so much of inspired language into the routine of worship. Long texts, if well treated by elaborate exposition, effect the same object more instructively than the mere rehearsal of the Scriptures. Moreover, long texts promote a taste for exposition among the people, and invite a preacher to expository discourse. Prolonged texts, furthermore, are the more accordant with the original theory of the text: they are conservative of the ancient reverence for the inspired utterances.

But a second memorandum is, that short texts have advantages which should sometimes give to them the preference. They are more easily remembered than long texts. A brief message in the memory is of more worth than a long one in the ear. Short texts, again, promote unity of impression. A lengthy text is apt to have some redundant materials which must be eliminated as the sermon proceeds. The brief text more easily tallies with the range of the sermon. Further, it often promotes interest of introduction by the omission of needless exposition. Indolent composing in the introduction frequently takes the form of exposition irrelevant to the aim of the sermon. Once more: the laconic text admits of emphatic repetition in the body of the sermon. Facility of repetition in the use of a text is often a prime element in the force of a conclusion. For the reasons now noted, it is obvious that the only rule which can be wisely adopted as to the length of a text is, "Fit the text to the demands of the subject." The advantages in either direction are only

secondary; but the demands of the subject are always imperative. They will necessitate variety.

But, while this is the only rule which criticism can wisely apply, another suggestion is, that a preacher's skill in the homiletic use of the Scriptures should affect the general length of his texts. The mere heading of a sermon with a dumb block of biblical words is inane; not so the skillful handling of it with oratorical genius. Plod and drone over a text, copying lazily from your commentaries, and no style of sermonizing is more stale; but use inspiration in the spirit of an orator, speaking as if you were yourself inspired, and your preaching becomes a model of fascinating speech. A clergyman, formerly of Brooklyn, used to preach upon entire chapters. He had trained his inventive power to act in devising methods of making the Bible interesting. He had at command an inexhaustible fund of biblical information. In his sermons, he would career over an entire biblical chapter with such exhilarating comment, that, in the result, he carried an audience with him to the end of an hour without a moment of weariness. He made exegetical learning kindle with oratorical fire. It is doubtful whether any thing else than his taste for scriptural truth, characters, events, idioms, and scenery could have saved his pulpit from being overwhelmed by the irrelevant materials stored in his polyglot memory. A man who can use biblical materials thus, with oratorical, as distinct from merely exegetical, skill, may safely indulge in the use of long texts. On the other hand, the most lifeless preaching possible, and therefore in spirit the most unscriptural preaching, is that which is made up of commonplaces, drawn from concordance and commentary, on a conglomeration of biblical words.

(3) A third inquiry concerning the form of texts is, May we choose for one sermon more than one text? The leading principle which decides this question is the same with that which regulates the length of the text, — fit the text to the subject and its discussion. This, however, will of necessity require that we generally adopt but one text. We should never choose more than one text, without an obvious demand for it in the nature of the theme, or of its discussion. What constitutes an obvious demand? It must be some departure from singleness in the subject. Two or more texts should not be chosen merely for the purpose of dignifying a subject by an accumulation of inspired statements of it. The text is not the proper place for this. If the subject be one, the text should be one. Neither should two or more texts be announced for the sake of discussing two or more independent subjects in one sermon. No such discussions of independent subjects are permissible in one sermon. The law of unity forbids them.

Two or more texts may properly be chosen for a subject which is twofold, or manifold, and for which no single text can be found which covers its whole range. The late Professor Hitchcock of Amherst discussed before the Legislature of Massachusetts, in 1850, the mutual dependence of liberty, education, and religion. The subject was single, yet threefold: no corresponding threefold text in the Bible exactly expresses or suggests that threefold theme. Therefore the preacher properly announced three texts, — one for each of the leading topics of the sermon. On the same principle, double texts are often appropriate to the discussion of related truths. Certain biblical doctrines lie over against each other. They are opposites without being contradictories. If no single text suggests such a brace

of truths, two may be chosen to introduce them. Thus Professor Shedd, in a discourse designed to reconcile the benevolence with the justice of God, announced the double text: "God is love," and "God is a consuming fire." A reconciliation of the theories of St. Paul and St. James on justification may require two texts. The Rev. Bishop Huntington, preaching upon "The cross as a burden and a glory," selected these two texts: "They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, him they compelled to bear his cross," and "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The two dispensations of the Old and New Testaments furnish a class of themes which may require double texts. Revelation as a whole derives a dual structure from this feature in its history. The views of Job and of St. Paul on the immortality of the soul; the Mosaic and the Christian laws of the Sabbath; the Mosaic and the Christian theories of marriage; the Mosaic and the Christian theories of human servitude; the Ten Commandments, and their summary in the Christian law of love; the imprecatory Psalms, and the Sermon on the Mount, — these are examples of subjects properly treated by mutual comparison, each couple in one sermon, with two texts. In all the cases in which double texts are allowed, you will perceive that the principle of selection is simply that of necessity. It is very different from that by which a preacher chooses double texts to intensify the biblical authority for a theme, or to discuss independent themes, or to affect a homiletic singularity.

3d, The third class of inquiries concern the impression of texts upon the audience. In the very conception of it a text is a rhetorical expedient: it is no essential part of discourse considered as such. Aristotle

knew nothing of it. We employ it as an oratorical device for certain advantages, most of which consist in the direct impression of the text upon the audience. Therefore this impression gives rise to a significant class of inquiries.

(1) Of these the first is, Should a preacher restrict his choice to perspicuous texts? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die?" "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found:" "By their fruits ye shall know them:" "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" "Grow in grace:" "By grace are ye saved through faith," — such passages, together with the narrative parts of the Bible, the parables, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the devotional Psalms, represent the staple of texts in the ministrations of many preachers. Is it wise to confine the pulpit to so narrow a range of choice? Is it desirable to give to such passages, even an ascendency in one's range of selection?

In answer we should defend the affirmative, if we were prescribing for an itinerant ministry; for perspicuous texts have some very positive advantages. Such texts are immediately suggestive of the subjects derived from them. Often it is desirable that a theme should disclose itself to hearers instantaneously: therefore it is judicious to choose a text which needs no comment. Often suspense is the very thing which we wish to retrench: therefore we take a clear text, that the hearer may not be held aloof from the theme by the interpolation of expository preliminaries. An occasion is sometimes such as to indispose an audience to such preliminaries. A wise preacher in Connecticut, after the death of a young person by a shocking calam-

ity, at one stroke took command of the wrought-up feelings of his hearers by announcing as his text the words, "It is I: be not afraid." Make a subject thus chime in, if possible, with the mood of an audience instead of plodding through an explanation of an obscure text, before you can reach a subject.

Again: a perspicuous text may facilitate a long and intricate discussion. It may save time for such a discussion. We must watch for all fair expedients for shortening preliminaries. Ten minutes saved by the absence of an expository introduction to a sermon may save the whole force of it in its final impression upon the hearers. On those economized minutes may depend the question whether the conclusion shall fall upon interested or upon jaded sensibilities. A clear text saves, also, not only time, but the intellectual strength of an audience for a difficult discussion. If a subject must task the hearer's power of attention or abstraction, an adroit preacher will not exhaust that power by a needless expenditure of it upon the text. The tactics of military skill are the true strategy of the pulpit. Concentrate the mental resources of an audience where they are most imperatively demanded. Reserve fresh force for the critical juncture of the discussion.

Moreover, a transparent text assists the illiterate part of an audience in the comprehension and recollection of the sermon. A text plainly expressive of the theme helps an untrained mind to the understanding of much which is not transparent. If an invalid hearer loses some part of the discourse, a perspicuous text may assist him to rejoin the train of thought. It is like a beacon to one who has lost his way. Such a text, also, very obviously assists the memory of such a hearer

The remembrance of the entire sermon will often depend on the simplicity of the text. This suggests, further, that a plain text may predispose many to listen to the sermon founded upon it. You will often detect a hearer deliberately composing himself to sleep when he sees the prospect of an elaborate discussion. A wise tactician in the strategy of the pulpit will catch such imbecile listeners, if need be, with guile. Do not indulge them with a dark text suggestive of another indulgence of darkness. I have known one preacher, who, in preaching to an audience which was unusually demonstrative in its religious emotions, would always choose a sermon which had an impassioned text. His text for one such audience was, "Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand." You will find yourselves driven by pastoral fidelity to invent expedients for breaking up habits of somnolence in a certain class of hearers. By a law of our nature we grow fond of anodynes to which we become habituated. May not this account for the attachment of certain attendants upon the worship of the sanctuary to pastors whose sermons they certainly do not hear? A faithful preacher will deem nothing beneath his care which may predispose infirm minds to listen to his discourses.

Still another advantage of a clear text is that it brings biblical authority to the front at the outset of a discussion. This supreme object of a text is achieved most readily by one which is easily understood. Texts which unequivocally affirm unwelcome doctrines may sometimes be made to capture a hearer's convictions or sensibilities before prejudice has time to rally. A plain declaration of God's word forbids cavil. An adroit preacher will thus forestall cavil, at times, by blocking its way with such a text. "My text is found in Mark

xiv. 21: 'Good were it for that man if he had never been born.' Who, then, can believe that Judas has been in heaven these eighteen hundred years?"—such were the text and introduction of a certain discourse on the future punishment of the wicked.

Such advantages as these have been the inducement to some homiletic writers to advise the selection of transparent texts only. Probably the same reason led to the adoption, by the Fathers, of the *περικοπή* of texts, and to the restriction of the range of choice in some of the Reformed churches to the scriptural lesson for the day. But such limitations presuppose a low state of culture in the popular mind. For the necessities created by the advanced culture of our own times, obscure texts have advantages which often offset those of perspicuous texts. The discussion of an obscure text, if well constructed, promotes popular knowledge of the Scriptures. An obscure text understood is so much added to the common stock of biblical information. If we always avoid such passages, out of regard to the wants of infirm hearers, one of the objects of having a text is lost. Some persons in every congregation are not students. They do not read commentaries. Their reading of the Scriptures is not very intelligent. Their daily devotional reading of the Bible is largely routine: they estimate its value, often, by the quantity read, rather than by the thoughts appropriated. For solid growth in scriptural knowledge they depend upon the ministrations of the pulpit. A considerate pastor will care for this class of souls by often choosing texts, which, when explained, will be some addition to their scriptural ideas. After many days, you may find the bread you have thus cast upon the waters in the good service which such a text performs in the meditations

of a Christian on his death-bed. Other things being equal, therefore, an obscure text is preferable to a perspicuous one in a stationary ministry, for the opportunity it gives for enlarging the range of biblical thought in the experience of many hearers. On this ground Bishop Horsley advocated and sustained by his own practice the frequent selection of difficult texts. In his pulpit he thus put himself at the head of a Bible class.

Again: an obscure text often facilitates a gradual approach to the subject of a discourse. Is it an argument for a plain text that it discloses the subject at once? True; but sometimes it is not desirable to disclose the subject at once. A prudent speaker will sometimes count it a misfortune to have the subject foreseen at a glance by its reflection from the text. If sometimes it is wise to overawe cavil by a biblical command to accept an obnoxious doctrine, at other times it may be wiser to conceal the obnoxious doctrine till certain prefatory remarks have quickened the interest of a hearer in it. In such a case a text which by its transparency tells the whole story defeats itself. The text, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," leaves a preacher no leeway for suspense in announcing the theme of "The Decrees of God." But Dr. Emmons approaches a branch of that subject more ingeniously from the text, "Except these abide in the ship, ye can not be saved." The text, "The wicked shall be turned into hell," gives inevitable foresight of what the subject is to be. But the same subject might be derived legitimately, yet gradually, from the parable of the house built on the sand. In the choice of a text, we must often strike the balance between opposing advantages. The same weights are not always in the same scale.

Further: an obscure text tends to interest the more cultivated hearers. If invalid minds may be benefited by facile texts, robust minds are on the alert for an object of intellectual interest. Such minds will grapple with a difficult discussion, will be attracted by a difficult text. One of the practical perplexities of preaching on the text, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" is the intellectual disappointment which thoughtful hearers feel at the announcement of that which promises them no intellectual refreshment. Have you not been sensible of this in listening to sermons upon that passage? It is one of the most difficult texts in the Bible on which to construct an interesting discourse.

This suggests that an obscure text furnishes a favorable mode of training to reflective habits the less cultivated hearers. A certain class of hearers are unreflecting, not from mental weakness, but from want of culture. One of the multifarious aims of a preacher should be to elevate this class of minds. The pulpit is the chief educating power to them. Yet they need a considerate pulpit. Specially do they require a training which shall associate genially their intellectual aspirations with their religious emotions. In practical life pastors are embarrassed by the antagonism which exists, in the popular convictions, between intellect and piety. You will soon encounter this antagonism in some form. You will find the presumption lurking in the minds of some of your most excellent hearers that a very intellectual thing can not be a very religious thing. It is a pernicious error: few to which the popular mind is exposed are more so. Yet you will never succeed in removing it, except by elevating such minds to a higher level of culture.

One method of inducing this state of improved culture is to take advantage of the reverence of your hearers for the word of God, their awe in view of its mysteries, their faith in the value of its unexplained obscurities, and their consequent desire to know more of its meaning. Take advantage of the assemblage of moral feelings which gather around the Bible, and make them tributary to the intellectual training necessary to the understanding of the Bible. Preach, therefore, often on obscure texts. One thing which has sustained theological thinking among the common people of Scotland is the taste for elaborate and argumentative exposition, which has been cultivated by the Scottish pulpit. A profound principle of tactics in the education of a people by the pulpit is contained in this advance of intellectual culture in alliance with the moral affections.

Such are some of the advantages of obscure texts. A pulpit which recognizes progress in the education of the masses, and therefore aims to keep itself at such a height that it can be an educating power to the masses, must admit discussions of the obscurities of revelation. Yet such discussion may be abused. Therefore it is desirable to observe certain cautions respecting the choice of obscure texts.

One caution is that we should not choose an obscure text unless we are confident that we can make it plain. Not only should we ourselves understand it, but we should be able to make our audience understand it. A positive evil is done, if we drag into view a scriptural obscurity, and, after a bungling exposition, leave it as we found it. Another caution is that we should not select a dark text, when to make it intelligible would require a disproportionate amount of the time allotted to the sermon. A discussion of a theme should not be

cramped in order to unfold an unmanageable text. A third caution is, that we should not choose a very obscure text for a very simple subject. Some passages when explained are reduced to an exceedingly simple meaning, yet the process of explanation is difficult and prolonged. Many of the most valuable religious sentiments of the Old Testament are but hints of the same sentiments recorded more luminously in the New Testament. To evolve them from the texts of the Old Testament may be a laborious process, yet some simple texts of the New Testament may have rendered them familiar to hearers of to-day. A text is never designed for a display of ingenuity in extorting a sentiment from it. The text is made for the subject, not the subject for the text.

A fourth caution is, that we should not choose obscure texts in such proportion as to misrepresent the simplicity of the Scriptures. Some preachers have a mania for exposition. A difficult text is a treasure to them, of value proportioned to its obscurity. Archbishop Whately, if one may judge from his published sermons, was inclined to a disproportioned treatment of the difficulties of the Bible. It is not wise to be eager to array these before the people from the pulpit.

I consider thus at length the question of perspicuous and obscure texts, because it is fundamental to the whole subject of the degree of intellectuality which should be cultivated in the pulpit. We need to correct those traditions of the pulpit respecting it which do not recognize progress in popular intelligence; and yet no sweeping principles can be safely adopted against them. A certain average of regard for conflicting interests must be aimed at, and this may not be the same in the experience of any two pastors.

LECTURE VII.

THE TEXT: EMOTION, DIGNITY, NOVELTY, PERSONALITY.

(2) THE second inquiry which concerns the impression of texts upon an audience is, Ought we to select texts of elevated emotional character? These have been termed by homiletic writers "promising texts." It was an ancient homiletic rule that such texts should not be chosen. The aim of the rule was to insure simplicity in all the labors of the pulpit. Care to make preaching elementary has been the burden of a vast amount of homiletic advice.

In sympathy with this view it must be conceded that serious difficulties attend the management of emotional texts. One of these is the obvious danger of exciting expectations which the sermon will disappoint. Take, for example, such passages as the following: "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani:" "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." These passages a preacher can not read appropriately without the suggestion of sublime emotions. An audience may naturally anticipate from them splendid discourses. The grand text needs to be buoyed up by a grand sermon

Will any sermon equal such texts? This difficulty is aggravated by the incongruity between an impassioned text and the quiescent state of an audience when the text is announced. Hearers are generally unexcited when a preacher rises to utter his text. Such passages as we are considering come upon them suddenly. The transition is abrupt. Can even inspired passion command instantaneous sympathy?

Another difficulty of such texts is, that they invite a preacher into an impassioned introduction. The tendency is to produce a strain to lift the introduction to the level of the text. Therefore eloquent description, or impassioned appeal, or richly-wrought imagery may be thrust into the preliminary portions of a sermon, where such composition is very rarely natural. So much the more prodigious, then, is the labor devolving upon the preacher of sustaining such an impression by a corresponding splendor in the sermon. If a man begins with the sunrise, he must rise to the meridian.

And this suggests the danger of bombast in a futile attempt to equal promising texts. Some passages of the Scriptures no uninspired mind can imitate. No preacher can describe the New Jerusalem as St. John has described it. Preachers become turgid when they imitate the old prophets in denunciatory discourse. They appear effeminate when they struggle to copy the beauty or the pathos of certain biblical appeals. They still more frequently make the pulpit ridiculous by prolonging and improving upon scriptual imagery.

These are real difficulties in the treatment of such texts. Yet it must be said, on the other hand, that promising texts can not always be dispensed with. One reason is that they form the most significant portions of God's word. Are we never to preach upon the

biblical descriptions of the judgment, of heaven, of hell? Moreover, some subjects are not congenial with an unpretending text. Some of the themes of the pulpit are intrinsically grand, awful, overpowering: others are plaintive, beautiful, exquisite. These qualities are ingrained in the subjects. The one class, if presented becomingly, must be discussed in bold, impassioned style: the other class, if discussed tastefully, must appear in elegant words, with elaborate imagery, leaving a gorgeous impression. With or without texts, subjects have these varieties of nature. They need congruous texts. Good texts on immortality are not numerous in the Scriptures. Shall a preacher content himself with the language of Christ to his disciples, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," in order to evade the grand text, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . . Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory"?

Furthermore, some occasions demand eloquent texts. Occasions occur on which a preacher must make a great effort. The theme must be great, the sermon great, and the text on a level with both. Dr. South, when he preached before Charles the Second on the anniversary of the "martyrdom of King Charles the First of blessed memory," struck the key-note of the sympathies of his audience by a text taken from the narrative of the early barbarism of the Hebrews, recorded in the Book of Judges: "And it was so that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds." There are occasions on which

text, subject, sermon, prayer, hymns, the tunes, and, it may be, the very drapery of the pulpit should be suggestive of an extraordinary event. Every thing must be becoming to such an occasion: whatever is not so will jar upon the wrought-up sensibilities of the hearers.

These reasons are conclusive for the admission of promising texts into the pulpit. Yet, as they are liable to abuse, we have occasion to remember certain cautions in the use of them. One is, that they should not be the exclusive favorites of a preacher. Eloquent texts, often chosen, degenerate in the popular esteem. A preacher gains a name for grandiloquence, which is transferred unjustly to his favorite Scriptures. Another caution is, that we should guard against the dangers incident to the treatment of promising texts. Those dangers, though real, are not inevitable. If a preacher is self-possessed under the inspiration of his text, he will use *it:* he will not suffer it to use *him.* Practically a preacher's good sense will regulate his use of this class of texts.

(3) Certain suggestions concerning the impression of a text upon an audience arrange themselves under the general inquiry, What is essential to the dignity of a text? Is not all inspired language of sufficient dignity for the pulpit? No; not when isolated as a text. In the third chapter of Lamentations, verse sixteenth, occurs the text, "Gravel-stones." Is this a dignified text? It suggests the rule that the dignity of a text requires that it shall not be restricted to a single word. One of the ancient preachers delivered a sermon on the word "But." We can conceive of an ingenious discourse on this very significant particle, yet it is a very insignificant text. What shall we say, then, of the selection of such words as "Remember,"

"Rejoice," "Repent," "Jehovah," "Sabbath," "Faith," "Anathema," "Christ," "Verily," "Charity"? They all fall under the same condemnation. Fruitful as they are of suggestion, it is an affectation of smartness to choose them as texts. What shall we do, then, if the significance of the word "Christ" or "Jehovah" is the theme of the sermon? Take a passage in which the word occurs, announce a grammatical section of it, and then limit attention to the word by the proposition. Any other method is unnatural. No matter how solemn the selected word may be, it is not impressive if so announced as to appear artificial.

In the same line of remark lies the more general principle, that texts should not be mutilated for the sake of giving them a forced pertinence. Homiletic authorities present abundant examples of this error. Generally they are miserable attempts at facetiousness. We need not debate them. It was unworthy of Dr. South to preach to a corporation of tailors on the text, "A remnant shall be saved." The good sense of every man condemns this, and the reverent feeling of every Christian pronounces it beneath the dignity of the pulpit. Yet, in the principle which underlies it, it is not more objectionable than the indulgences of some more sober preachers. For example, one preacher discourses on the text, "There is no God." This is inspired language, but it is not inspired thought. Another has a discourse on the text, "Be ye angry;" the design of the discourse being to show the duty of a virtuous indignation. But this is not the inspired design. Chrysostom's sermon on excessive grief at the death of friends is from the text, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not." But this is not the

apostolic injunction. In condemning this abuse of texts, good sense echoes the verdict of good taste.

Such abuses of texts as these very naturally excited the disgust of Voltaire at the whole custom of using texts. The papal pulpit had been full of such impertinences. They were so characteristic of preaching at the height of the papal corruption, that it became a proverb, adopted from one of the early cardinals, to exclaim, if one happened to hit upon a happy travesty of the Scriptures, "Good for the pulpit! keep that for a sermon!"

There is one apparent exception to this principle, which is not a real one. It is where a passage is retrenched by elision, and yet is a pertinent text, because the fragment chosen does not depart from the spirit of the whole. "By grace are ye saved" is a good text, because the fragment, and the passage from which it is taken lie on the same plane and in the same line of thought. There is, then, no mutilation of the passage, and no want of dignity in the text. The exception is only apparent; and it represents a large class of fragmentary passages, which are perfectly good texts.

Yet again: it is essential to the dignity of texts that they should not be such as to suggest low or ludicrous associations. The following are examples from the extant literature of the pulpit, — "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" "The bellows are burned:" "There was no harm in the pot:" "Ye are straitened in your own bowels:" "Moab is my wash-pot:" "A jewel of gold in a swine's snout:" "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." These are biblical. Sermons have been preached upon them; but they are beneath the dignity of the pulpit

That inspiration has recorded them is no evidence that inspiration authorizes the use of them as texts. The proprieties of location are every thing here. A passage in its place in the inspired record may fit into the picture of inspired meaning, with its oriental surroundings; but it does not follow that the passage is a becoming text for an occidental pulpit.

This suggests that the dignity of a text requires that it be not such as to violate modern and occidental ideas of delicacy. Dr. Watts endeavored to versify for public worship some passages from the Song of Solomon. But the good taste of the Church has silently dropped nearly every one of those lyrics. They are stored in our older hymn-books; but no pastor offers them, and no choir nor audience uses them for purposes of song. The elder Puritan taste luxuriated in that portion of the Scriptures as a source of texts; but an advanced culture is much more discriminating in the selection, and wisely so. Many of the most intense passages of that *epithalamium* are exquisitely beautiful in their places as parts of an Eastern bridal-song; but those same passages, isolated from their surroundings, and exalted as texts, to be scrutinized by modern and occidental criticism, are simply repulsive. That is not a fastidious taste which is offended by them. That is no affectation which avoids them.

(4) The relation of a text to an audience suggests the further inquiry, What principles should govern a preacher respecting the choice of novel texts? In reply, it should be observed that the pulpit has some standard texts. "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth:" "What shall I do to be saved?" "I pray thee have me excused:" "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian:" "Go thy way for this

time:" "Now is the accepted time,"—these and a large number of the same class contain themes which are nowhere else so pithily expressed. They seem as if they had been fore-ordained primarily for use in the discussion of those themes in the pulpit. It would be affectation to avoid these standard texts, for no other reason than that they are familiar to all. Every faithful preacher must employ them, though every faithful preacher of much experience before him has done the same. They are among the jewels of the pulpit. Diamonds are never obsolete.

Yet, on the other hand, a large proportion of sermons should be upon unhackneyed texts, and this for several reasons. Some of the advantages of obscure texts are, also, advantages of novel texts. Especially are novel texts desirable, often, for the sake of the interest they excite. True, the interest of novelty is not the most profound, but it may be the forerunner of a more valuable interest. George Herbert said, "Nothing is small in God's service." One of the most masterly successes of the pulpit is that of freshening an old story. Other things being equal, a novel text is an element in this power. A novel text is a new voice. The novel text, like an obscure text, may also promote exposition of the Scriptures. Often it will be an obscure text, and will demand exposition. If it is not obscure, the announcement of it is an addition to the scriptural knowledge of many; and, if it be a striking passage, it may add to their materials of scriptural meditation for a life-time.

Furthermore, novel texts promote variety in preaching. We need a broad range of biblical authorities, as we need a broad range of themes. Monotony of thought in the pulpit often results, as we have seen, from

monotony of textual selection. Moreover, a strange text will often facilitate permanence of impression. It is a law of mind that a truth is apt to be deepened in its impression upon us, if it comes to us from an unexpected source. A profane man who happens to utter an acknowledgment of the value of prayer moves us by his commonplace thought as no preacher could. It is not so much the greatness as it is the worldliness of statesmen which often renders their trite and jejune tributes of respect to Christianity as solemn to us as proverbs of religious wisdom.

The principle here involved is very strikingly illustrated in the deduction of themes from unexpected texts. A listener often expresses the impression which a sermon has made upon him by saying, "I did not know there was any such text in the Bible." Such a remark means more than it says. It means, "That sermon has affected me: its truth I feel. That text has disclosed it to me, — a gem of truth which I never saw before. I shall remember the sermon for the sake of the text." Dr. Bushnell's sermon on the theme, "Every man's life a plan of God," is a striking sermon in itself. It will be remembered by many for the sake of the subject, but by some for its deduction of such a subject from an unwonted source, the text being the address of Jehovah to Cyrus, in Isaiah's vision: "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." Compare this with the more common texts, "Without me, ye can do nothing," or, "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

Dr. Bushnell's sermon on unconscious influence is another instance of the same kind. No one would forget the sermon, who had observed its ingenious yet apt

derivation from a text which perhaps was never preached upon before: "Then went in also that other disciple." Compare this with the standard text on the influence of Christians, "Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill can not be hid;" or the common text for a sermon on the evil influence of the wicked, "One sinner destroyeth much good." Dr. South's sermon against extemporaneous prayer must have gained some force from the novel aptness of his text, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God." Compare this with the text so often employed in defense of a liturgy, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye."

Once more, an unhackneyed text invites effort on the part of a preacher. It stimulates his mind in the composition of a sermon as it does the hearer in listening to the sermon. He is aroused by an object in the early part of his work in constructing the discourse. This you will find to be often of great moment in the labor of habitual composition. Do we never listen to discourses which are pointless, and are preached with no enthusiasm, till the conclusion approaches, when they change signals, and become luminous with oratorical fire? The preacher has seemed to construct and develop his sermon with no object which aroused him early in his work. His thoughts have not been intense; his transitions have not been ingenious; his style has not been vivid, till the peroration has begun to loom up; and then "he mounts up on wings, as an eagle." Such discourses often flow from an indolent use of a hackneyed text. The preacher, acting under the chill of professional routine, has allowed himself to be beguiled into a hackneyed strain of remark. He does not wake up, and put his invention to the task, and his pen to its speed,

till the application of his theme makes him conscious of an object. He has not started enthusiastically: therefore he plods lifelessly. For the foregoing reasons, without subjecting ourselves to any rule respecting novelty of texts, we may wisely adopt the principle, that while we recognize some standard texts, yet, other things being equal, an unhackneyed text is preferable.

(5) One inquiry remains to be considered of that class which concerns the impression of texts upon the audience. It is, May a preacher choose texts which to an audience will seem to be personal? By personality in a text is meant a significance which applies it palpably to any individual, be he preacher or hearer. This is another of the topics on which only principles, not rules, can be laid down. It is obvious that a peacher should not avoid pungency in his choice of texts. That would be a timid caution which would prompt a preacher to do this through fear of seeming to mean somebody. But, on the other hand, it is equally obvious that a preacher must not, in the choice of texts, disregard the claims of courtesy. That is a selfish boldness which abuses the liberty of the pulpit by making it the medium either of egotism or of insult. Our Saviour and the Apostles were gentlemen in their preaching.

The most objectionable forms of personality in texts will be avoided by attention to a very few simple principles. One is that of avoiding a violent accommodation of texts. A very large proportion of those instances of textual personality which make up in part the fund of clerical anecdote consist of an extreme license of accommodation. Scriptural language is wrested, not only from its own proper sense, but from all good sense. The significant passages of the Bible, which are usually

chosen as texts, are not so framed as to strike individuals alone. They have a range of shot: they cover classes of men. A preacher may aim them at an individual; but they reach an individual as the representative of a class. Hence violence must be done to them to give them a significance which shall apply them to an individual alone.

Let us test this by one or two examples. The subject is of some importance as affecting the whole range of clerical impertinence. Many years ago, a man residing in West Springfield, Mass., was buried by the caving-in of a well. He remained for some hours in a perilous condition, and was rescued in the last stages of exhaustion. On the following Sabbath the Rev. Dr. Lathrop, pastor of the Congregational Church in the town, announced as his text, "Look . . . to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." This was one of the mildest forms of a personal text. The man referred to probably did not faint under it. But how does it strike a thoughtful hearer as an application of the word of God? Was it a manly use of inspired language?

A certain pastor lost his popularity with his people, and they refused to pay his salary. He sued them for it, and gained the suit. They, in revenge, paid him in coppers. He, in rejoinder, preached a farewell sermon on the text, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil." This was a Roland for an Oliver; but was it a dignified treatment of the Scriptures? The vast majority of cases of personality in the choice of texts are just such violent applications of biblical words by an abuse of accommodation. Let a preacher preserve a manly habit in the accommodation of texts, and he will not be betrayed into such distortions.

A due regard for a second principle will protect a

preacher against improper personalities in the choice of texts: it is that such freedom with the Scriptures is founded on a false theory of clerical influence. Real power in a clergyman is essentially solemn and affectionate. Those elements in a man's ministry which appeal to conscience and to the sense of kindness are the chief sources of the strength of his pulpit. Without these, he may gain notoriety, but not influence. Such influence as he may seem to gain is not clerical in its nature. Therefore to him it is worse than none. A man who establishes a reputation for personality, oddity, or buffoonery in the pulpit, does just so much against his reputation, and therefore against his usefulness as a Christian preacher. He establishes a kind of influence of which he can not but feel ashamed when he is clothed, and in his right mind, and begins to aim at the conversion of souls. By his buffoonery he has done a work which he must undo, before he can successfully approach men who are inquiring what they must do to be saved, or men who are in affliction, or men who are on a deathbed. Yet these are among the classes of our congregations whose instincts about a preacher are the most unerring test of his clerical influence. It is a curse to a minister to have an influence founded on qualities which are repellant to the sympathies of such minds. No preacher can afford to support the reputation of having more grit than grace. A clergyman was once settled in one of our cities, of whom an intelligent lawyer, not a Christian man, used substantially this language, "I admire my pastor. He is a tingling preacher, witty, eloquent, severe. He is not afraid of a laugh in his audience. I am willing to pay largely to retain him, and so are we all. But if I were in affliction, or were about to die, he is the last man I should

want to see then." Such a criticism, if well founded, should annihilate a pastor. What must the Saviour think of him! We can not too earnestly remind ourselves that clerical influence may be easily sacrificed to clerical notoriety. And no two things are more unlike.

A third principle, which, if properly regarded, will protect a preacher from certain forms of impertinent personality in his choice of texts, is that modesty is a power in a public man. A genuine modesty will prevent a preacher from thrusting himself immoderately, or in an untimely way, upon the attention of his hearers. Tact is needed to strike always the right line of procedure in this respect. It was not a clerical impropriety in an aged clergyman in Worcester County, Massachusetts, whose son was ordained as his colleague, to preach at the ordination upon the text, "He must increase; but I must decrease." A favorite and becoming text for sermons of pastoral reminiscence, in which after a quarter or half century of service, pastors may properly speak of their own labors, is, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day."

The modesty of these personal texts is obvious. Is it as obvious in the text of the young preacher, who in a farewell sermon, after a ministry of three years, preached upon the words, "Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears"? Was there not an intolerable impudence in the personality of the following instance? An evangelist of considerable reputation was invited to preach in a certain place; and the reason urged for his acceptance was that the pastor had outlived his influence, and the people were in a distracted state. The evangelist came, and commenced his work

with the text, "Without me ye can do nothing." Against all such impertinences a preacher is protected by simply remembering that modesty is itself a power in a public man.

One other principle, which will also tend to shield the pulpit from a perverted personality in texts, is that a preacher has no right to invade the privacy of domestic life. The clergy need sometimes to be reminded of the old maxim of English law, that every man's house is his castle. As a preacher, a man may not say every thing which as a pastor he may say. As a pastor, a man is the personal friend of his people. He goes into their homes, and there may speak in all fidelity truths which it would be impudence to utter in his pulpit. Again: as a preacher, a man may utter in the body of a sermon things which he may not say in a text. It may be a stretch of his authority to accommodate a text to a hearer, so that, because it is a text, it shall stick to him like a label to a man in a pillory. But the most offensive errors of this kind are those in which a preacher chooses texts by which he invades the sanctity of his own home by foisting his private affairs upon the notice of his people. A pastor in Massachusetts made the Scriptures the medium of his rudeness of culture by preaching, on the Sabbath morning after his marriage, from the text, "Two are better than one;" and, on the Sabbath after the birth of his child, from the text, "Unto us a son is given." No man who is fitted for the pulpit in other respects will be guilty of such blunders as these; but perversions in which the principle is the same, any preacher is liable to, whose self-respect does not unite with his reverence for the Scriptures to prevent his indulgence of a frivolous or a rude taste in his selection of texts.

LECTURE VIII.

THE TEXT: PERTINENCY, COMPLETENESS, ACCOMMODATION.

4th, We have thus considered the sources of texts, and the form of texts, and the relation of texts to the audience. Let us now advance to a fourth class of inquiries, which concern the relation of a text to the main body of a sermon.

(1) Of these, the first is, On what principles shall we judge of the pertinency of a text? Pertinency to the sermon is the most vital quality of a good text. Vinet says that no human book has been so tortured and jested with as the Scriptures have been by preachers in their choice of texts. With equal justice, he charges the Romish pulpit with having been specially culpable in diminishing thus the respect due to the word of God. Protestant usage has been corrupted to a greater extent than is commonly imagined by the relics of Romish levity in the treatment of the Bible. Yet a very large proportion of these abuses would have been prevented, if a manly taste had protected the single excellence of pertinency between text and theme.

Let it be observed, then, that the pertinency of a text relates chiefly to congruity of sentiment between text and theme. A perfect text will express exactly the subject of the sermon, no more, and no less. Con

gruity of sentiment, then, may be sacrificed in several ways. It is sacrificed by the selection of a text which does not contain the subject, either expressly, or by implication, or by natural suggestion. For example, one clergyman — the author, by the way, of a treatise on preaching — has a sermon on education, the text of which is, "Thou shalt not steal." An English preacher selected as his text the words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men," and then proceeded to announce his subject, which was, "to examine the doctrines of Calvin as laid down in his Institutes." A French preacher selected the text, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest;" and from these words he professed to derive the subject of capital punishment. These are flagrant cases of incongruity, but in principle they are the same with the entire class of texts, which, by misrepresentation, are made to introduce a theme which is foreign to their real meaning. A text foreign to the subject is no text.

Again: the pertinency of a text is sacrificed where the text contains the subject, but not the proposition; that is, where it contains a different aspect of the subject from that which the sermon discusses. Some preachers are fond of making a text and a proposition seem to contradict each other. One preacher discourses on the perseverance of the saints, designing to vindicate the doctrine; but he adopts as his text the words of St. Paul to the Galatians, "Ye are fallen from grace." Dr. South has a sermon on the truth that "Good Intentions are no Excuse for Bad Actions;" but the text is, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath." These are frivolous uses of the inspired thought: the remote consequences of them may

be more serious than the immediate evil. One abuse invites another: one abuse justifies another. The principle of a slight abuse is the principle of an extreme abuse. The moment we abandon common sense in interpretation, we abandon all sense which can command respect. The mystical uses of the Scriptures advocated by Origen and Augustine, and revived by Swedenborg, are the logical result of some of the homiletic usages adopted by preachers in the choice of texts.

Furthermore, the pertinency of a text is often sacrificed by the choice of a general text for a specific subject. "Grow in grace" is not a good text for a sermon on humility. "They went out and preached that men should repent" is not a good text for a discourse on encouragements to repentance. A more pertinent text would be, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." On the same principle, the passage, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God," is not a pertinent text for a sermon on the sympathy of God with his people. Saurin has a sermon on this theme from a far better text, because more specifically expressive of the theme: "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." This text thrills the hearer with its image of the subject.

We should observe, however, that a specific text for a specific theme is not always practicable. Some subjects are not specifically named, or implied, or suggested, in the Scriptures. For such themes we are compelled to choose a general text; that is, an inferior text. Still this quality of pertinency of sentiment is the crowning virtue of a text: it should never be needlessly sacrificed or impaired. Many preachers habitually choose unsuggestive texts. They seem to think that any thing

will do for a text, if the subject has even a remote connection with it. On the contrary, a reverent preacher, and a live man in the pulpit, will aim to make a text, if possible, strike a good blow for his conclusion.

But pertinency in a text is not restricted to the sentiment. It relates, also, to congruity of rhetorical structure between the text and the sermon. Is there not, to the eye of good taste, an incongruity between a very imaginative text and a severely argumentative discourse? Do we not feel a similar infelicity between a difficult logical text, and a hortatory address? Neither an argumentative nor a hortatory address on the duty of religious conversation with impenitent men would very congruously follow the text, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Pertinency of rhetorical structure is one of the secondary excellences of a text. Often it is not practicable. We should not subject ourselves to a rule requiring it: still it is a beauty where it is attainable, and very many themes of the pulpit admit of variety of choice in this respect. Let me illustrate this. Here is a hortatory text, "Fear not them which kill the body." Here is a historic text, "And, when he had said this, he fell asleep." The following is an exclamatory text, "O Death! where is thy sting?" This is an argumentative text, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God." Another is a didactic text, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit." We have a text of soliloquy in the passage, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." From all these texts might be derived, either by logical deduction or by natural suggestion, the subject of a good man's peace in death. Yet it is not difficult to see that a keen sense of rhetorical pertinency would require some

reference, in the selection, to the rhetorical character of the sermon.

But pertinency in a text is not confined to congruity of sentiment and of rhetorical structure: it relates, also, to congruity of the associations of the text with the object of the sermon. The associations of a text should, if possible, be such as to aid the subject of the sermon. This kind of congruity will be best understood by some illustrations of the want of it. A preacher discoursed upon the exalted rank of the redeemed in the future world, and he chose for his text the words "Ye shall be as gods." Here the subject is above the text, and the associations of the text tend to drag down the subject to a level with the work of devils. An evangelist in the State of New York preached upon the solemnity of the close of a protracted meeting, and selected as his text the dying words of Christ, "It is finished." Such conceits as these degrade texts into connections with themes which can not by any ingenuity be forced up to a level with the texts. Apologies for such uses of texts should go for nothing. We should not be deceived, if we can palliate them plausibly. They are deformities, often monstrosities, however blandly or reverently we may disguise them in an apologetic introduction.

Observe, now, how the associations of a text may aid a subject by the force of sympathy with it. You wish to preach a discourse on diligence in the Christian life, and you select as a text the words expressive of the youthful awakening of Christ to his life's work, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" You wish to preach a sermon to Christians on neglect of prayer, and you adopt the words of Christ in the garden, "What! could ye not watch with me one

hour?" You wish to preach on the forgiveness of injuries, and you take as your text, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Would not the associations of these texts be auxiliary to the object of the sermons? I have said that this congruity of association should be obtained, if possible. Sometimes it is not possible. We can not, therefore, prescribe any rule of universal application. We can only say that the congruity of association is an excellence in a text, when it is practicable.

(2) A second inquiry concerning the relation of a text to the body of a sermon is, What principles apply to the regulation of incompleteness and redundancy in texts?

In answer, let it be observed that good taste requires that a text should comprise no less material than is discussed in the sermon. The text should, in some natural development of thought, cover the whole area of a sermon: it should not be a patch upon the fabric Dr. Emmons has a discourse on the being and perfections of God. You observe the subject is of the most general kind: it suggests a broadcast discussion. But what is the text? Is it an equally comprehensive passage, like the words of Jehovah to Moses, "I am that I am;" or the words of the Psalmist, "Know ye that the Lord he is God?" Not these, but the argumentative passage from St. Paul to the Hebrews, "Every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." Why is not this a perfect text? Because it covers but a portion of the theme. It is an admirable text for a sermon on the being of God as proved by the argument from design; but for a discourse on the being and perfections of God it is incomplete. A text may not specify all the topics of a

sermon; but it ought to comprise them all, as a principle comprises all its applications.

Further, good taste requires that, if possible, a text shall comprise no more material than is discussed in the sermon. The reason for this is its obvious tendency to promote unity of impression. Study of texts for the sake of retrenchment down to the precise limits of the subjects is the mark of an accomplished preacher. A text is for use. Enough is better than more. Dr. South's precision in his selections is often excellent. For instance, he discourses on a subject which he entitles "Christianity mysterious, and the wisdom of God in making it so;" and his text is, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." He preaches on the love of Christ for his disciples, and chooses the text, "Henceforth I call you not servants; . . . but I have called you friends." One advantage of deriving subjects from texts, instead of choosing texts for subjects, is that redundancy of text is more easily avoided. But sometimes, often indeed, it can not be avoided. We can not always find a passage which expresses exactly our theme, no more and no less. We must, then, admit redundancy as a less evil than incompleteness. Too much is a less evil than too little.

This suggests that good taste forbids the elimination of superfluous material from within the limits of a text. This error is not that of mutilating a text for the sake of a forced pertinency; nor is it that of elision from the end of a passage, nor that of omission from its beginning: it is elimination from within a text, as superfluous terms are thrown out from an algebraic equation. For example, in the Epistle to the Colossians occurs the passage, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, hum

bleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." The late Rev. Mr. Barnes of Philadelphia published a sermon on a benignant spirit, of which the text was, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, kindness." This expurgation of inconvenient elements from the interior of a passage is not in good taste. Dr. Watts may thus pick up a version of a Psalm by eliminating from the original the fragments which are neither lyrical nor devotional; and on the same principle we may properly eliminate portions of the Scriptures in the public reading of them for devotional purposes. You may form a burial-service with which that used by the Church of England, impressive as it is, can bear no comparison, by weaving together selected fragments of the Scriptures. But the selection of a text for purposes of discussion is a different thing. Here no such skill in *ricochet* is agreeable.

Therefore, when a redundant text is necessary, we should repeat all that is needed to avoid elimination, and then specify the words which are the text. Many passages require this treatment. For example, you wish to discourse on Christian honesty; and you select as your text the eighth verse of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, reading the entire passage. Then you soon specify the phrase, "Whatsoever things are honest," as containing the theme of your remarks. In this manner you preserve the connection of inspired language, and do not distort or confuse the ideas of a hearer respecting it. This is good taste, because it is the dictate of reverence.

(3) A third inquiry respecting the relation of a text to the sermon is, May a preacher employ an accommodated text?

What is an accommodated text? A text is not neces-

sarily accommodated when it receives a different application from that which it has in its inspired use. A text may be a biblical fact; that fact may illustrate a principle; that principle may be susceptible of other illustrations; of those illustrations, one which is not expressed or implied in the text may be the theme of discourse. For instance, the evangelist affirms that "Pilate and Herod were made friends together." This illustrates the principle that wicked men who are enemies to each other often agree in their deeper hostility to Christ. This principle is further illustrated in a variety of ways in modern life. Of these ways, one preacher selected the coalition of two hostile parties against the temperance reform as the theme of a discourse on a Fast Day. This was not an accommodated text: it was a remote application, yet a perfectly legitimate one, of the principle illustrated in the original. Dr. Bushnell's sermon on unconscious influence, from the text, "Then went in also that other disciple," was not on an accommodated text.

An accommodated text is one which is applied in a sermon to a subject resembling that of the text, yet *radically* different from that of the text. Examine an illustration. Bishop Huntington has a sermon the subject of which is more properly termed regeneration. He defines it "the economy of renewal." His text is taken from Micah, "Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest." This passage does not express the doctrine of the sermon; it does not imply that doctrine; it can not by any logical inference be made to reach that doctrine: it is, therefore, no authority for that doctrine. But it does resemble the doctrine; for there is in regeneration an arising and a departing from an old state to a new, and at the command of God.

This text, therefore, may be made to suggest the doctrine of regeneration, by accommodation. It resembles that from which it is radically different.

Accommodated texts may be of three kinds. One kind is where the resemblance between text and theme is only in sound. Thus an Episcopal preacher discoursed on the observance of Ash Wednesday, from the text, "I have eaten ashes like bread." Another preached on the duties of judges, from the text, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

Another kind of accommodated text is one in which the accommodation is founded on a metaphorical resemblance; and this, again, may be twofold. A literal text may be used metaphorically. A sermon was once preached on the truth that "depravity pervades the moral virtues of man." The text was, "Now, in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher," — a literal, narrative text used figuratively to express a doctrine of religion. A metaphorical text, again, may be used as figurative of a different sense from that of the original. Many sermons have been preached on the text, "Look . . . to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged," from which preachers derive the duty of Christians to remember the depraved state from which they have been redeemed. This passage is figurative in the original; but not at all figurative of any allusion to depravity. It refers to God's dealings with the Hebrew nation: it pictures their origin as a people. The figure in the original is not a pit, but a quarry. The sentiment is, therefore, "remember your national infancy, and the labor bestowed on your national training. You were once a rough, unhewn block: remember that." Yet, by a change in the character of the metaphor, this is made

a text on individual depravity. Professor Longfellow, in one of his works, introduces a preacher, whom he represents as discoursing on autumn from the text, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" This passage is figurative in the original; but the metaphor is referred by commentators diversely either to God or to Christ. It has, at least, no inspired reference to the autumnal foliage: it can be so applied only on the ground of metaphorical resemblance.

Still another kind of accommodation of texts is on the ground of resemblance in principle; that is, the principle in the text resembles the principle of the subject, but is radically distinct from it. The words of the text, therefore, will express the principle of the subject perhaps equally well with that of their true meaning. For example, Dr. South has a sermon on preparation for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, of which the text is, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" Here is resemblance between text and theme, not merely in sound, not only by metaphor, but in principle. Yet text and theme are radically distinct. Dr. Blair has a sermon on the importance of time, which he derives, by this kind of accommodation, from the inquiry of Pharaoh addressed to Jacob, "How old art thou?" A preacher in Maine, by the same kind of accommodation, preached upon the principle of subjecting the sale of intoxicating drinks to the Maine law, which he derived from a passage in Esther, "And the drinking was according to the law." These three kinds of accommodation should be remembered; for upon them depends the whole question of the propriety of accommodated texts.

We are now prepared to answer the question, May

a preacher use an accommodated text? The abuses of accommodation have been such, that many of the more manly of the ministry have said, without qualification, "No: let us have none of this puerility." But I think that a little discrimination will show that the question must be answered variously. Do not the following positions commend themselves to a manly taste?

First, accommodation of texts on the ground of resemblance in sound is puerile. A manly culture revolts from it. It degrades the Bible. It places texts on the same level of rhetorical character with puns. Rejecting this kind of accommodation, we should condemn all forced applications of scriptural names of persons and places. It was a frivolity worthy of a pope, that Pius VI. should flatter an Austrian general whose name was John, by preaching a sermon in honor of a victory which the general had gained, choosing for a text, "There was a man sent from God, and his name was John." It was an impertinence of which none but an idle mind would have been guilty, that a preacher, living no matter where, saluted an unruly parishioner whose name was Ephraim, on the Sabbath after his marriage, by choosing for the text of the morning sermon the words, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." These are specimens of a most unscholarly and unmanly taste, which has made the pulpit notorious. We owe a vast amount of it which still degrades the clergy to the mental idleness of the Romish priesthood. A mind which feels that it has any thing else to do will not, without violence to itself, stoop to this play upon a jew's-harp.

Further: accommodation on the ground of metaphorical resemblance is also to be condemned. Some examples of it may appear plausible; but the principle

involved in it is always the same. Such accommodation is not natural to a well-trained mind when that mind is in earnest. It belongs to a sportive or a fanciful state of mental activity. Least of all is it becoming to the use of a volume so burdened with thought as is the Bible. Some examples of this kind of accommodation are even more objectionable, because more elaborate, than the accommodation by jew's-harp, which we have already condemned. Can you conceive of a more ridiculous combination than the following, from one of the old preachers? He adopted the distinction between clean and unclean beasts under the Levitical law as emblematic of the distinction between Christians and sinners, after this fashion: "The clean beasts divided the hoof; so Christians believe in the Father and the Son: clean beasts were those who chewed the cud; so Christians meditate on the law: sinners do neither of these things, and therefore are unclean beasts."

Even the best specimens of this kind of accommodation are objectionable. For instance, Massillon, whose taste was sadly corrupted by his Romish inheritance in culture, selects the text, "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered;" a purely literal, historical text, as it stands in the Bible; but Massillon accommodates it, on the ground of metaphorical resemblance, to three distinct classes of religious characters. Under the head of "the blind" he considers those who are deficient in religious knowledge; under the head of "the halt," those who are insincere in confession; and, under the head of "the withered," those who have no sorrow in repentance.

We feel without argument the levity of such uses of the Bible as these; but why are they not, in principle, as worthy of commendation as the following, which

is a specimen of a large class of very plausible conceits which have frittered away much of the dignity of texts? A preacher chose for his text the words, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent;" and he accommodated it to this theme, "the necessity of drawing near to Christ in hours of trouble and darkness." The whole usage of the pulpit by which metaphorical resemblance is tolerated as the ground of accommodation is false in principle, and puerile in taste. As culture advances, taste condemns it; and as piety grows in alliance with culture, the heart revolts from it. There is no Christian good sense in it. It holds the Bible at arm's-length. It is sympathetic with a religion of the fancy rather than with a religion of the reason and the conscience. One is not surprised to find it rife in the Romish pulpit: it is at home there. That superficial religious culture, and that idleness of mind which can amuse itself with subjecting the salvation of a soul to the cut of a surplice, are in perfect affinity with this frivolous method of using the word of God. Yet a considerable part of the literature of the Protestant pulpit is infected with the same abuse; and many Protestant commentators have encouraged it by cultivating the taste for "spiritualizing" the Scriptures.

The accommodation of texts on the ground of resemblance in principle between the text and the theme is admissible. William Jay preached a sermon on a national jubilee appointed in England on the occasion of the king's entering the fiftieth year of his reign. His text was taken from Leviticus, "It shall be a jubilee unto you." President Davies of Virginia preached a discourse on a New-Year's Day, and selected as his text the words of Jeremiah to the false prophet Hananiah, "This year thou shalt die." Dr. Hitchcock of

Amherst has a sermon on the text, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." His subject is, "certain mineralogical illustrations of character." In each of these cases the subject of the text is not the subject of the sermon. The text can not logically be made to cover the sermon; yet there is more than resemblance in sound or figure; there is resemblance in principle. Even this kind of accommodation may be abused; but its right use is defensible on several grounds.

Such accommodation is a natural use of a text. Our minds are so made, that similar principles suggest each other. If, then, the same language may express either, it is not unnatural to a manly train of thought to use that language by transfer from one to the other. Further, it is a scriptural use of a text. Passages from the Old Testament are sometimes quoted in the New Testament, introduced by the phrase ἵνα πληρωθῇ, on no other principle than this of accommodation. The quotation is transferred from its original sense to another, which that sense resembles, but from which it is distinct. Again: it is often a pleasing use of a text. So far from detracting from the value of a text, if not abused, it augments that value, through the interest which the mind feels in the discovery of resemblance. This interest is similar to that which attends the method of teaching by parables. What is a parable? It is a narrative illustrating a truth by means of resemblance. The language has its narrative sense, and yet is applied in a didactic sense on the ground of resemblance of cases. The hypothetical case resembles the real one. The conduct of the ten virgins was not identical with that of men under the conditions of probation, but it was similar. The theft of the ewe lamb was not the

same as the sin of David, but it was like it. Once more: this is often a necessary use of a text. Subjects must be discussed in the pulpit which can not be introduced by a text in any other way, and yet retain the significance of the custom of employing texts. Which is better, — to introduce the duty of sinners to seek eternal life in company with Christians by the text, "He that hath an ear let him hear;" or by the text, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good"? Respecting many themes, we have no range of choice. We must do one of three things, — we must preach without a text, or we must take a general text, which as a text means nothing, or we must select an accommodated text.

For these reasons we accept the usage of accommodating texts on the ground of resemblance in principle, but reject all accommodation on the ground of resemblance in sound or in metaphor. Yet even this restricted usage is liable to abuse. We shall therefore consider in the next lecture certain cautions to be observed in the use of accommodated texts.

LECTURE IX.

THE TEXT: ACCOMMODATION, MOTTOES, MISCELLANIES.

It has been observed, that, in the use of accommodated texts, certain cautions are necessary. Of these, the first is that we should not select accommodated texts when logical texts can be found. Why do we need an indirect authority for a theme when a direct one is at command? Why should we be content with a hint of a subject when an expression of it is practicable? We sport with a truth which we seek to introduce by needless circumlocution. Earnest processes of mind are always as direct as they can be without hazard to their object. The pulpit suffers in its reputation for manliness, and it deserves to suffer, if it is tempted into dalliance with truth for the gratification of a fancy for a text. Why should we discourse upon the parental love of God from the narrative of Jacob's affection for Joseph, or of Abraham's for Isaac, when we have a text which seems as if inspired for our purpose: "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Why should we choose as the text of a sermon on the absoluteness of human obligation to God the words, "How much owest thou unto my lord?" when we have such a text as this by the side of it, "When ye shall have

done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do"? If we gain nothing by an accommodated text, we may be assured that we lose something. Intrinsically, the logical text is the superior.

From this it follows that we should not generally choose accommodated texts. This is one form of abuse of this usage of the pulpit, — that preachers are servants to their fancy in the selection of texts, and therefore they preach disproportionately upon those which are not, logically, sources of their themes. It is no defense of such disproportion to say that the themes have no logical texts, and therefore the accommodation is a necessity. It is so much the worse for the themes then. That is a distorted ministry which deals in any large proportion with subjects which are not logically presented in the Scriptures. It is not a biblical ministry.

A regard for biblical authority requires, moreover, that we should not accommodate passages in such a way as to distort or degrade their biblical associations. This may be done, even when a remote resemblance in principle exists between text and theme. Bishop Latimer once preached a discourse on the text, "Who art thou?" The interrogation was originally addressed by the Pharisees to our Saviour. But Latimer employs it as a monitory inquiry addressed by the Holy Spirit to sinners. He asks, "Who art thou?" and answers, "A lost sinner;" and, again, "Who art thou?" and replies, "A redeemed sinner." The sermon is a series of such repetitions of the query, with admonitory responses. This is accommodation on the ground of some distant resemblance of text to theme in point of meaning; but

it is fanciful, because it distorts the associations of the text. Distortion of the biblical associations of texts sometimes takes the form of transposing classes of hearers to whom texts are supposed to be addressed; that is, addressing to Christians language which originally is addressed to sinners, and *vice versa*. Such transposition is not always a distortion of a text. Sometimes the truth declared is naturally applicable to both classes, though addressed to one; but in other cases a text has become localized in the midst of certain surroundings in a hearer's mind, so that no preacher of good taste would disturb those associations. On this ground we must condemn the choice of a clergyman who once preached on the text, "One thing thou lackest," and accommodated it to a discourse on the deficiencies of Christians. Are we not sensible of a violence done to the biblical associations of a text in this case?

Yet sometimes the danger is not only this, but of an absolute destruction of a text in its biblical significance. I remark, therefore, that we should not accommodate passages, which, by frequent accommodation, are in danger of losing their true meaning in the minds of hearers. The necessity of this caution will be evident from an illustration. The text, "Watchman, what of the night?" is one of the standards of the pulpit; but who of the people knows its legitimate meaning? The pulpit has appropriated it almost universally to sermons on the "signs of the times." If a preacher wishes to discourse upon the prospects of missions, or the prospects of reform, or the prospects of the nation, he turns to this as the most convenient passage in the Bible, because it seems to restrict discussion to nothing in particular. But in fact it is one

of the most individual and restricted of all texts. In its biblical significance it is a taunt of infidelity. The prophet is represented as stationed in a watch-tower, in a time of great peril, on the lookout for friend or foe. The triumphant Idumæan is then represented as passing along, and crying out in derision of the solitary sentinel. The elocution of the passage ought to express this derision. It is as if the Idumæan stranger spoke thus, "Ha, ha, watchman! how do you like the look of the night?" A sermon on this text, designed to develop the taunting spirit of infidelity in a time of misfortune to the cause of Christ, might disclose the significance of the language with great force. But the passage is scarcely known to the people in any such use of it. Such a discourse upon it would be a novelty. Preachers generally have used the text as it is used in the missionary hymn founded upon it by Bowring:—

> "Watchman, tell us of the night,
> What its signs of promise are."

That hymn and the usage of the pulpit have almost destroyed that text in the minds of the people. Such texts as this ought not to be accommodated by the present generation of preachers. They have been wrenched out of place in the popular thought of them. They are almost lifeless. They should be permitted to rest from accommodated uses till they have recovered their biblical force.

(4) Similar to this inquiry concerning accommodated texts, yet distinct from it, is a fourth inquiry affecting the relation of the text to the sermon. It is, May preachers properly employ motto-texts?

What is a motto-text? It is not necessarily an accommodated text. The subject may be a logical

deduction from a motto-text: it can not be such from an accommodated text. For example, "The field is the world" may be a motto-text for a sermon on the conversion of Madagascar to Christianity, but it can not be accommodated to that subject. The subject is logically related to the text. Again: a text to which no expressed reference is made in the discussion is not necessarily a motto-text. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" may be the text of a sermon in which the text is not once repeated, or expressly referred to, throughout the entire discussion; yet it may not be a motto.

A motto implies two things, — remoteness of connection between the text and the theme, and independence of the text in the discussion of the theme. Observe one or two illustrations. Upon the text, "That the soul be without knowledge it is not good," Professor Park once preached a sermon on the value of theological seminaries. In this case, the text contained a principle. From that principle the theme was a remote inference. No further use was made of the text than to introduce that inference. From the text, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," the late Professor Edwards once preached a discourse on the state of the Roman Catholic religion in Italy. On the following Sabbath, in the same pulpit, a sermon from the same text was preached on education societies. In these instances, the text was a command to which the sermons were acts of obedience; yet no mention was made of the text after the subjects were announced. These were not accommodated texts. Why? Because the connection was logical between text and theme. Yet they were not suggestive texts as related to the themes. Why? Because the connec-

tion between theme and text was remote. Neither were they suggestive of the discussion, nor the discussion of them. Why? Because the discussion proceeded independently of the text.

Yet, again, a text may be both a motto and an accommodated text. Some years ago, on the occasion of a famine in Ireland, a charity-sermon was preached in Boston from the text, "I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction." This was an accommodated text: the subject of the original does not contain at all the subject of the sermon. The text was applied to the sermon only on the ground of resemblance in thought. But it was also a motto-text: no use could be made of it in the discussion of the theme. It represents an extreme class, yet not a small one, of instances in which the liberty of the pulpit takes the broadest range.

It is very popular to condemn the use of motto-texts, and for reasons which are not without force. It is urged that it is trifling with the Scriptures to choose a text, and then abandon it: the text is said to be, in such a case, only a pretext: therefore it is said to be unfavorable to evangelical preaching to employ motto-texts. We often hear objection made to them as facilitating literature or philosophy at the expense of the gospel. These are valid objections to the use of mottoes in preaching, but they are not conclusive. A decisive argument can be advanced in defense of such texts. Of this, one consideration is that the exclusion of mottoes would restrict injuriously the range of the topics of the pulpit. Such texts are a necessity to any broad compass of thought in preaching. Combinations of truth are suggested by the wants of a modern congregation which no text of the Bible will express, and which none will inclose otherwise than by remote rela-

tion. Occidental civilization renders some discussions needful which were not needed in patriarchal or apostolic times, and for which, therefore, the Scriptures contain no forcible texts. Modern methods of usefulness are affected by modern inventions. The invention of printing has created tract societies, for instance. Are not they a suitable theme for a sermon? Yet where is the text which names or implies this department of religious action otherwise than by remote suggestion?

Modern theological discussions render necessary some combinations of truth in preaching which were not needed at Ephesus or at Rome in the ministrations of St. Paul. We can find no texts for them other than mottoes. The local history of a parish may create an occasional need of certain methods of discourse, which no inspired thought embraces otherwise than by a general principle, that reaches the exact case of that parish, two thousand years later, only by remote connection. Shall these modern, occidental, local, in every way peculiar needs of a congregation be neglected for the want of texts by which a preacher can meet those needs textually? So far from promoting the evangelical spirit of the pulpit, such a principle would restrain and cripple that spirit. As a book of texts, the Bible is made for the pulpit, not the pulpit for the Bible. We must have freedom, or we can not have life, in the adaptation of texts to subjects.

Another consideration in the defense of motto-texts is that they are a less evil than a forced intimacy between text and sermon would be. An artifice to which some preachers resort to avoid the appearance of having a motto-text is to foist the text into the sermon by repeating it at every convenient landing-place. Another

artifice of this kind is to dwell upon the text by pointing out forced resemblances between it and the train of thought in the sermon. One need scarcely say that these artifices are unmanly. We see them to be so when they are stated in form. They are among the tricks of composition to which no manly mind will stoop consciously. But, as with some of the more venial faults of composition, we fall into them unconsciously. We need, therefore, to define such artifices as these to our own criticism, and see that they are in bad taste, that they are worse logic, and that, most of all, they are miserable exegesis. Admitting that a motto-text is an evil, it is a less evil than an unnatural connection of text and theme.

A third consideration in defense of motto-texts is that they are a less evil than accommodated texts. It is a singular fact that the very taste which declaims against the irreverence of using mottoes in the pulpit is especially fond of the accommodation of the Scriptures to uninspired trains of thought. The most unnatural conceits of the pulpit have been attempts to spiritualize passages which had no religious thought in them. But which is the worse, — to choose a text which logically contains the theme, and then discuss the theme independently of the text, or to choose a text which contains neither discussion nor theme, except as the preacher puts them there? Which is the more irreverent, — to neglect a text, or to force into it uninspired contents? The truth is, that, under proper restrictions, neither is an act of irreverence. But, of the two, the use of the motto is the more vigorous expedient. It is less liable to abuse; it has created less abuse of the usages of the pulpit than have the conceits of accommodation. Yet the clerical taste

which has rioted in these has been offended at the motto.

But if mottoes, in this view of them, seem to be a necessity, they suggest the question, Is it invariably necessary to have a text? This leads me to remark a fourth consideration in vindication of motto-texts, that they are a less evil than to preach, even occasionally, without a text. It seems plausible to ask, If a text is not needed in a discussion, why have a text for the theme? But the objection will not stand the test of practice. A custom like this of building the pulpit upon divine foundations will not bear tampering with. An invasion of it occasionally invites a longer suspension of it, and a suspension tempts to an abandonment. The custom as it stands gives a valuable advantage to evangelical preachers. It is a silent but powerful check upon a heretical pulpit, that usage requires its ministrations to be founded on inspired texts: it is compelled to use a volume which is its own refutation. This is too great an advantage to the truth to be lightly thrown away. Let an evangelical ministry allow occasional departures from the usage, and we may rest assured that preachers of error will very speedily widen the breach. They will often preach without texts; they will choose texts from uninspired sources; eventually they will abandon the custom, as Voltaire advised.

The liberty we claim, however, is obviously liable to abuses. We should, therefore, observe certain restrictions in the use of motto-texts. Of these, one is that mottoes should not be needlessly chosen. If passages can be found which are exactly fitted to the demands of a discussion, they should always have the preference. Another restriction is that mottoes should not be gen-

erally chosen as texts. Here, as in the case of accommodated texts, it proves a fault in a preacher's range of themes and methods of discussion, if his texts are in large proportion mere mottoes of his sermons. The proportion is, probably, the exact proportion in which his trains of thought are but distantly related to the Scriptures. A third restriction is that we should, if possible, refrain from employing as mottoes texts which are seldom employed in any other way. Some passages have been standard mottoes for ages. "The field is the world" has been the motto of missionary sermons innumerable. Who ever heard a sermon on it which was designed to unfold the principle of the text? "Glory to God in the highest" has been persecuted with sermons upon a vast variety of subjects. So has the text, "Faith cometh by hearing." A merciful preacher will be merciful to such texts. It relieves very much of the evil incident to a motto, if it be an unhackneyed passage.

This suggests a fourth restriction, that, in the choice of a motto-text, we should have special care for the pertinence of it to the sermon. An interesting coincidence of text and theme, though it be but momentary, will, by the pleasure it gives, balance the evil of seeming to neglect the text in the discussion. It indicates care on a preacher's part: it shows that he has chosen the motto thoughtfully; he has not chosen it simply out of deference to custom. Let us illustrate the point of this restriction by the contrast of two examples. A Sabbath-school missionary preached a discourse in Richmond, some years ago, on the text, "The field is the world." The object of the sermon was to give some information respecting the establishment of Sabbath schools in Minnesota. The result was the request

for the sum of twenty-five dollars for a Sabbath-school library. Of course, the text was necessarily a motto; yet it had a perfectly logical connection with the subject. "The world" includes Minnesota: the cultivation of "the field" includes Sabbath schools. But was it a becoming text? Was it an interesting text? Did it add any thing to the force of the sermon? Did it suggest any pleasing answer to the question, Why did the preacher have a text? Did it not leave bare the fact that he chose a text out of deference to usage, and for no other purpose?

In the same pulpit, at about the same time, a clergyman preached in behalf of the Waldenses. His object was to give the most recent intelligence concerning the state of that people, and to ask a contribution to the supply of their wants. He must, of course, select a motto-text. He had recently visited the Waldenses, and had been requested by them to present their good wishes to the American churches. He accordingly availed himself of this coincidence between his own experience and that of St. Paul, and selected for his text the words from the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews, "They of Italy salute you." This was both a motto and an accommodated text. It had no logical connection with the subject: it had no place whatever in the discussion. One can not conceive of a wider latitude between text and theme. The case represents the very extreme of usage respecting texts. Still who will say that it was not a good text? Did it not furnish a satisfactory answer to the question, Why did the preacher choose a text?

A fifth restriction upon the use of motto-texts is that we should not choose them if we do not mean to treat them in a manly way. We may better abandon them

than attempt to disguise them. We need not inform an audience that our text is not the best conceivable. The less we say of the processes of composition in the delivery of a discourse, the better; but we should manfully leave these processes to disclose themselves, if hearers have the skill to observe them. So we should leave a motto-text to speak for itself, without any effort to conceal the fact that it is a motto. If we do not need the text in the body of the sermon, we should let it alone. We should not thrust it into the interstices of the structure, as if to remind the audience, in the absence of better evidence, that we had a text.

5th, We have now considered the most important inquiries relating to the selection of texts. There remain a few topics, not of vital importance, and yet not matters of indifference, which may be considered, in the fifth place, under the title of "miscellaneous inquiries."

(1) Of these, the first is, Where should be the place of the text in the delivery of the sermon? The American and the German usages, as you are aware, differ. American usage is almost uniform in placing the text at the beginning of the discourse. The German usage is not uniform; but, more frequently than otherwise, it locates the text at the end of an introduction.

The German method has some advantages. It prepares a hearer's mind for the text. Some texts may need such a preparative process. A text may contain a repulsive doctrine. A preacher may have reason to prefer the conciliatory to the authoritative process in discoursing upon that doctrine: therefore he may deem it prudent to introduce the text with prefatory remarks. A text may contain an offensive simile: a preface not

apologetic, but commendatory, may rescue it from criticism. A text may excite undue expectations in an audience. It is sometimes expedient to forestall excessive expectations by remarks introducing such a text. Again: the German usage assimilates preaching to secular oratory. In itself it is a disadvantage to isolate the pulpit. As it is against nature to make monks of clergymen, so it is not in itself desirable to separate preaching from other methods of public, oral address.

Further: the German method is less formal than ours, and therefore is better adapted to appeals to the feelings of hearers. In this respect it is well fitted to the character of the German pulpit, which is more imaginative and emotional, and less argumentative and instructive, than ours. German preachers state and define truth less severely than American preachers; they argue less; they illustrate and appeal more. Moreover, the German method of locating texts, if not uniformly adopted, promotes variety in preaching. Any thing is valuable which prevents any usage of the pulpit from crystallizing. We may, therefore, with good effect, occasionally adopt the German form.

But the American usage should predominate in our practice, and this for several reasons. One is that it *is* the usage of our pulpit. Another reason is that the American usage gives greater prominence to the Scriptures than the German. Something is gained by beginning discourse with inspired words. The text of a sermon is like the title of a book. The place of honor, wherever that is, is the ordinary place for the text. This suggests, further, that it is accordant with the religious feelings of a preacher commonly to place scriptural language before his own. It is natural that we should follow, rather than seem to lead, inspired

thought. Again: the American method promotes brevity of preliminaries. The danger attends the German mode, of having a double introduction, — one for the text, and one for the subject. This is often the fact in German preaching. In earnest discussion, and especially in difficult discussion, such as is often heard in the American pulpit, economy of time in the delivery of preliminary matter is a necessity. The American custom, therefore, should predominate in the habits of an American preacher; but an occasional deviation from it is no eccentricity, and may be an excellence.

(2) A second miscellaneous inquiry is, Should a text be repeated in the announcement? This is not always necessary: the text may be short. It is not always convenient: the text may be long. No rule can be adopted. Sometimes emphasis may require repetition; again, elegance may forbid it. Why should we seek uniformity in a matter of this kind? Variety is better.

(3) Another inquiry is, What should be the order of announcement of a text? Always announce chapter and verse first; and this simply because it is natural. When we quote an authority, it is natural to give the authority before we cite the words. A text is an authority quoted. To cite the language first, and then give the reference, is always abrupt, sometimes affected, and occasionally ludicrous.

(4) Another inquiry is, With what kind of preface should a text be announced? Have no rule, except to cultivate simplicity and variety. It is a gross violation of simplicity to announce a text with a pompous or long-winded preface. I do not refer now to introductions of texts where the German usage is adopted, but to the prefatory words which almost all preachers use

to avoid abruptness. These are sometimes offensively elaborate. Have you never heard prefaces of texts of which this is a caricature? "You will find the particular passage of the Sacred Scriptures to which it is my present purpose to invite your earnest attention on this solemn occasion, in that most interesting and impressive description of the most blessed of the virtues, recorded in the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in the thirteenth chapter, the first verse, the last clause of the verse, and expressed in the following language; to wit, 'I am become as sounding brass.'"

I close these remarks on the subject of texts, with a statement of the general principle upon which all questions respecting them should be determined. It is that a keen sense of the reverence due to the Scriptures should be associated with a liberal construction of rules. That is the best text for a sermon which associates it in the most manly, free, and intimate connection with the Word of God.

LECTURE X.

THE EXPLANATION: DEFINITION, OBJECTS, MATERIALS.

HAVING finished the discussion of the text of a sermon, we proceed now to that feature of discourse which has been entitled the explanation.

I. What is the explanation? It is that part of a sermon which comprehends all those remarks of which the object is to adjust the meaning of the text to the homiletic use which is to be made of it.

1st, Observe that it is not entirely identical with the process by which we have characterized an explanatory sermon All that is needful to constitute a sermon of that class is that the main process of it be explanatory of something. But the explanation as a part of a topical sermon concerns exclusively the text and its contemplated uses. It may not be the chief feature of a discourse: it may be the briefest incident to the chief discussion.

2d, Further: the explanation as executed should be distinguished from the process of investigation. This is self-evident when stated, but the statement is essential. Explanation, it should always be remembered, is an after-process to that of discovery: it concerns the results of investigation, not the process. The expounder ceases, for the time, to be an investigator. The speaker is no longer a recluse. Some essentials

of good preaching grow out of this truism, and yet are often sacrificed by forgetting it.

3d, Moreover, the explanation in a sermon is often distinct from exegesis in a commentary. These may be synonymous, but they are not necessarily so. Exegesis concerns a text, with no reference to its homiletic uses: the explanation concerns a text, with no other reference than to its homiletic uses. It explains the text, therefore, only so far, and with such incidents of illustration, as the object of the sermon requires. Its aim is to make the text useful. Beyond this, the sermon finds no place for a text, and therefore no place for its explanation. Exegesis, then, is no more a model for homiletic explanations than the homiletic explanation is for exegesis in a commentary. The two things differ as their uses differ.

4th, Moreover, the explanation, as a part of a topical or a textual sermon, is distinct from exposition in an expository sermon. The distinction is, that the one is only a preliminary, while the other is the bulk of the sermon. Rhetorically this distinction is not radical. The rhetorical process in the two specimens of composition is the same. The principles which we are about to consider, therefore, have a double importance. They are suggested by the explanation as a fragment of a topical sermon; but they cover, as well, the whole subject of expository preaching. What the explanation in a topical sermon is, that the body of an expository sermon is, with this difference only, that one is preliminary, and the other not. We discuss the explanation, then, not merely as one part in the analysis of a sermon, but also as a rhetorical specimen of expository discourse. I prefer, for the sake of rhetorical unity, to discuss the subject of expository preaching in this connection, rather than to treat it as a distinct theme.

II. We pass, in the second place, to consider more specifically the objects of the explanation.

1st, Of these, may be named, first, verbal criticism. Certain texts require this, and nothing more.

Verbal criticism may take the form of an analysis of the text. A text sometimes needs to be partitioned in order to be appreciated. Significant words need to be distinguished; points of emphasis need to be made obvious; an ellipsis may need to be amplified; a person implied may need to be expressed. An illustration of some of these objects is found in a discourse published by the late Rev. Dr. Tyler of East Windsor. On the text, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," the preacher proceeds in his explanation to inquire: 1. Who utters this language? 2. What is the offer made in this language? 3. On what condition is the offer made? Having thus developed the forcible points in the text, he deduces the proposition that nothing hinders the salvation of any man but his own will. The explanation here consists of verbal criticism in the form of an analysis of the text. Again: verbal criticism may be necessary in the form of definition. This will sometimes be the object. Mr. Robertson, in a sermon on the text, "For their sakes I sanctify myself," devotes nearly the whole of his explanation to a definition of the word "sanctify" as applied to the Son of God. His whole sermon hinges on that definition. Again: verbal criticism may be necessary in the form of verbal paraphrase. This is only a succession of definitions. It is often necessary as a translation from the antique dialect of the Scriptures into the language of modern life. Verbal criticism, again, may be necessary in the form of correction of the text. If the English version be wrong, the aim of the sermon may require

that it be righted. If the English version be obscure, the design of the sermon may require that it be made clear.

2d, A second object of an explanation may be logical adjustment.

The logical relations of the text to the context may need to be adjusted. A text intelligible in itself may seem to contradict the context. It may seem to be irrelevant to the context. It may be parenthetical. Its truth — if not its truth, its force; if not its force, its pertinence — may depend on certain logical connections with the context, which are not obvious. To make them obvious may be all the exposition which the text demands. The logical relations of the text to other portions of the Scriptures than the context may require adjustment. Some passages instantly suggest apparently contradictory passages. An explanation achieves much for a sermon, if it makes distant Scriptures buttress a text. The relations of a text to arguments confirmatory of its interpretation may require adjustment. Much to the purpose is often accomplished by showing briefly that a metaphorical text resembles a similar metaphor in modern *usus loquendi*. The protection of a text from a distorted literalism may depend on matching it well with homely examples of common speech. The relations of a text to certain intuitions of man may need adjustment. One of the first duties of a preacher is to keep inspired language in line with the necessary beliefs of men. Isolated as texts are from their inspired connections, they often seem to contradict our intuitions, when, if located in their places, they do not so contradict them. No wise preacher will drag a text through a sermon with the semblance or the suspicion of contradiction to intuitions. On the

other hand, it is often a grand support to a text to shape its explanation so as to suggest its clear coincidence with an intuition.

3d, A third object of an explanation may be rhetorical amplification. Oftener than otherwise, this is the chief object. A text which needs no verbal criticism and no logical adjustment may need to be amplified. The Bible is a book of suggestions mainly. Texts, especially, are but hints. An explanation should often expand them; sometimes it should magnify them. It should do the work of the telescope, in bringing a distant truth near, and of the microscope, in disclosing the beauty of a minute truth. Rhetorical amplification may assume either or both of two forms. It may be illustrative paraphrase. This differs from verbal paraphrase only in being constructed for illustration instead of interpretation of a text. The aim is to give not merely a new version, but an illumination of the text. The other form of rhetorical amplification is that of descriptive incident. This adds to paraphrase of a text its surroundings in the inspired narrative. The object is the same as before, — to educe the full force of the text.

A careful study of the demands of a text in respect to these several objects of explanations will save a preacher from needless and aimless expositions. The inquiry should be, Does the text, for the use to which I am to put it in this sermon, demand either of these objects? Does, or does not, the full force of the text, for my use of it, lie on the face of it? If it does, then no explanation is required. If given, it will be only an encumbrance, as many long-winded, expository introductions are.

III. From these objects of the explanation, we pro-

ceed, in the third place, to consider the materials of explanations. Bearing in mind the relation of the subject to expository preaching, this inquiry assumes more importance than if it were limited to a fragment of discourse. The chief design in discussing it is to answer it homiletically, by showing how this part of a discourse, and how expository sermons in full, may be adjusted to popular presentation. The laws of exegesis, of course, underlie the whole question. Homiletics has somewhat to say, however, of a preacher's use of those laws in the pulpit.

1st, Of the sources of expository materials, then, should be named first, and, of course, primarily in point of importance, the words of the text. This is obvious.

2d, Equally obvious is a second source; namely, the immediate context. Popular interest in a text will often depend on a skillful use of the context. Sometimes an elaborate use of the context is necessary to disclose any homiletic force in the text itself. The text of a certain discourse is found in Judges xvii. 13: "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." What homiletic use does such a text suggest? What hearer, in listening to it, sees in it any thing to quicken interest beyond the momentary wonder that a preacher should found a sermon upon it? But Rev. Dr. Bushnell, by an ingenious yet not forced manipulation of the context, shows that the text is a unique example — perhaps the most pithy one in the Scriptures — of the natural fraternity between wickedness and superstition. Half the vivacity of expository preaching depends on a skillful evolution of texts from their biblical surroundings.

3d, This suggests a third source of the materials of explanations; namely, the scope of the whole argument

from which a text is taken. Not merely the text, not merely the immediate context, but the drift of an epistle is often essential to a truthful interpretation of a word. A precept, a doctrine, an ordinance depends, it may be, not on a text, nor on its proximate paragraphs, but on the aim of a volume. The root shows what the branch must be. The interpretation of the entire Book of Revelation hinges on the assumed aim of the book at the outset. This principle is as valuable to a preacher as to an exegete. The great theme of anathema in the Epistle to the Romans is not moralism, but ritualism. The scope of the epistle discloses this, and it sharpens the point of a hundred texts against a totally different sin from that which many sermons on those texts assail. Luther and his associates were more biblical in their use of this epistle than many modern divines. They made it teach not only the doctrine of justification by faith, but this doctrine as opposed, not to moralism chiefly, but to reliance for salvation on religious ceremonies. Their sermons on the epistle are just in the line of the Apostle's aim.

4th, A fourth source of the materials of explanations is found in the historical and biographical literature of texts. Facts respecting the character of the writer of a text, events in his history, the place from which he wrote, the time at which he wrote, the immediate occasion of his writing, the place held by him in the biblical canon, the literary qualities of his productions, the character of the persons he addressed, events in their history, the effect of his message upon them, the peculiarities of the age, nation, sect, family, to which they belonged, the eminent contemporaries of both writer and readers, — these and similar materials you recognize as being often the expository setting in

which texts are presented by the pulpit. Every thing vitalizes a text, which, in a natural way, introduces persons into and around it. A group of characters will impress a text on the popular mind, as an illustrated newspaper teaches the people a campaign or a pageant, when no grammatical explanation could get a hearing. The biblical writers and characters may sometimes be delivered from the mist in which the fact of their inspiration envelops them in many minds by mentioning some of their secular contemporaries. Can you not imagine some of your more intelligent hearers deriving a gleam of fresh interest in an explanation of a text from the life of Elijah from a notice of the fact that he was contemporaneous with Homer? Or of a text from the writings of St. Paul, from the fact that he was contemporaneous with Seneca?

In the eighth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul discusses the point of casuistry respecting the eating of meats offered to idols. What is a merely verbal exegesis of that chapter worth to a popular audience? It is extremely difficult to make such an audience feel that the question there raised by the Apostle had any religious significance. In the handling of that passage the people need to know some of the historic facts of Pagan worship. They need to get a glimpse of the old Greek and Roman private life. They should see that the question of which St. Paul treats was a very practical one to a Roman Christian every time he went into the market to supply his table. They should be told that the question concerned the common social courtesies of Roman life. Not only was it true that meats from the temples were sold in the markets, but Roman banquets were often sacrifices to the gods. Invitations to dine with a friend were

often expressed in language technical to religious worship. Hortensius invites Cicero to a sacrifice to Jupiter: he means that Hortensius desires the pleasure of Cicero's company at dinner. The ritualistic character of private banquets remained in form long after the faith of the cultivated classes in Paganism had collapsed. That which was true in this respect at Rome was equally true at Corinth. The Apostle's casuistry, therefore, entered into the conventional courtesies of life in Corinth and throughout the then civilized world. The question in its principle was world-wide, and perpetual in its bearings. Christian life to-day in Paris and New York needs the discussion of it as much as in Rome and Corinth in St. Paul's time. It is a great thing to establish in the popular convictions this pertinence of the Scriptures to modern wants; and very largely this must be done by the apt use of the historical and biographical literature of texts.

5th, A fifth source of the materials of exposition is found in the comparison of texts with parallel passages of the Scriptures.

(1) One obvious use of this expedient is to define the limits of an interpretation. Many texts are truths in their extremes. Some are metaphors. Some are the boldest of hyperboles. Some, on the face of them, are paradoxes; literally interpreted, they are absurd. Some, in the history of Christian doctrine, have become enslaved to philosophy. Some are loaded with inherited misrepresentations. Some are disputed by balanced authorities. It is a great art to handle these texts wisely before an unlettered audience. The common mind is childlike in its tendency to literalism and its attachment to inherited beliefs. That is a masterly aim from the pulpit which can always evolve the truth to

popular satisfaction without awakening the suspicion that the Bible is explained away.

One of the most effective methods of doing this is to make Scripture interpret Scripture. Explain a metaphor by a literal passage. Offset one extreme by its opposite in biblical speech. Interpret an hyperbole by yoking it with a biblical definition. Read the poetry of the Scriptures by the help of its prose. An abused text disabuse by association with one which speaks for both. A disputed text expound by parallels which are not disputed. The proper limits of interpretation are thus often defined most quickly, and, for the popular satisfaction, most conclusively. It assists the common mind to understand the Third Commandment, — "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," — if we set over against it the declaration in Ezekiel, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." If the text, "God is love," is abused by a humanitarian laxity, we tone up the truth most readily by the contrasted text, "God is a consuming fire." Many texts which are abused by fatalistic interpretations we redeem most securely by alliance of them with such passages as, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The general drift of parallel passages is the best defense we have against a false interpretation of one or two isolated texts which merely grammatical exegesis can not save from fatalistic teachings, because, grammatically expounded, they do teach fatalism more naturally than any thing else. "No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him," is a text of this kind. If any language interpreted by grammatical exegesis alone can teach fatalism in the matter of salvation, that text teaches it. We save it only by limiting

it by the general drift of the Scriptures as indicated by parallel passages.

(2) Another use of this expedient in expositions is to explain peculiarities of idiom. The New Testament contains Hebraisms. These are often best explained by parallels from the Old Testament. The dialect of prophecy has idioms peculiar to no other type of revelation. The so-called double sense of prophecy is of this character. The use of the word "day" in prophetic idiom is a peculiarity. We gain much, if, by parallel citations, we make it clear that such idioms exist. The interpretation of an idiom comes to light of itself, if we can collect examples of it in groups.

(3) Again: parallels are valuable in explanations, for purposes of illustration. An obscure text may often be best explained by comparison with a plain one teaching the same sentiment. A text declarative of a principle may be explained by a biblical narrative illustrating the principle. Our whole sacrificial theory of the Atonement, so far as it depends on biblical proof, hinges finally on parallels between the apostolic declarations of it and the Mosaic illustrations of it. What those declarations mean depends on what the Mosaic ritual was.

(4) Further: parallels are valuable in explanations as confirmatory arguments. The exposition is precisely the place in which to strengthen an interpretation by reduplication of it from other texts. It was a favorite method with Rev. Albert Barnes to buttress his texts by citations of similar Scriptures. I once heard him preach a sermon of which seven-eighths consisted of biblical passages illustrating and confirming different phases of his text. This expedient is liable to great abuse; but, skillfully employed, it is sometimes all the explanation that a text requires.

6th, A sixth source of the materials of exposition is the application of the philosophy of common sense to exegesis. The intelligibility of language grows out of the roots of philosophy which are in every mind. We bring to the Bible, antecedently to our interpretation of it, the germs of philosophy by which we understand it, if at all. We can not help this. A preacher should understand and appreciate it, if he would commend the Bible to the common mind. The Bible, rightly interpreted, has an almost omnipotent ally in the common sense of common people: falsely interpreted, it has as potent a foe there. This principle is liable to abuse; but, like other abused truths, it must be used to save it from abuse.

(1) In application, and in illustration of the principle, the fact deserves notice that progress in mental science reacts upon the interpretation of the Scriptures. The effect of improvements in mental science upon dogmatic theology is well understood. The creeds of the Church establish it beyond question. The same principle is not always so fully recognized in the relation of mental science to the history of exegesis. It is a truth of great moment to the pulpit, that exegesis has a history which has been open all along the line to the influences of philosophy. Those influences have been less direct upon the history of exegesis than upon the history of creeds, but not a whit less powerful.

For instance, we do not interpret the Scriptures precisely as men did when the dominant schools of philosophy were all tinged with fatalism. We can not, if we would, interpret certain texts as Augustine, or even as Calvin did, without sacrificing much which mental science has established since their day respecting the freedom of the will. The common mind, as well as the

more highly cultivated, will not, if left to itself, interpret the Scriptures now precisely as it did when its own consciousness was overshadowed and repressed by a fatalistic philosophy on the part of its religious teachers. Mind is so related to language, that philology inevitably responds to philosophy. The two periodically salute each other on the march of the ages. We can not interpret certain Scriptures as Turretin did, any more than we can interpret certain other Scriptures as the popes did, who made them teach the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. The freedom of the will has conquered a place in all civilized philosophy; certain doctrines of theology have shaped themselves by the side of it; and these have been stereotyped by certain improved exegeses. This inter-relationship has been entirely legitimate. Truth has responded to truth. Discovery in the one direction has necessitated discovery in the other. True, the principle here involved has been abused. It is a perilous principle because it is so effective. The blade is dangerous because it has so keen an edge. But, with the guards which every vital principle needs when in the possession of a finite and a depraved mind, it is a necessary principle in the interpretation of a book which counts its age by thousands of years, and yet claims to be a revelation of the mind of God.

(2) Further: progress in political science affects our use of the philosophy of common sense in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Our whole modern theory respecting responsibility to the State for religious belief depends on an abandonment of many venerated interpretations of texts. Those interpretations have yielded to common sense. They have not surrendered to grammar and lexicon · for, under grammar and lexicon alone,

they are possible still. They have yielded to pressure from without. Common sense quickened by political progress has discovered that those interpretations were false. The Bible does not teach them, and never did.

Do we not, for example, necessarily interpret to-day the language of our Lord, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in," differently from the manner in which those Fathers interpreted it who drew from it most prayerfully, not only their authority, but their duty, to establish the Inquisition? Yet we owe our deliverance from thraldom under that text largely to the Prince of Orange. Do we not inevitably interpret the text, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," differently from the manner in which the churchmen of Milton's time interpreted it, when they understood from it that republicanism was blasphemy? De Quincey says that this was once "a jewel of a text; for broomsticks were proved out of it most clearly, and also the atrocity of republican government." Look into Algernon Sidney, or into Locke's controversy with Sir Robert Filmer, or into any books of those days on political principles, and you will find that the Scriptures were so used as to form an absolute bar against human progress. What has wrought the change to modern methods of interpretation? In part, it is the two centuries of progress in the philosophy of civil government, which has reacted upon the Scriptures through the state of mind which men bring with them to the work of interpretation.

The same phenomenon is seen in the history of the biblical argument on slavery. Slavery was unanswerably vindicated from the Bible, so long as we allowed its advocates to bring to the exegesis of the book that philosophy of civil government which had been domi-

nant for a thousand years. It is not yet a hundred and forty years since John Newton, after his conversion, took command of a slave-ship, and held it for four years, praying over his Bible all the while, and verily believing that he had tender communion with God, "especially," as he says with charming stupidity, "on my African voyages." What is it that renders such an anomaly impossible now? It is mainly an intuition brought by the popular mind to the interpretation of the Scriptures. "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." Men have discovered the true interpretation of the Bible by the lightning of that intuition to which President Lincoln gave utterance. Yet the power to feel it, and the courage to trust it in its fullness, have been the product, mainly, of the last two hundred years.

These illustrations indicate the broad and varied reach of the principle before us, — that the philosophy of common sense is progressive, and that its progress reacts legitimately upon the discovery of the meaning of the Scriptures. The principle, be it repeated, is a perilous one; but, because it is so, we should recognize it in its uses, to save it from its abuses. We can not bury it by disuse. It is no scholastic monopoly. The popular mind will use it lawlessly, if the pulpit does not teach the people its legitimate use. It is one of those forms of popular conviction which we can not control, unless we accept it cordially. If we force upon the Scriptures interpretations which ignore common sense the popular mind will either create for itself wiser biblical teachers, or will reject the Bible as an authoritative revelation.

LECTURE XI.

THE EXPLANATION: MATERIALS, QUALITIES.

7TH, Proceeding with the discussion of the materials of exposition, we find a seventh source of them in the facts of natural science.

(1) Sometimes natural science illuminates the commonly received interpretation of texts. Dr. Chalmers brought the whole system of modern astronomy under tribute to the text, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." William Jay added to the clerical stock of thought by his use of the science of metallurgy to illustrate the text, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." John Pye Smith and others have brought the science of physiology to enforce the text, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." A volume has been written on the religion of chemistry, which can not but be auxiliary to the exposition of many biblical texts. The science of anatomy has often been made to assist interpretations of the narratives of our Lord's crucifixion. A certain physician now living has probably been saved from infidelity by observing the unconscious truthfulness of the evangelists, in their account of the crucifixion, to anatomical facts which then were entirely unknown to science. No doubt can exist of the propriety of employing the fruits of natural science in homiletic service, in cases

like these, in which science directly illustrates and intensifies the commonly received interpretations of the Scriptures.

(2) Occasion for solicitude arises, however, in the minds of many, lest natural science, in other cases, should make havoc with exegesis. A homiletic question arises, therefore, to this effect, "Ought a preacher to disturb the popular mind by the homiletic use of scientific discoveries which seem to conflict with biblical exegesis?" The following well-known facts appear entitled to the weight of conclusive argument in the affirmative.

The weight of scholarly authority among commentators now admits the principle that scientific discovery may modify within certain limits our interpretation of the Scriptures. It can not be questioned that modern philology has yielded somewhat to natural science. Commentators may differ in detail as to what and how much should be yielded; but the weight of authority, by a vast preponderance, agrees in yielding something. The principle is admitted, that philology is not above admonition and instruction from other sciences. This fact should have great weight in guiding the ministrations of the pulpit. On questions of this nature the popular mind should be taught to follow the authority of Christian scholarship. We do incalculable injury if we encourage the people in a pious independence of learning in their interpretations of the Bible. It is unsafe for a preacher, even by silence, to allow a hiatus to grow between the popular faith and the results of learned investigation.

A second fact to be remembered is the one so often and so justly claimed by biblical philologians, — that science has never yet established facts inconsistent with

a natural interpretation of the Scriptures on philological principles. The truth of this position need not be argued now: it is too familiar to you. But its bearing on the policy of the pulpit for the future needs to be enforced. Two points, specially, we should claim as settled. One is that the controversy between science and exegesis has an accumulated history. Apparent collision between the two is no novelty. We should never treat it as a novelty in our own minds, nor allow an opponent to do so in discussing the claims of the Scriptures. Very much is lost with the people, if we lose a certain prestige to which the history of this controversy entitles us, by seeming ourselves to come to it, or permitting our opponents to do so, *de novo*, as if the conflict were one in which nothing had as yet been settled, and nothing, therefore, could at present be assumed. We should always start with the indisputable claim that the conflict has a history.

The other point is, that, setting aside the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures, a philosophical argument may be constructed in their defense, founded upon the history of this controversy. Candid philology has never yet been contradicted by candid science, and it is a philosophical inference that it never will be. Presumed contradictions in numerous instances have been disproved by the final conclusions of authorities on both sides. Philology has modified its interpretations. True; but science has modified its claims; some it has abandoned; others it has qualified. Natural science has shifted its ground more frequently and more rapidly than biblical philology has done. The result thus far is, that, with no disparagement to either, each has approached the other. On several great topics once in dispute there is no longer any

respectable debate between them. They see eye to eye. The point of the argument for exegesis is that sound philological principles have not been abandoned. Science has created no necessity for the surrender of them. They have only been defined more accurately. Exegesis understands itself better than ever before, and is all the stronger for its changes of base.

It follows that the pulpit need not be disturbed by the occurrence of new points of contact between natural science and exegesis. These will occur as old ones have occurred. The time may come when the most candid and the most reverent attitude of mind respecting them will be one of temporary suspense. As honest men we may be obliged sometimes to suggest probable interpretations rather than those of which we feel assured. Even possible conceptions of the inspired meaning may be temporarily given for the want of better. Be it so: temporary suspense of confident exegesis is no new thing: the Bible has survived many such periods. We should not be alarmed. Nor should we ever intimate to the people a doubt from which they might reasonably infer that our faith is disturbed. The pulpit should never tremble at the shaking of a spear. Faith ought not to waver at a phenomenon which has become almost periodical in the history of opinion. Timid utterances from the pulpit under such suspenses of interpretations are like the fright of savages at an eclipse. Wait. Teach the people to wait. Teach them intellectual patience. The history of such phenomena in the past is a pledge for the future. What if hereditary theories of inspiration have to undergo revision? This is no novelty. Inherited faith can scarcely suffer a ruder shock than it received and lived through when the Copernican astronomy first met the word of God.

The current theories of inspiration were revolutionized by that apparent collision. Yet how simple a thing that revolution seems to us now! How securely we smile at the popes who tried to throttle it! Why, then, should we fear to encounter similar revolutions in the future? Why, for instance, should we fear the Darwinian speculations, be their conclusions what they may? Is there not here a philosophical argument altogether independent of the divine authority of the Scriptures, and yet an argument so simple that it can often be made available for anchoring the faith of the people in the Bible? I can not but think that the pulpit itself frequently needs toning up to a more philosophic confidence in the destiny of the Scriptures.

(3) This leads me to observe that an educated clergy must bear some opprobrium caused by the reckless claims of an uneducated clergy. Ignorant and partly educated preachers do immense injury to the pulpit by their blind hostility to science. They assert claims in behalf of inspiration which can not possibly be sustained. Christian scholarship has no desire to sustain them. Christian ignorance insists on interpretations at which the intelligence of the world laughs, and over which the intelligence of the Church mourns. When zeal in opposing the science of infidels intemperately charges infidelity upon science, infidelity gets the best of the argument. A reaction to the discredit of clerical candor and clerical learning is inevitable. We must, therefore, take this into account in adjusting the policy of the pulpit. We should be more cautious to do justice to the facts of science, because we must bear the brunt of the conflict at a point where we are weakened by our own allies. Our strategy should be simply that of candor and courage. Not only admit all that

science can fairly claim, but admit it with the coolness of one who can afford to do it; admit it with the magnanimity of one who claims his enemy for a friend. As interpreters, we claim science as the tributary of the Bible. The hostility is only apparent, and that appearance is but temporary. We should act upon this conviction. We can afford to be generous; for all that we give will return to us again.

(4) A final fact, which you have doubtless anticipated me in uttering, is that the policy here recommended is the only one which can be permanently successful. The popular mind has a very brief and blunt logic, which it will inevitably oppose to a written revelation if it is once permitted to believe that the revelation can not bear the facts of the material world. In the long run, men will believe that they see what they see, and hear what they hear, let the book say what it may. Fire is fire: there are no two opinions about that. That is not a divine revelation which disputes the fact. The popular mind will feel not a moment's hesitation, if, by any blindness of the pulpit, infidelity can succeed in narrowing the conflict down to any such controversy as that. It is then no longer a conflict between faith and reason: it is a conflict between faith and the human senses: it is between faith in dead ages and the testimony of a man's own eyes. For permanent service, therefore, the only policy which is practicable to the pulpit is to hold science in its normal relations as the friend and ally of the Scriptures. Use it as a tributary; use it freely; use it trustfully; use it courageously.

IV. We pass now to the fourth topic in the discussion of the explanation; namely, its qualities.

1st. In the first place, an explanation should be such

as to give the true meaning of a text. Bearing in mind the preliminary remark already made, that we are considering the theory of explanations with reference, not to the explanatory fragment of a topical sermon alone, but to the whole subject of expository preaching as well, the rule now before us is evidently fundamental to a large proportion of evangelical preaching. We have, on a former occasion, considered the question of the use of interpolated texts and of mistranslated texts. A practical question distinct from that occurs in every preacher's experience. It is, "May we employ a popular or an inherited misinterpretation of a text for the sake of homiletic advantages attending such a use of it?" Such advantages doubtless exist. Effective sermons are preached on such misinterpretations. Souls have been saved by such sermons. Still the obvious reply to the inquiry must be in the negative; and this, on substantially the same principles as those applied to the use of interpolations and mistranslations.

(1) The meaning of the text *is* the text. The inspired thought constitutes the text. A misinterpreted text is no part of the Bible.

(2) Moreover, many popular misinterpretations are inferior in homiletic value to the true interpretations. Many texts are more pertinent and beautiful and suggestive for the direct uses of the pulpit in their true version than in their commonly received perversion. An example of this occurs in the popular interpretation of Col. ii. 8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." This is misinterpreted commonly, as teaching the danger of the corrupting influence of philosophy upon religious doctrine. Both the pulpit and theological schools are responsible for encouraging this erroneous interpretation. The pas-

sage contains no such warning. It teaches a far more necessary and impressive lesson. Strictly interpreted, and translated into modern speech, this text means no more nor less than this: "Be on your guard, that no man may captivate you by religious sophistry." This idea, for the purposes of the pulpit to say the least, is vastly superior to that which has been so often foisted into the passage, of the danger of philosophy in corrupting systems of theology. So it will be found to be in the large majority of instances. The true sense of a text exegetically expounded is its best sense for homiletic use.

(3) It should be further observed, that the past and present usage of the pulpit respecting truthfulness of interpretation is not entirely trustworthy. Explanations which exegesis has exploded are sometimes retained by the pulpit for their homiletic usefulness. Preachers often employ in the pulpit explanations of texts which they would not defend in an association of scholars. The pulpit suffers in its exegetical practice by retaining for polemic uses explanations which originated in an abuse of philosophy. I do not say in the use of philosophy. We have seen that there is a legitimate use of philosophy, within certain limits, in aiding the discoveries and application of sound philology. But philosophy has often tyrannized over philology. In the defense of the creeds of the Church, the exigencies of philosophy have overborne the philological instinct of the popular mind, as well as the philological learning of the schools. A modern exegete affirms that the interpretation of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans which makes it a description of Christian experience was never heard of in the Church till the time of Augustine. He originated it to support

his theory of original sin. He held the opposite interpretation, as now held by many German exegetes, till he was pressed in the argument with Pelagius. The authority of Augustine, and the force of his theology, have sent down to our own day the interpretation he then adopted.

Again: the pulpit often suffers, in its exegetical practice, from an unthinking acceptance of certain popular traditions. Where no homiletic nor polemic uses of texts are in question, certain traditional ideas are blended with the popular reading of the Scriptures, which the pulpit often adopts without inquiry into their biblical authority. For example: the idea that Mary Magdalene was a harlot is generally assumed in homiletic explanations of her history. This is the popular idea. From this is derived a popular title for asylums for fallen women. But there is no evidence in the Scriptures that she was any thing worse than the victim of demoniacal possession. Yet the popular mind has assumed that the phrase "seven devils" (so often called "unclean spirits" in the Scriptures) means profligacy. Painters have seconded the assumption, and art has made it immortal. The pulpit has fallen in with it without much inquiry into the precise significance of the inspired narrative. Archbishop Whately says, that, when he once ventured to question the popular theory, the Scriptures were confidently referred to by his opponent as proof conclusive against him. But the only evidence was found to be the table of contents which formed the heading of the chapter in our English version.

Still further: the pulpit suffers, in its exegetical authority, from the habit of spiritualizing all parts of the Scriptures indiscriminately. Ancient usage justi

fied any use of a text, which, by any eccentric laws of association, could be made serviceable to any practical religious impression. Popular commentaries have largely contributed to this abuse. Some of them no preacher can read respectfully without insensibly surrendering somewhat of his integrity of exegetical taste.

Such are the more important of the reasons for the caution which I have advanced, that the past and present usage of the pulpit respecting truthfulness of interpretation is not entirely trustworthy. You can not safely accept that usage as authority. It is improving, but it is no model for a youthful ministry. Do not be misled by it. Form your own model, and let it be one which scholarship, and good taste, and good sense can approve.

(4) In further consideration of the question before us, let it be observed that a want of hermeneutic accuracy in the explanation of the Scriptures is hazardous to the authority of the pulpit. A preacher is in danger of great inconsistencies of interpretation who accepts any other ultimate guide in his expositions than that of hermeneutic science. "Ultimate guide," I say; for the legitimacy of the influence of philosophy and of natural science, as proximate guides, has been admitted. That is, they legitimately help to define and discover principles of biblical hermeneutics. But, when those principles are settled, their authority is final. A preacher puts in peril the power of his pulpit, if he fails to recognize this, and to act upon it. He will often make the Scriptures self-contradictory.

A more subtle danger is that of awakening the silent conviction in the minds of hearers that a preacher's interpretations are not trustworthy. Hearers are more shrewd than is often supposed in detecting a real weak-

ness in the pulpit. As strength makes itself felt, so does weakness, when hearers can not define either, or tell their sources. It matters little what it is, a weakness will be discovered. The common people may know little of the laws of interpretation, but they will discover the fact, if these laws are often violated by their religious teachers. First in the form of a suspicion, then in the form of an impression, and at length in the form of a conviction, the feeling will find its way among them, that, whatever else their pastor may be, he is not a safe interpreter of the Scriptures. He adds nothing to their knowledge of God's word. They do not feel assured of his accuracy in the use of biblical language. A commentary like Barnes's Notes appeals to their common sense more satisfactorily. It needs no argument to prove, that, if this is the silent impression which the pulpit makes upon a people, the prestige of that pulpit is in peril.

You will be struck with the fact, when you become familiar with the ministry, that there are two classes of men in the profession: there are the men who sustain the pulpit, and the men whom the pulpit sustains. There are preachers whom the profession carries. They are so much dead weight. They add nothing to its power of movement. They do nothing which a layman might not do as well. As laymen themselves, they would be as useful as they are, except for this fact, — that they gain something from the glamour of professional connections. Such men are the first to be overwhelmed by the rising tide of biblical thought and biblical enthusiasm which they do not understand, and of which they can make no use. Infidelity starts inquiries, and Christian thought seconds them, which such men can not answer. They can only plod on in

what they call more practical ways, and in time the Church drops them. Yet a moderate amount of biblical learning, kept constantly fresh by biblical study, would save such men.

(5) This view is further enforced by the fact that biblical science is advancing more rapidly than any other with which the pulpit has directly to do. No other has received such a solid, enduring impulse as this has during the last fifty years. It has far more palpable results of progress to show than speculative theology. One cause and one consequence of this is the constant appearance of new commentaries and other works expository of the Scriptures. No other department of sacred learning is now multiplying books so rapidly as this. The literature of it changes with every decade of years. Few other books of solid worth are so soon displaced by later authorities as books of comment on the Bible. In no other department does a pastor's library need such frequent weeding and replenishing as in this.

This rapidity of growth in biblical science is vital to the tastes and habits of a preacher. Is it not easy to see how fatally a pastor may be left in the rear of biblical scholarship? It will never do to plod on in old ways of exegesis, content with the ancient interpretations of texts, yet hoping to be sustained as religious authorities with the people, merely because we build useful sermons on such interpretations. You might as sensibly teach in colleges the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. A preacher, then, has a very significant part of his life's work before him in qualifying himself to explain truthfully the meaning of his texts.

LECTURE XII.

THE EXPLANATION: QUALITIES.

HAVING discussed the topic of truthfulness of interpretation, we may pass more rapidly over several other principles which should regulate the qualities of expository discourse.

2d, The explanation should be such as to develop the meaning of the text in its full force. The signification of a text is one thing; its significance, another. The signification of a text is complete when its words are truthfully interpreted, and its grammatical idea expressed. Its significance is its signification clothed in all that is needful for vividness of impression. Lord Brougham, in laying down rules for constructing the narration in the plea of a lawyer, insists upon that which he terms "picturesque expression." A similar quality is often necessary in the explanation of a text. Purely philological processes, though underlying every thing, may, in many cases, be the least part of the work of exposition. Rhetorical invention must often supplement philology very largely in order to magnify a text to its true proportions.

(1) Picturesque explanations are especially necessary to the interpretation of an ancient volume like the Bible. The Scriptures are ancient, not antiquated. We must see them as we see the heavens, — through a

lens of large magnifying power. We must bring the distant near, must make the ancient fresh. This must be done by the highest finish of art. Do we exaggerate a text by such achievement of art? Not at all, in any legitimate use of it. The telescope does not exaggerate the size and brilliancy of Jupiter in the evening sky. We only approximate the truth, even thus.

(2) Picturesque exposition is necessary, also, to the interpretation of a foreign volume like the Bible. We must read the Bible through a foreign atmosphere. Language, climate, nationality, customs, politics, sciences, almost every thing that can give idiosyncrasies to a book, do give such to the Scriptures. And their idiosyncrasies are not our idiosyncrasies. To us they are more emphatically a foreign volume than the Iliad. Nor, on that account, is the Bible unpractical or unfit. But a multitude of its choicest passages do, for that reason, depend, for their significance to us, upon a reproduction to our vision of those foreign conditions in which they had their origin.

(3) Picturesque explanation is especially necessary to the popular mind. The people need to have done for them in this respect that which a scholar can do for himself. The people can often determine by the force of common sense the philological meaning of a text, when they have neither the learning nor the imaginative invention which are necessary to fill a text with its true significance. The pulpit must modernize and Americanize texts, and thus realize them to a modern and American audience. One of the radical diversities of talents in the ministry concerns this power of picturesque exposition. Some preachers are admirable expository critics: others are expository painters. It is not difficult to foresee from which of the two

classes the great preachers must come. So necessary is some degree of this power of picturesque invention to a versatile eloquence in the pulpit, that we may almost say of preachers what Alison says of historians, — that there never was a truly great one whose talents would not have made him eminent as a painter or a dramatic poet.

Here, in my judgment, is the hinge of the whole question of expository preaching. Its practicability depends on that which, for distinction's sake, may be termed the expository culture in the making of the preacher's own mind. If a preacher must be limited to one intellectual talent for the pulpit, let him pray for this. The preacher who has it in any large degree is always a power in the pulpit. He is always among the men who do not seek places, but whom places seek.

3d, A third quality of the explanation is that it should be such as not to give to a text more than its full force. One of the old divines calls the error of exaggerating exegesis a "bombarding of the text." It may be most happily illustrated by observing several of the immediate causes of it.

(1) One of these is an abuse of textual preaching. A man who always preaches textual sermons will inevitably "bombard" some texts. Many texts otherwise good do not naturally furnish the textual divisions of a good sermon. They are units. You can not divide them, and find your materials of thought in the several clauses, without inventing material which is not in them.

(2) Another cause of exaggerated explanation is unchastened rhetorical painting. An example will illustrate this. On the text, "Hear, ye O mountains, the Lord's controversy, an English preacher indulges in a

prolonged description of the biblical scenery at which the text hints. The word "mountain" is sufficient to reproduce in his fancy the whole picture of the vale of Chamouni. God and man are arrayed in a forensic debate in a vast amphitheater, and the surrounding mountains are summoned as spectators and listeners. The description is so elaborate and minute, that one who has seen the Alps imagines Mont Blanc and the Aiguille Verte bending in attentive silence to hear the argument *pro* and *con* between the infinite and the human disputants. Yet the more vivid the picture to the fancy of the reader, the more positive is the sense of inflation of the text. The text is a brief and solitary hint. Its grandeur consists in that glimpse which flashes for a moment, and is withdrawn. That is all that the text means. In that momentary gleam of sublimity its full force is given. By prolonged expansion it loses force, because the idea will not brook delay. It is like lightning. Fix the lightning in the sky long enough to describe a thunder-storm, and it becomes no more than a streak of yellow paint. So the most sublime and poetic hint of a truth may dwindle to the veriest humdrum of prose, if you attempt to paint it with all its correlatives and auxiliaries. A more chastened taste in rhetorical description would save a preacher from such violence to biblical poetry. This is one of a thousand instances in which the true taste is the inspired taste. You can not improve it.

(3) Another cause of the error before us is the subjection of exegesis to the service of polemic theology. An ancient Calvinistic divine endeavored to prove that the Ten Commandments are all violated by a belief in Arminianism. Arminians make a divinity of man's power, and thus break the First Commandment. They

bow down to this idol of their own creation, and thus break the Second Commandment. They talk of ineffectual grace, and thus take God's name in vain: so they break the Third Commandment. They commit spiritual adultery with their idol, and thus they break the Seventh Commandment. They take away from God the dignity which is his due, and thus they break the Eighth Commandment. They covet their elect neighbor's interest in Christ, and so break the Tenth Commandment. A similar sport is carried on with the whole Decalogue, as if the chief object of the divine conference with Moses on Mount Sinai had been to furnish him with rubbish to fling at Arminians. Such biblical exegesis can not be lifted in point of dignity above the sport of schoolboys.

(4) A similar cause of this error is the perversion of the Scriptures to uninspired political uses. Lord Macaulay relates an instance of the preaching of the Bishop of Ely before the court of King James II. A passage from one of the Chronicles was the text, and it was expounded to this effect: King Solomon represents King James; Adonijah was undoubtedly the forerunner of the Duke of Monmouth; Joab was a Rye-house conspirator; Shimei was a Whig; Abiathar was a Cavalier: and he called special notice to two clauses in the text, one of which, he said, implied that King James was superior to Parliament, and the other, that he alone had command of the militia.

(5) Yet a more inexcusable cause of the error before us is a heedless ignorance of biblical facts. A preacher a few years ago, whose imagination had been cultivated more assiduously than his biblical learning, discoursed upon the scene which took place between David and Abigail on the occasion on which she came

out to meet him for the purpose of moderating his anger against her husband Nabal. The preacher dwelt in glowing terms on the beauty of the Carmelite lady, and described, among other details of the interview, her appearance as she approached David on a richly caparisoned and prancing horse. The preacher himself was noted for his fondness for a good horse, which, in the view of some of his parishioners, exceeded the bounds of clerical dignity; and, as he dwelt with great zest upon the equestrian accomplishments of the beautiful rider, an old lady in the congregation gratified her secret distaste for that feature in her pastor's character by turning to her neighbor, and whispering that the sermon was "very handsome," but she "knew better," for the Bible said that Nabal's wife came out to meet David "on an ass." That horse belonged to the "Miltonic interpretation" of the Old Testament.

(6) Another cause of exaggerated exegesis is an abuse of prophecy. Dr. Arnold says that he has never read a commentary on the prophecies which does not, in some point or other, distort the truth of history to make it fit the prophecy. Yet the pulpit can be in this respect no other than the echo of commentaries. The biblical learning of the pulpit will scarcely ever rise above that of the schools.

(7) Perhaps the most violent cause of the error in question is found in the abuse of the Parables. The pulpit has been slow to learn that many incidents in the Parables teach nothing. They are expletive incidents, thrown in to round out the story. To find in them a profound spiritual sense is uninspired manufacture of thought. Inspiration and bibliolatry are in this respect at antipodes. Bibliolatry digs, awestruck, for the occult sense of words: inspiration is calmly con-

tent with common sense. What shall we say, then, of the following from Bishop Heber? On the Parable of the Good Samaritan, he says that the traveler represents the human race; his leaving Jerusalem symbolizes man's departure from God; Jericho is the synonym of the temptations of this world; the robbers are the devil and his angels; the priest signifies the sacrifices of the patriarchal age; the Levite is the Mosaic law; and the Samaritan is Christ. The bishop's good sense seems to have halted here. He adds, not as the discovery of his own genius, that the two pieces of silver "have been supposed" to signify the two sacraments which are left behind for the consolation of Christians, "till their good Samaritan shall return." Professor Stuart, in remarking upon this specimen of exegesis, used to ask whether "somebody" was not represented by the ass on which the Samaritan rode. Yet Bishop Heber was a sensible man. In the affairs of life he called water water, like the rest of us. Why should words and things in the Scriptures be interpreted and used as men never interpret them in any other book, or in the colloquial intercourse of life?

Such vagaries as these were once regarded as a part of the staple of the pulpit. By the ancient standard of pulpit eloquence the ingenuity of such conceits marked the rank of the preacher. The more original his invention, the more authoritative was his exegesis. The theory was that inspired language, because it was inspired, was an inexhaustible mine of hidden treasures of the fancy, in which every preacher might delve at will. He was the prince of preachers who could invent the interpretation least likely to suggest itself to the common reader or to be supported by his common sense. The struggle for liberty to interpret the Scrip-

tures by the rules of good sense, as men interpret the language of other books, has been long and hard-fought; and it is by no means ended.

4th, A fourth quality of an explanation is that it should be clear. An obscure explanation is a self-contradiction. Several causes of such obscurity deserve mention.

(1) One cause is ignorance of oriental life and of ancient civilization. A preacher can not himself understand certain portions of the Scriptures, if he is not familiar with Eastern and ancient usages. He should be a well-informed man in Asiatic researches. Even when the letter of a text is not misunderstood, the force of it may be lost for the want of culture in the department of general oriental knowledge.

(2) Another cause of obscurity of exposition is the needless use of technical phraseology. Terms technical to exegesis, to theology, to Christian experience, or even to biblical usage, should be employed, if at all, with caution. The Bible itself does not needlessly employ them. Even technicalities which the usage of the pulpit has made common are not always understood; if understood, they are but dimly so. They are like windows of ground glass.

(3) Another occasion of obscurity in the explanation is confusion of philosophical distinctions. It is a truism that the Scriptures are not inspired to teach philosophy. Yet philosophical distinctions underlie all sound exegesis, as they do the interpretation of all language. Such distinctions must often be stated to save a text from contradiction of other texts, or of the necessary beliefs of men. If, therefore, a preacher does not admit such distinctions, if he does not understand them, if they are overborne by his theology, if he dare

not accept them courageously, if he have not the skill to make them clear to others, he may leave such a text more obscure than he found it. The common sense of the people should rather be let alone in its reception of the Scriptures than be muddled by lame philosophizing.

As specimens of such texts, may be named passages respecting dependence and ability; passages respecting the causes of sin, like that concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart; passages respecting providence and decrees; passages respecting the power of prayer; and passages respecting inherited depravity. Many such texts involve the whole philosophy of the human will. To explain them truthfully, that philosophy must not be falsified nor ignored. A distinction must often be stated, when it is not expanded. When not stated, it must often be implied in the explanation. The preacher must have it in mind unexpressed. To the audience it is the invisible key. The door does not open unless the key is turned by a cunning hand.

(4) A further cause of obscurity in exposition is the want of naturalness of arrangement. Have you never listened to expositions in which the preacher seemed to touch every thing, and explain nothing? He handled every thing vigorously, it may be, yet nothing so as to leave a definite impression. In such a case the difficulty will often be found to be simply the want of natural order. Events are described, not in their actual, nor in any probable, order of occurrence. Characters are grouped in relations which are not proportional. They remind one of a certain cartoon by Raphael, in which figures of half a ton's weight and some hundreds of pounds of fishes are crowded into a skiff not larger nor more seaworthy than a Swampscott dory. The preacher talks at random. He dances from the great

to the small, from the near to the remote, from the material to the spiritual, from the figurative to the literal, and back again, and forth anew, rambling with no order which seems such to a logical mind. He neglects nothing, yet explains nothing. His work results in a literary kaleidoscope.

5th, A fifth quality of an explanation is that it should, if possible, express positive opinions. A preacher should, if possible, have an opinion of his text for which, as an exegete, he is willing to be responsible. The following particulars are worthy of note on this topic.

(1) By far the major part of the Bible is susceptible of positive interpretation. Passages impracticable to exegesis are comparatively few: not one exists, probably, of vital moment. A preacher will find no very large part of the Bible closed to faithful biblical study. Any thing which is thus closed to him is not, for the time being, a canonical text for his pulpit.

(2) Moreover, expression of unsettled opinions of the meaning of the Scriptures does great injury to the pulpit. The pulpit is the place for a religious teacher. Some degree of authoritative instruction is essential to its power. Hearers have a right to expect defined and settled convictions from one whom they have chosen as their instructor. They do not want dogmatism; but they do demand, and justly, confidence of judgment. A man is not "apt to teach" who does not know what he believes. This is especially true when the meaning of the Scriptures is in question. If the pulpit does not know its own ground here, to the people it will seem to know nothing to the purpose. The well-known principle of all popular oratory is applicable here also, — that the popular faith is powerfully affected by the way

in which a preacher treats the foundation of his opinions. Other things being equal, the man who knows will be heard in preference to the man who only believes. He who believes will be heard in preference to the man who doubts. The Scriptures are the foundation of the pulpit. Texts are its pillars. In exegesis, if in any thing, a preacher needs confident opinions. Unsettled faith there ceases to be faith in any thing else with which a Christian pulpit is concerned. A pulpit skeptical as to the Scriptures becomes a floating island: the popular faith can anchor nothing to it.

(3) A Calvinistic theology, especially, requires positive exegesis on the part of its preachers. It is a strong theology. Say whatever else we may of it, it is an oaken theology. Its gnarled branches must be rooted in a deep and solid soil. Its destiny is to encounter tempests of the moral elements. Its life must be far under ground. No dawdling exegesis can support it; nor can any confidence in it as a system of truth be propagated from a pulpit which does not know whether it finds the system in the Scriptures or not. We must find it in the Scriptures, or nowhere. We must know it to be there, or the people will soon know nothing about it. It could not live beyond one generation in the faith of a people who should be thoroughly possessed of the skeptical spirit respecting its biblical foundations.

(4) The tactics of infidelity demand a positive exegesis in the pulpit. I allude here to the standing charge of infidelity, — that the Bible is not a self-consistent volume. This charge is often very effective with a certain ignorant and indolent type of popular skepticism. It declares that the Bible is an instrument on which any tune can be played. Learned and thoughtful infi

delity knows better than that; but that is the most facile way of neutralizing the biblical argument of the clergy with an unthinking and unlearned commonalty. The pulpit must rebut the charge, not by loud-mouthed denials, but by acting upon the assumption of its falseness. Preachers, by having positive opinions in biblical interpretation, and by expressing them positively, will bear down the charge. They need not pause to debate it.

(5) Turning, now, to some of the failures of preachers to exhibit a positive biblical faith, I remark that some fail unconsciously by a skeptical mannerism in their expositions. Have you not heard one explain a text with the forms of doubt, when nobody doubts, or can doubt, the truth of the explanation? "If this be the meaning of the Apostle;" "This seems to be the idea of the Prophet;" "Such may be supposed to be the design of the Psalmist;" "Probably our Lord meant to teach,"—these and similar formulæ of doubt are employed when there is no reasonable doubt. Commentators on the passages in question express no doubt. The preacher has no doubts. He speaks from the habit of affected wisdom. His impulse would be to speak of the certainty of death with a codicil of doubt in the case of a long-lived stock. I call this a skeptical mannerism. Contrast it with the robust style of apostolic preaching: "I am persuaded;" "Hereby we know;" "I say the truth in Christ;" "We have the mind of Christ;" "Know ye not?" "I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you;" "We use great plainness of speech;" "Great is my boldness of speech;" "The Spirit speaketh expressly;" "We know; we are confident, I say;" "Thus saith the Lord." In such varied and intense forms of speech the

inspired preachers express intense convictions. Theirs is an indubitable message. The Epistles of the New Testament seem as if written under oath.

(6) Failure in point of positiveness of exegesis sometimes results from constitutional timidity of opinion. In some minds original opinions are always the result of a trembling balance of probabilities. Which way the scale preponderates never seems absolutely certain. The opponents of Dr. Arnold used to say of him, — though on what grounds I can not imagine, — that he always woke up in the morning with the conviction that every thing was an open question.

(7) In other cases, the failure arises from an overbearing of the speculative upon the exegetical taste. The history of the religious opinions of some men is almost exclusively a dogmatic history. They have come at their opinions through the avenue of speculation, not through that of exegesis, but substantially to the exclusion of exegesis. Consequently for a long time, perhaps for a lifetime, biblical interpretation is of practically no account in their habit of thinking. Such minds make inefficient exegetes in the pulpit. They are so much bolder as theologians than as exegetes, they speculate so much more confidently than they interpret, they are so much more at home in natural than in revealed theology, and in revealed theology they are so much more fond of its catechetical than of its biblical forms, that, in the interpretation of the Scriptures, they never make the impression of authorities.