

Lectures to My Students-C H Spurgeon

Lectures to my Students:

A SELECTION FROM ADDRESSES DELIVERED TO THE STUDENTS
OF The Pastors' College, METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

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INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGY

IN reply to many requests from those ministers who in their student days listened to my lectures, I submit a selection to the press. This, however, I cannot do without an apology, for these addresses were not originally prepared for the public eye, and are scarcely presentable for criticism.

My College lectures are colloquial, familiar, full of anecdote, and often humorous: they are purposely made so, to suit the occasion. At the end of the week I meet the students, and find them weary with sterner studies, and I judge it best to be as lively and

interesting in my prelections as I well can be. They have had their fill of classics, mathematics, and divinity, and are only in a condition to receive something which will attract and secure their attention, and fire their hearts. Our reverend tutor, Mr. Rogers, compares my Friday work to the sharpening of the pin: the fashioning of the head, the straightening, the laying on of the metal and the polishing have been done during the week, and then the process concludes with an effort to give point and sharpness. To succeed in this the lecturer must not be dull himself, nor demand any great effort from his audience.

I am as much at home with my young brethren as in the bosom of my family, and therefore speak without restraint. Generous minds will take this into account in reading these lectures, and I shall hope that all who favour me with their criticisms will be of that noble order.

Possibly caustic remarks may be made upon my frequent references to myself, my own methods of procedure, and personal reminiscences. These also were intentional. I have purposely given an almost autobiographical tinge to the whole, because my own experience, such as it is, is the most original contribution which I can offer, and with my own students, quite as weighty as any other within my reach. It would have been impossible for me to quote the experiences of other men if they had not been bold enough to record them, and I make an honest attempt to acknowledge my debt to my greater predecessors by writing down my own. Whether this arises from egotism or not, each reader shall decide according to the sweetness or acidity of his own disposition. A father is excused when he tells his sons his own life-story and finds it the readiest way to enforce his maxims; the old soldier is forgiven when he "shoulders his erntch, and shows how fields were won;" I beg that the licence which tolerates these may, on this, occasion, be extended, to me.

It would have saved me much labour had I reserved these lectures for re-delivery to new companies of freshmen, and I am conscious of no motive in printing them but that of desiring to keep my counsels alive in the memories of those who heard them years ago, and impressing them upon others who dwell beyond the precincts of our class-room. The age has become intensely practical, and needs a ministry not only orthodox and spiritual, but also natural in utterance, and practically shrewd. Officialism is sick unto death; life is the true heir to success, and is coming to its heritage. Mannerisms, pomposities, and proprieties, once so potent in the religious world, are becoming as obsolete in the reverence of men as those gods of high Olympus for whom in past ages poets tuned their lyres, and sculptors quickened marble into beauty. Truth and life must conquer, and their victory is nearest when they cease to be encumbered with the grave clothes of conventionalism and pretence. It is delicious to put one's foot through the lath and plaster of old affectations, to make room for the granite walls of reality. This has been a main design with me, and may God send success to the effort.

The solemn work with which the Christian ministry concerns itself demands a man's all, and that all at its best. To engage in it half-heartedly is an insult to God and man. Slumber must forsake our eyelids sooner than men shall be allowed to perish. Yet we are all prone to sleep as do others, and students, among the rest, are apt to act the part of the foolish virgins; therefore have I sought to speak out my whole soul, in the hope that I might not create or foster dulness in others. May He in whose hand are the churches and their pastors bless these words to younger brethren in the ministry, and if so I shall count it more than a full reward, and shall gratefully praise the Lord.

Should this publication succeed, I hope very soon to issue in similar form a work upon Commenting, containing a full catalogue of Commentaries, and also a second set of lectures. I shall be obliged by any assistance rendered to the sale, for the price is unremunerative, and persons interested in our subjects are not numerous enough to secure a very large circulation; hence it is only by the kind aid of all appreciating friends that I shall be able to publish the rest of the contemplated series.

The Pastors' College

THE Pastors' College was commenced upon a very small scale in the year 1856. Since that date it has educated and sent forth into the ministry not less than three hundred and fifty men, of whom, after deductions by death and other causes, about three hundred remain in the Baptist denomination, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition to this, a far larger number of men receive gratuitous education in the evening, such as may fit them to be city missionaries, colporteurs, or useful private Christians.

The institution receives no man in order to make him a preacher, but it is established to help in the further education of brethren who have been preaching with some measure of success for two years at the least. Many men of earnest spirit and established Christian character are hindered in their efforts to do good by the slenderness of their knowledge. Conscious of their own defects, they endeavour to improve themselves, but the absence of a guide, their need of books, and their scanty time, all prevent their making progress. These are the men whom the Pastors' College welcomes. Men in whom piety, zeal, and the indwelling Spirit are to be found need not fear refusal at our doors on account of poverty, if they possess those gifts of utterance which are essential to the preacher.

The College aims at training preachers rather than scholars. To develop the faculty of ready speech, to help them to understand the word of God, and to foster the spirit of consecration, courage, and confidence in God, are objects so important that we put all other

matters into a secondary position. If a student should learn a thousand things, and yet fail to preach the gospel acceptably, his College course will have missed its true design. Should the pursuit of literary prizes and the ambition for classical honours so occupy his mind as to divert his attention from his life work, they are perilous rather than beneficial. To be wise to win souls is the wisdom ministers should possess.

In the Pastors' College definite doctrines are held and taught. We hold by the doctrines of grace and the old orthodox faith, and have no sympathy with the countless theological novelties of the present day, which are novelties only in outward form: in substance they are repetitions of errors exploded long ago. Our standing in doctrinal matters is well known, and we make no profession of latitudinarian charity, yet we find no failure in the number of earnest spirits who rally to our standard, believing that in truth alone can true freedom be found.

The support of the College is derived from the free-will offerings of the Lord's people. We have no roll of subscribers, although many friends send us aid at regular intervals. Our confidence is that God will supply all our needs, and he has always done so hitherto. The President has never derived a farthing from the work for himself in any shape, but on the contrary delights to give to the work all that he can, both of money and gratis service; and therefore he the more confidently appeals to others to assist him in maintaining the Institution. No work can possibly confer a greater benefit upon mankind than the training of ministers whom God has chosen, for around them spring up churches, schools, and all the agencies of religion and philanthropy. As we are commanded to pray for labourers on the Lord's harvest, so are we bound to prove the honesty of our prayers by our actions.

At least £100 is required every week to carry on the work.

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1 The Minister's Self-watch

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine."—1 Timothy 4:16.

Every workman knows the necessity of keeping his tools in a good state of repair, for if the workman loses the edge from his axe, he knows that there will be a greater draught upon his energies, or his work will be badly done. Michael Angelo, the master of the fine arts, understood so well the importance of his tools, that he always made his own brushes with his own hands, and in this he gives us an illustration of the God of grace, who with special care fashions for himself all true ministers.

It is true that the Lord can work with the faultiest kind of instrumentality, as he does when he occasionally makes very foolish preaching to be useful in conversion; and he can even work without agents, as he does when he saves men without a preacher at all, applying the word directly by his Holy Spirit. But we cannot regard God's absolutely sovereign acts as a rule for our action. He may, in His own absoluteness, do as pleases Him best, but we must act as His plainer dispensations instruct us; and one of the facts which is clear enough is this, that the Lord usually adapts means to ends, from which the plain lesson is, that we shall be likely to accomplish most when we are in the best spiritual condition; or in other words, we shall usually do our Lord's work best when our gifts and graces are in good order, and we shall do worst when they are most out of trim. This is a practical truth for our guidance. When the Lord makes exceptions, they do but prove the rule.

We are, in a certain sense, our own tools, and therefore we must keep ourselves in order. If I want to preach the gospel, I can only use my own voice; therefore I must train my vocal powers. I can only think with my own brains, and feel with my own heart, and therefore I must educate my intellectual and emotional faculties. I can only weep and agonize for souls in my own renewed nature, therefore must I watchfully maintain the tenderness which was in Christ Jesus.

It will be in vain for me to stock my library, or organize societies, or project schemes, if I neglect the culture of myself; for books, and agencies, and systems, are only remotely the instruments of my holy calling; my own spirit, soul, and body, are my nearest machinery for sacred service; my spiritual faculties, and my inner life, are my battle axe and weapons of war.

M'Cheyne, writing to a ministerial friend, who was traveling with a view to perfecting himself in the German tongue, used language identical with our own: "I know you will apply hard to German, but do not forget the culture of the inner man—I mean of the heart. How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his saber clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God's sword, His instrument—a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

For the herald of the gospel to be spiritually out of order in his own proper person is, both to himself and to his work, a most serious

calamity; and yet, my brethren, how easily is such an evil produced, and with what watchfulness must it be guarded against!

Traveling one day by express from Perth to Edinburgh, suddenly we came to a dead stop, because a very small screw in the engine had been broken, and when we started again we were obliged to crawl along with one piston-rod at work instead of two. Only a small screw was gone. If that had been right the train would have rushed along its iron road, but the absence of that insignificant piece of iron disarranged the whole. A train is said to have been stopped on one of the United States' railways by flies in the grease-boxes of the carriage wheels.

The analogy is perfect; a man in all other respects fitted to be useful, may by some small defect be exceedingly hindered, or even rendered utterly useless. Such a result is all the more grievous, because it is associated with the gospel, which in the highest sense is adapted to effect the grandest results. It is a terrible thing when the healing balm loses its efficacy through the blunderer who administers it.

You all know the injurious effects frequently produced upon water through flowing along leaden pipes; even so the gospel itself, in flowing through men who are spiritually unhealthy, may be debased until it grows injurious to their hearers. It is to be feared that Calvinistic doctrine becomes most evil teaching when it is set forth by men of ungodly lives, and exhibited as if it were a cloak for licentiousness; and Arminianism, on the other hand, with its wide sweep of the offer of mercy, may do most serious damage to the souls of men, if the careless tone of the preacher leads his hearers to believe that they can repent whenever they please; and that, therefore, no urgency surrounds the gospel message.

Moreover, when a preacher is poor in grace, any lasting good which may be the result of his ministry, will usually be feeble and utterly out of proportion with what might have been expected. Much sowing will be followed by little reaping; the interest upon the talents will be inappreciably small.

In two or three of the battles which were lost in the late American war, the result is said to have been due to the bad gunpowder which was served out by certain "shoddy" contractors to the army, so that the due effect of a cannonade was not produced. So it may be with us. We may miss our mark, lose our end and aim, and waste our time, through not possessing true vital force within ourselves, or not possessing it in such a degree that God could consistently bless us. Beware of being "shoddy" preachers!

1. It should be our first care that we ourselves be saved men.

That a teacher of the gospel should first be a partaker of it is a simple truth, but at the same time a rule of the most weighty importance. We are not among those who accept the apostolic succession of young men simply because they assume it; if their college experience has been rather vivacious than spiritual, if their honors have been connected rather with athletic exercises than with labors for Christ—we demand evidence of another kind than they are able to present to us. No amount of fees paid to learned doctors, and no amount of classics received in return, appear to us to be evidences of a call from above.

True and genuine piety is necessary as the first indispensable requisite; whatever "call" a man may pretend to have, if he has not been called to holiness, he certainly has not been called to the ministry.

"First be trimmed yourself, and then adorn your brother," say the Rabbis. "The hand," says Gregory, "that means to make another clean, must not itself be dirty." If your salt be unsavory how can you season others? Conversion is an essential condition in a minister. You aspirants to our pulpits, "you must be born again." Nor is the possession of this first qualification a thing to be taken for granted by any man, for there is very great possibility of our being mistaken as to whether we are converted or not. Believe me, it is no child's play to "make your calling and election sure."

The world is full of counterfeits, and swarms with panderers to carnal self-conceit, who gather around a minister as vultures around a carcass. Our own hearts are deceitful, so that truth lies not on the surface, but must be drawn up from the deepest well. We must search ourselves very anxiously and very thoroughly, lest by any means after having preached to others we ourselves should be castaways.

How horrible to be a preacher of the gospel and yet to be unconverted! Let each man here whisper to his own inmost soul, "What a dreadful thing it will be for me if I should be ignorant of the power of the truth which I am preparing to proclaim!" Unconverted ministry involves the most unnatural relationships.

A graceless pastor is a blind man elected to a professorship of optics, philosophizing upon light and vision, discoursing upon and distinguishing to others the intricate shades and delicate blendings of the prismatic colors—while he himself is absolutely in the dark! He is a dumb man elevated to the chair of music! He is a deaf man fluent upon symphonies and harmonies! He is a mole professing to educate eagles! He is a limpet elected to preside over angels.

To such a relationship one might apply the most absurd and grotesque metaphors, except that the subject is too solemn. It is a

dreadful position for a man to stand in, for he has undertaken a work for which he is totally, wholly, and altogether unqualified, but from the responsibilities of which this unfitness will not screen him, because he willfully incurred them. Whatever his natural gifts, whatever his mental powers may be, he is utterly out of court for spiritual work if he has no spiritual life; and it is his duty to cease the ministerial office until he has received this first and simplest of qualifications for it.

Unconverted ministry must be equally dreadful in another respect. If the man has no commission from God, what a very unhappy position for him to occupy! What can he see in the experience of his people to give him comfort? How must he feel when he hears the cries of penitents; or listens to their anxious doubts and solemn fears? He must be astonished to think that his words should be owned to that end!

The word of an unconverted man may be blessed to the conversion of souls, since the Lord, while He disowns the man, will still honor His own truth. Yet how perplexed such a man must be when he is consulted concerning the difficulties of mature Christians! In the pathway of experience, in which his own regenerate hearers are led, he must feel himself quite at a loss. How can he listen to their deathbed joys, or join in their rapturous fellowships around the table of their Lord?

In many instances of young men put to a trade which they cannot endure, they run away to sea sooner than follow an irksome business; but where shall that man flee who is apprenticed for life to this holy calling, and yet is a total stranger to the power of godliness? How can he daily bid men come to Christ, while he himself is a stranger to His dying love? O sirs, surely this must be perpetual slavery. Such a man must hate the sight of a pulpit as much as a galley-slave hates the oar!

And how unserviceable such a man must be. He has to guide travelers along a road which he has never trodden. He has to navigate a vessel along a coast of which he knows none of the landmarks! He is called to instruct others, being himself a fool. What can he be but a cloud without rain, a tree with leaves only. As when the caravan in the wilderness, all athirst and ready to die beneath the broiling sun, comes to the long desired well, and, horror of horrors! finds it without a drop of water. Just so, when souls thirsting after God come to a graceless ministry, they are ready to perish because the water of life is not to be found. Better abolish pulpits than fill them with men who have no experimental knowledge of what they teach.

Alas! the unregenerate pastor becomes terribly mischievous too, for of all the causes which create infidelity, ungodly ministers must be ranked among the first. I read the other day, that no phase of evil presented so marvelous a power for destruction, as the unconverted minister of a parish, with an expensive organ, a choir of ungodly singers, and an aristocratic congregation. It was the opinion of the writer, that there could be no greater instrument for damnation out of Hell than that.

People go to their place of worship and sit down comfortably, and think they must be Christians, when all the time all that their religion consists in, is listening to an orator, having their ears tickled with music, and perhaps their eyes amused with graceful action and fashionable manners; the whole being no better than what they hear and see at the opera—not so good, perhaps, in point of aesthetic beauty, and not an atom more spiritual.

Thousands are congratulating themselves, and even blessing God that they are devout worshipers, when at the same time they are living in an unregenerate Christless state, having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. He who presides over a system which aims at nothing higher than formalism, is far more a servant of the devil than a minister of God!

A formal preacher is mischievous while he preserves his outward equilibrium, but as he is without the preserving balance of godliness, sooner or later he is almost sure to make a trip in his moral character, and what a position is he in then! How is God blasphemed, and the gospel abused!

Terrible is it to consider what a death must await such a man! and what must be his after-condition! The prophet pictures the king of Babylon going down to Hell, and all the kings and princes whom he had destroyed, and whose capitals he had laid waste, rising up from their places in Pandemonium, and saluting the fallen tyrant with the cutting sarcasm, "Have you become like unto us?" Can you suppose a man who has been a minister, but who has lived without Christ in his heart, going down to Hell, and all the imprisoned spirits who used to hear him, and all the ungodly of his parish rising up and saying to him in bitter tones, "Are you also become as we are? Physician, did you not heal yourself? Are you who claimed to be a shining light cast down into the darkness forever?"

Oh! if one must be lost, let it not be in this fashion! To be lost under the shadow of a pulpit is dreadful, but how much more so to perish from the pulpit itself!

There is a solemn passage in John Bunyan's treatise, entitled "Sighs from Hell," which full often rings in my ears: "How many souls have blind priests been the means of destroying by their ignorance? Preaching that was no better for their souls than rats-poison to the body. Many of them, it is to be feared, have whole towns to answer for. Ah! friend, I tell you, you that have taken in hand to preach to the people, it may be you have taken in hand you can not tell what. Will it not grieve you to see your whole parish come bellowing after you into Hell? crying out, 'This we have to thank you for, you were afraid to tell us of our sins, lest we should not put meat fast enough into your mouth. O cursed wretch, who were not content, blind guide as you were, to fall into the ditch yourself—

but have also led us there with you!"

Richard Baxter, in his "Reformed Pastor," amid much other solemn matter, writes as follows: "Take heed to yourselves, lest you should be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach; and lest, while you proclaim the necessity of a Savior to the world, your hearts should neglect him, and you should miss of a saving interest in him and his saving benefits. Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish while you call upon others to take heed of perishing, and lest you famish yourselves while you prepare their food! Though there be a promise of shining as stars to those that turn many to righteousness (Daniel 12:3), this is but on supposition that they be first turned to it themselves. Many men have warned others that they come not to that place of torment, which yet they hastened to themselves; many a preacher is now in Hell, who has an hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it. Can any reasonable man imagine that God should save men for offering salvation to others, while they refused it themselves, and for telling others those truths which they themselves neglected and abused? Many a tailor goes in rags who makes costly clothes for others; and many a cook scarcely licks his fingers, when he has dressed for others the most costly dishes. Believe it, brethren, God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an able preacher; but because he was a justified, sanctified man, and consequently faithful in his Master's work. Take heed, therefore, to yourselves first, that you be that which you persuade others to be, and believe that which you persuade them daily to believe, and have heartily entertained that Christ and Spirit which you offer unto others. He who bade you love your neighbors as yourselves, did imply that you should love yourselves and not hate and destroy both yourselves and them."

My brethren, let these weighty sentences have due effect upon you. Surely there can be no need to add more; but let me beg you to examine yourselves, and so make good use of what has been addressed to you.

This first matter of true religion being settled, it is of the next importance to the minister:

2. That his piety be vigorous.

He is not to be content with being equal to the rank and file of Christians, he must be a mature and advanced believer; for the ministry of Christ has been truly called "the choicest of his choice, the elect of his election, a church picked out of the church." If he were called to an ordinary position, and to common work, common grace might perhaps satisfy him, though even then it would be an indolent satisfaction; but being elect to extraordinary labors, and called to a place of unusual peril, he should be anxious to possess that superior strength which alone is adequate to his station.

His pulse of vital godliness must beat strongly and regularly.

His eye of faith must be bright. His foot of resolution must be firm.

His hand of activity must be quick.

His whole inner man must be in the highest degree of piety.

It is said of the Egyptians that they chose their priests from the most learned of their philosophers, and then they esteemed their priests so highly, that they chose their kings from them.

We require to have for God's ministers the pick of all the Christian host; such men indeed, that if the nation wanted kings they could not do better than elevate them to the throne.

Our weakest-minded, most timid, most carnal, and most ill-balanced men are not suitable candidates for the pulpit.

There are some works which we should never allot to the invalid or deformed. A man may not be qualified for climbing lofty buildings, his brain may be too weak, and elevated work might place him in great danger; by all means let him keep on the ground and find useful occupation where a steady brain is less important. There are brethren who have analogous spiritual deficiencies, they cannot be called to service which is conspicuous and elevated, because their heads are too weak. If they were permitted a little success they would be intoxicated with vanity—a vice all too common among ministers, and of all things the least becoming in them, and the most certain to secure them a fall.

Should we as a nation be called to defend our hearths and homes, we should not send out our boys and girls with swords and guns to meet the foe, neither may the church send out every fluent novice or inexperienced zealot to plead for the faith. The fear of the Lord must teach the young man wisdom, or he is barred from the pastorate. The grace of God must mature his spirit, or he had better tarry until power be given him from on high.

The highest moral character must be sedulously maintained. Many are disqualified for office in the church who are well enough as simple members. I hold very stern opinions with regard to Christian men who have fallen into gross sin. I rejoice that they may be truly converted, and may be with mingled hope and caution received into the church; but I question, gravely question whether a man

who has grossly sinned should be very readily restored to the pulpit.

As John Angell James remarks, "When a preacher of righteousness has stood in the way of sinners, he should never again open his lips in the great congregation until his repentance is as notorious as his sin."

Let those who have been shorn by the sons of Ammon tarry at Jericho until their beards are grown; this has often been used as a taunt to beardless boys to whom it is evidently inapplicable, it is an accurate enough metaphor for dishonored and characterless men, let their age be what it may.

Alas! the beard of reputation once shorn is hard to grow again. Open immorality, in most cases, however deep the repentance, is a fatal sign that ministerial graces were never in the man's character. There must be no ugly rumors as to ministerial inconsistency in the past, or the hope of usefulness will be slender. Into the church such fallen ones are to be received as penitents, and into the ministry they may be received if God puts them there; my doubt is not about that, but as to whether God ever did place them there; and my belief is that we should be very slow to help back to the pulpit men, who having been once tried, have proved themselves to have too little grace to stand the crucial test of ministerial life.

For some work we choose none but the strong; and when God calls us to ministerial labor we should endeavor to get grace that we may be strengthened into fitness for our position, and not be mere novices carried away by the temptations of Satan, to the injury of the church and our own ruin. We are to stand equipped with the whole armor of God, ready for feats of valor not expected of others. To us self-denial, self-forgetfulness, patience, perseverance, longsuffering, must be every-day virtues, and who is sufficient for these things? We had need live very near to God, if we would approve ourselves in our vocation.

Recollect, as ministers, that your whole life, your whole pastoral life especially, will be affected by the vigor of your piety. If your zeal grows dull, you will not pray well in the pulpit; you will pray worse in the family, and worst in the study alone. When your soul becomes lean, your hearers, without knowing how or why, will find that your prayers in public have little savor for them; they will feel your barrenness, perhaps, before you perceive it yourself.

Your discourses will next betray your declension. You may utter as well-chosen words, and as fitly-ordered sentences, as aforetime; but there will be a perceptible loss of spiritual force. You will shake yourselves as at other times, even as Samson did, but you will find that your great strength has departed.

In your daily communion with your people, they will not be slow to mark the all-pervading decline of your graces. Sharp eyes will see the grey hairs here and there long before you do.

Let a man be afflicted with a disease of the heart, and all evils are wrapped up in that one—stomach, lungs, viscera, muscles, and nerves will all suffer. Just so, let a man have his heart weakened in spiritual things, and very soon his entire life will feel the withering influence. Moreover, as the result of your own decline, everyone of your hearers will suffer more or less; the vigorous among them will overcome the depressing tendency, but the weaker sort will be seriously damaged.

It is with us and our hearers as it is with watches and the public clock; if our watch be wrong, very few will be misled by it but ourselves. But if the Greenwich Observatory should go amiss, half London would lose its reckoning. So is it with the minister; he is the parish-clock, many take their time from him, and if he be incorrect, then they all go wrongly, more or less, and he is in a great measure accountable for all the sin which he occasions. This we cannot endure to think of, my brethren. It will not bear a moment's comfortable consideration, and yet it must be looked at that we may guard against it.

You must remember, too, that we have need of very vigorous piety, because our danger is so much greater than that of others. Upon the whole, no place is so assailed with temptation as the ministry. Despite the popular idea that ours is a snug retreat from temptation, it is no less true that our dangers are more numerous and more insidious than those of ordinary Christians. Ours may be a vantage-ground for height, but that height is perilous, and to many the ministry has proved a steep cliff off which many fall.

If you ask what these temptations are, time might fail us to particularize them; but among them are both the coarser and the more refined. The coarser are such temptations as self-indulgence at the table, enticements to which are superabundant among a hospitable people, the temptations of the flesh, which are incessant with young unmarried men set on high among an admiring throng of young women. But enough of this, your own observation will soon reveal to you a thousand snares, unless indeed your eyes are blinded.

There are more secret snares than these, from which we can less easily escape; and of these the worst is the temptation to ministerialism—the tendency to read our Bibles as ministers, to pray as ministers, to get into doing the whole of our religion as not ourselves personally—but only relatively, concerned in it. To lose personal repentance and faith is a loss indeed. "No man," says John Owen, "preaches his sermon well to others if he does not first preach it to his own heart." Brethren, it is eminently hard to keep to this. Our office, instead of helping our piety, as some assert, is through the evil of our natures turned into one of its most serious

hindrances; at least, I find it so. How one kicks and struggles against officialism, and yet how easily does it beset us, like a long garment which twists around the racer's feet and impedes his running! Beware, dear brethren, of this and all the other seductions of your calling; and if you have done so until now, continue still to watch until life's last hour.

We have noted but one of the perils, but indeed they are legion. The great enemy of souls takes care to leave no stone unturned for the preacher's ruin. "Take heed to yourselves," says Baxter, "because the tempter will make his first and sharpest onset upon you. If you will be the leaders against him, he will spare you no further than God restrains him. He bears the greatest malice, to those who are engaged to do him the greatest mischief. As he hates Christ more than any of us, because he is the General of the field, and the 'Captain of our salvation,' and does more than all the world besides against the kingdom of darkness; so does he note the leaders under him more than the common soldiers, on the like account, in their proportion. He knows what a rout he may make among the rest, if the leaders fall before their eyes. He has long tried that way of fighting, 'neither with small nor great,' comparatively, but these; and of 'smiting the shepherds, that he may scatter the flock.' So great has been his success this way, that he will follow it on as far as he is able. Take heed, therefore, brethren, for the enemy has a special eye upon you. You shall have his most subtle insinuations, and incessant solicitations, and violent assaults. As wise and learned as you are, take heed to yourselves lest he overwit you. The devil is a greater scholar than you, and a nimbler disputant; he can 'transform himself into an angel of light' to deceive. He will get within you and trip up your heels before you are aware. He will play the juggler with you undiscerned, and cheat you of your faith or innocence, and you shall not know that you have lost it; nay, he will make you believe it is multiplied or increased when it is lost. You shall see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait! And his baits shall be so fitted to your temper and disposition, that he will be sure to find advantages within you, and make your own principles and inclinations to betray you; and whenever he ruins you, he will make you the instrument of your own ruin. Oh, what a conquest will he think he has got, if he can make a minister lazy and unfaithful; if he can tempt a minister into covetousness or scandal! He will glory against the church, and say, 'These are your holy preachers—you see what their preciseness is, and where it will bring them.' He will glory against Jesus Christ Himself, and say, 'These are your champions! I can make your chief servants to abuse you. I can make the stewards of your house unfaithful.' If he did so insult against God upon a false surmise, and tell Him he could make Job to curse Him to His face (Job 1:2), what would he do if he should indeed prevail against us? And at last he will insult as much over you that ever he could draw you to be false to your great trust, and to blemish your holy profession, and to do him so much service, who was your enemy. O do not so far gratify Satan; do not make him so much sport. Do not allow him to use you as the Philistines did Samson—first to deprive you of your strength, and then to put out your eyes, and so to make you the matter of his triumph and derision."

Once more. We must cultivate the highest degree of godliness because our work imperatively requires it. The labor of the Christian ministry is well performed in exact proportion to the vigor of our renewed nature. Our work is only well done when it is well with ourselves. As is the workman, such will the work be. To face the enemies of truth, to defend the bulwarks of the faith, to rule well in the house of God, to comfort all that mourn, to edify the saints, to guide the perplexed, to bear with the froward, to win and nurse souls—all these and a thousand other works beside are not for a Feeble-mind or a Ready-to-halt, but are reserved for Great-heart whom the Lord has made strong for Himself. Seek then strength from the Strong One, wisdom from the Wise One, in fact, all from the God of all.

3. Let the minister take care that his personal character agrees in all respects with his ministry.

We have all heard the story of the man who preached so well and lived so badly, that when he was in the pulpit everybody said he ought never to come out again; and when he was out of it they all declared he never ought to enter it again. From the imitation of such a Janus may the Lord deliver us. May we never be priests of God at the altar, and sons of Belial outside the tabernacle door. We do not trust those people who have two faces, nor will men believe in those whose verbal and practical testimonies are contradictory. As actions, according to the proverb, speak louder than words, so an unholy life will effectually drown the voice of the most eloquent ministry. After all, our truest building must be performed with our hands; our characters must be more persuasive than our speech.

Here I would not alone warn you of sins of commission, but of sins of omission. Too many preachers forget to serve God when they are out of the pulpit, their lives are negatively inconsistent. Abhor, dear brethren, the thought of being clock-work ministers who are not alive by abiding grace within, but are wound up by temporary influences; men who are only ministers for the time being, under the stress of the hour of ministering, but cease to be ministers when they descend the pulpit stairs.

True ministers are always ministers. Too many preachers are like those sand-toys we buy for our children; you turn the box upside down, and the little acrobat revolves and revolves until the sand is all run down, and then he hangs motionless; so there are some who persevere in the ministrations of truth as long as there is an official necessity for their work, but after that, no pay, no performance; no salary, no sermon.

It is a horrible thing to be an inconsistent minister. Our Lord is said to have been like Moses, for this reason, that He was "a prophet

mighty in word and in deed." The man of God should imitate his Master in this; he should be mighty both in the word of his doctrine, and in the deed of his example—and mightiest, if possible, in the second. It is remarkable that the only church history we have is, "The Acts of the apostles." The Holy Spirit has not preserved their sermons. They were very good ones, better than we shall ever preach, but still the Holy Spirit has only taken care to record their "acts." We have no books of the resolutions of the apostles.

When we hold our church-meetings we record our minutes and resolutions, but the Holy Spirit only puts down the "acts." Our acts should be such as to bear recording, for recorded they will be. We must live as under the more immediate eye of God, and as in the blaze of the great all-revealing day.

Holiness in a minister is at once his chief necessity and his goodliest ornament. Mere moral excellence is not enough, there must be the higher virtue; a consistent character there must be, but this must be anointed with the sacred consecrating oil, or that which makes us most fragrant to God and man will be lacking.

Old John Stoughton, in his treatise entitled "The Preacher's Dignity and Duty," insists upon the minister's holiness in sentences full of weight. "If Uzzah must die but for touching the ark of God, and that to stay it when it was like to fall; if the men of Beth-shemesh for looking into it, if the very beasts that do but come near the holy mount be threatened—then what manner of people ought they to be who shall be admitted to talk with God familiarly, to 'stand before him,' as the angels do, and 'behold his face continually;' 'to bear the ark upon their shoulders,' 'to bear his name before the Gentiles;' in a word, to be his ambassadors? 'Holiness befits your house, O Lord;' and were it not a ridiculous thing to imagine, that the vessels must be holy, the vestures must be holy, all must be holy, but only he upon whose very garments must be written 'holiness to the Lord,' might be unholy; that the bells of the horses should have an inscription of holiness upon them, in Zechariah, and the saints' bells, the bells of Aaron, should be unhallowed? No, they must be 'burning and shining lights,' or else their influence will dart some malignant quality. They must 'chew the cud and divide the hoof,' or else they are unclean. They must 'divide the word aright,' and walk uprightly in their life, and so join life to learning. If holiness be lacking, the ambassadors dishonor the country from whence they come, and the prince from whom they come; and this dead Amasa, this dead doctrine not quickened with a good life, lying in the way, stops the people of the Lord, that they cannot go on cheerfully in their spiritual warfare."

The life of the preacher should be a magnet to draw men to Christ, and it is sad indeed when it keeps them from him. Sanctity in ministers is a loud call to sinners to repent, and when allied with holy cheerfulness it becomes wondrously attractive.

The voice of Jacob will do little good, if the hands be the hands of Esau. In the law, no person who had any blemish was to offer the oblations of the Lord (Leviticus 21:17-20); the Lord thereby teaching us what graces ought to be in his ministers. The priest was to have in his robes bells and pomegranates; the one a figure of sound doctrine, and the other of a fruitful life. Exodus 28:33, 34. The Lord will be sanctified in all those that draw near unto him (Isaiah 52:11); for the sins of the priests make the people abhor the offering of the Lord (1 Samuel 2:17); their wicked lives do shame their doctrine. With their doctrine they build, and with their lives they destroy.

"Let not your works shame your doctrine, lest they who hear you in the church tacitly answer, Why do you not yourself what you teach to others? He is too delicate a teacher who persuades others to fast with a full belly. A robber may accuse covetousness. A minister of Christ should have his tongue, and his heart, and his hand agree."

"Many are they who teach well and do ill. They have Heaven at their tongue's end—yet the earth is at their finger's end. They speak false divinity with their hands; such as live not according to their preaching. But He who sits in the Heaven will laugh them to scorn, and hiss them off the stage, if they do not mend their action."

Even in little things the minister should take care that his life is consistent with his ministry. He should be especially careful never to fall short of his word. This should be pushed even to scrupulosity; we cannot be too careful; truth must not only be in us, but shine from us.

A celebrated doctor of divinity in London, who is now in Heaven, gave notice one Sunday that he intended to visit all his people, and said, that in order to be able to get round and visit them and their families once in the year, he should take all the seat-holders in order. A person well known to me, who was then a poor man, was delighted with the idea that the minister was coming to his house to see him, and about a week or two before he conceived it would be his turn, his wife was very careful to sweep the hearth and keep the house tidy, and the man ran home early from work, hoping each night to find the minister there. This went on for a considerable time. He either forgot his promise, or grew weary in performing it, or for some other reason never went to this poor man's house. The result was this, the man lost confidence in all preachers, and said, "They care for the rich, but they do not care for us who are poor." That man never settled down to any one place of worship for many years, until at last he dropped into Exeter Hall and remained my hearer for years until providence removed him. It was no small task to make him believe that any minister could be an honest man, and could impartially love both rich and poor. Let us avoid doing such mischief, by being very particular as to our word.

We must remember that we are very much looked at. Men hardly have the impudence to break the law in the open sight of their fellows—yet we live and move in the public eye. We are watched by a thousand eagle eyes! Let us so act that we shall never need to care if all Heaven, and earth, and Hell, swelled the list of spectators. Our public position is a great gain, if we are enabled to exhibit the fruits of the Spirit in our lives; take heed, brethren, that you throw not away the advantage.

When we say to you, my dear brethren, take care of your life, we mean be careful of even the minutiae of your character. Avoid little debts, unpunctuality, gossiping, nicknaming, petty quarrels, and all other of those little vices which fill the ointment with flies. The self-indulgences which have lowered the repute of many, must not be tolerated by us. The familiarities which have laid others under suspicion, we must chastely avoid. The roughnesses which have rendered some obnoxious, and the fopperies which have made others contemptible, we must put away. We cannot afford to run great risks through little things. Our care must be to act on the rule, "giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed."

By this is not intended that we are to hold ourselves bound by every whim or fashion of the society in which we move. As a general rule, I hate the fashions of society, and detest conventionalities, and if I conceived it best to put my foot through a law of etiquette, I would feel gratified in having it to do. No, we are men, not slaves; and are not to relinquish our manly freedom, to be the lackeys of those who affect gentility or boast refinement. Yet, brethren, anything that verges upon the coarseness which is akin to sin, we must shun as we would a viper. The rules of Chesterfield are ridiculous to us, but not the example of Christ; and He was never coarse, base, discourteous, or indelicate.

Even in your recreations, remember that you are ministers. When you are off the parade, you are still officers in the army of Christ, and as such demean yourselves.

But if the lesser things must be looked after, how careful should you be in the great matters of morality, honesty, and integrity! Here the minister must not fail. His private life must ever keep good tune with his ministry, or his day will soon set with him, and the sooner he retires the better, for his continuance in his office will only dishonor the cause of God and ruin himself.

2 The Call to the Ministry

Any Christian has a right to disseminate the gospel who has the ability to do so; and more, he not only has the right, but it is his duty so to do as long as he lives. Revelation 22:17. The propagation of the gospel is left, not to a few, but to all the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to the measure of grace entrusted to him by the Holy Spirit, each man is bound to minister in his day and generation, both to the church and among unbelievers. Indeed, this question goes beyond men, and even includes the whole of the other gender. Whether believers are male or female, they are all bound, when enabled by divine grace, to exert themselves to the utmost to extend the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our service, however, need not take the particular form of preaching—certainly, in some cases it must not, as for instance in the case of females, whose public teaching is expressly prohibited in 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34. But yet if we have the ability to preach, we are bound to exercise it.

I do not, however, in this lecture allude to occasional preaching, or any other form of ministry common to all the saints, but to the work and office of the pastor, in which is included both teaching and bearing rule in the church, which requires the dedication of a man's entire life to spiritual work, and separation from every secular calling, 2 Timothy 2:4; and entitles the man to cast himself for temporal supplies upon the church of God, since he gives up all his time, energies, and endeavors, for the good of those over whom he presides. 1 Corinthians 9:11; 1 Timothy 5:18. Such a man is addressed by Peter in the words, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." 1 Peter 5:2.

Now, all in a church cannot oversee, or rule—there must be some to be overseen and ruled; and we believe that the Holy Spirit appoints in the church of God some to act as overseers, while others are made willing to be watched over for their good. All are not called to labor in word and doctrine, or to be elders, or to exercise the office of a pastor; nor should all aspire to such works, since the gifts necessary are nowhere promised to all. But those should addict themselves to such important engagements who feel, like the apostle, that they have "received this ministry." 2 Corinthians 4:1.

No man may intrude into the sheepfold as an under-shepherd; he must have an eye to the chief Shepherd, and wait His beck and command. Before a man stands forth as God's ambassador, he must wait for the call from above; and if he does not so, but rushes into the sacred office, the Lord will say of him and others like him, "I sent them not, neither commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the Lord." Jeremiah 23:32.

By reference to the Old Testament, you will find the messengers of God in the old dispensation claiming to hold commissions from

Jehovah. Isaiah tells us that one of the seraphim touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar, and the voice of the Lord said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah 6:8. Then said the prophet, "Here am I, send me." He ran not before he had been thus especially visited of the Lord and qualified for his mission. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" were words as yet unuttered, but their solemn meaning was well understood.

Jeremiah details his call in his first chapter: "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

"Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."

But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." Jeremiah 1:4-10.

Varying in its outward form, but to the same purpose, was the commission of Ezekiel; it runs thus in his own words: "He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you."

As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house.' Ezekiel 2:1-6

"And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them." Ezekiel 3:1-4.

Daniel's call to prophesy, although not recorded, is abundantly attested by the visions granted to him, and the exceeding favor which he had with the Lord, both in his solitary meditations and public acts.

It is not needful to pass all the other prophets in review, for they all claimed to speak with "thus says the Lord."

In the present dispensation, the priesthood is common to all the saints; but to prophesy, or what is analogous thereto, namely, to be moved by the Holy Spirit to give oneself up wholly to the proclamation of the gospel, is, as a matter of fact, the gift and calling of only a comparatively small number; and surely these need to be as sure of the rightfulness of their position as were the prophets; and yet how can they justify their office, except by a similar call?

Nor need any imagine that such calls are a mere delusion, and that none are in this age separated for the peculiar work of teaching and overseeing the church, for the very names given to ministers in the New Testament imply a previous call to their work. The apostle says, "Now we are ambassadors for God;" but does not the very soul of the ambassadorial office lie in the appointment which is made by the monarch represented? An unsent ambassador would be a laughing-stock. Men who dare to avow themselves ambassadors for Christ, must feel most solemnly that the Lord has "committed" to them the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19. If it be said that this is restricted to the apostles, I answer that the epistle is written not in the name of Paul only, but of Timothy also, and hence includes other ministry besides apostleship.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians we read, "Let a man so account of us (the us here meaning Paul and Sosthenes, 1 Corinthians 1:1), as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." 1 Corinthians 4:1. Surely a steward must hold his office from the Master. He cannot be a steward merely because he chooses to be so, or is so regarded by others. If any of us should elect ourselves stewards to the Marquis of Westminster, and proceed to deal with his property, we should have our mistake very speedily pointed out to us in the most convincing manner. There must evidently be authority before a man can legally become a pastor, "the steward of God." Titus 1:7.

The Apocalyptic title of Angel (Revelation 2:1) means a messenger; and how shall men be Christ's heralds, unless by his election and ordination? If the reference of the word Angel to the minister be questioned, we should be glad to have it shown that it can relate to anyone else. To whom would the Spirit write in the church as its representative, but to someone in a position analogous to that of the presiding elder?

Titus was bidden to make full proof of his ministry—there was surely something to prove. Some are "vessels unto honor, sanctified and fit for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Timothy 2:21. The Master is not to be denied the choice of the

vessels which he uses; he will still say of certain men as he did of Saul of Tarsus, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles." Acts 9:15. When our Lord ascended on high he gave gifts unto men, and it is noteworthy that these gifts were men set apart for various works: "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). From which it is evident that certain individuals are, as the result of our Lord's ascension, bestowed upon the churches as pastors; they are given of God, and consequently not self-elevated to their position.

Brethren, I trust you may be able one day to speak of the flock over whom "the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28), and I pray that every one of you may be able to say with the apostle of the Gentiles, that your ministry is not of man, neither by man, but that you have received it from the Lord. Galatians 1:1.

In you may that ancient promise be fulfilled, "I will give them pastors according to my heart." Jeremiah 3:15. "I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them." Jeremiah 23:4.

May the Lord himself fulfill in your several persons his own declaration: "I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." May you take forth the precious from the vile, and so be as God's mouth. Jeremiah 15:19. May the Lord make manifest by you the savor of the knowledge of Jesus in every place, and make you "unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in those who saved, and in those who perish." 2 Corinthians 2:15.

Having a priceless treasure in earthen vessels, may the excellency of the divine power rest upon you, and so may you both glorify God and clear yourselves from the blood of all men. As the Lord Jesus went up to the Mount and called to him whom he would, and then sent them forth to preach (Mark 3:13)—even so may he select you, call you upward to commune with himself, and send you forth as his elect servants to bless both the church and the world.

How may a young man know whether he is called or not? That is a weighty inquiry, and I desire to treat it most solemnly. O for divine guidance in so doing! That hundreds have missed their way, and stumbled against a pulpit, is sorrowfully evident from the fruitless ministries and decaying churches which surround us. It is a fearful calamity to a man to miss his calling; and to the church upon whom he imposes himself, his mistake involves an affliction of the most grievous kind. It would be a curious and painful subject for reflection—the frequency with which men in the possession of reason mistake the end of their existence, and aim at objects which they were never intended to pursue.

When I think upon the all but infinite mischief which may result from a mistake as to our vocation for the Christian pastorate, I feel overwhelmed with fear lest any of us should be slack in examining our credentials. I had rather that we stood too much in doubt, and examined too frequently, than that we should become cumberers of the ground.

There are not lacking many exact methods by which a man may test his call to the ministry if he earnestly desires to do so. It is imperative upon him not to enter the ministry until he has made solemn quest and trial of himself as to this point. His own personal salvation being secure, he must investigate as to the further matter of his call to office. The first is vital to himself as a Christian, the second equally vital to him as a pastor. As well be a professor without conversion, as a pastor without calling. In both cases there is a name and nothing more.

1. The first sign of the heavenly calling is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work. In order to a true call to the ministry there must be an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling to others what God has done to our own souls; what if I call it a kind of instinct, such as birds have for rearing their young when the season is come; when the mother-bird would sooner die than leave her nest.

It was said of Alleine by one who knew him intimately, that "he was infinitely and insatiably greedy for the conversion of souls." When he might have had a fellowship at his university, he preferred a chaplaincy, because he was "inspired with an impatience to be occupied in direct ministerial work."

"Do not enter the ministry if you can help it," was the deeply sage advice of a divine to one who sought his judgment. If any student in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of Heaven and earth let him go his way—he is not the man in whom dwells the Spirit of God in its fullness, for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants.

If on the other hand, you can say that for all the wealth of both the Indies you could not and dare not espouse any other calling so as to be put aside from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, then, depend upon it, if other things be equally satisfactory, you have the signs of this apostleship. We must feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel. The word of God must be unto us as fire in our bones; otherwise, if we undertake the ministry, we shall be unhappy in it, shall be unable to bear the self-denials incident to it, and shall be of little service to those among whom we minister. I speak of self-denials, and well I may; for the true pastor's work is full of them, and without a love to his calling he will soon succumb, and either leave the drudgery, or move on in discontent, burdened with a monotony as tiresome as that of a blind horse in a mill.

"There is a comfort in the strength of love;
Twill make a thing endurable which else
Would break the heart."

Girt with that love, you will be undaunted; divested of that more than magic-belt of irresistible vocation, you will pine away in wretchedness.

This desire must be a thoughtful one. It should not be a sudden impulse unattended by anxious consideration. It should be the outgrowth of our heart in its best moments, the object of our reverent aspirations, the subject of our most fervent prayers. It must continue with us when tempting offers of wealth and comfort come into conflict with it, and remain as a calm, clear-headed resolve after everything has been estimated at its right figure, and the cost thoroughly counted.

When living as a child at my grandfather's in the country, I saw a company of huntsmen in their red coats riding through his fields after a fox. I was delighted! My little heart was excited; I was ready to follow the hounds over hedge and ditch. I have always felt a natural taste for that sort of business, and, as a child, when asked what I would be, I usually said I was going to be a huntsman. A fine profession, truly!

Many young men have the same idea of being parsons as I had of being a huntsman—a mere childish notion that they would like the coat and the horn-blowing; the honor, the respect, the ease; and they are probably even fools enough to think, the riches of the ministry. (Ignorant beings they must be if they look for wealth in connection with the Baptist ministry.) The fascination of the preacher's office is very great to weak minds, and hence I earnestly caution all young men not to mistake whim for inspiration, and a childish preference for a call of the Holy Spirit.

Mark well, that the desire I have spoken of must be thoroughly unselfish. If a man can detect, after the most earnest self-examination, any other motive than the glory of God and the good of souls in his seeking the pastorate, he had better turn aside from it at once; for the Lord will abhor the bringing of buyers and sellers into His temple. The introduction of anything mercenary, even in the smallest degree, will be like the fly in the pot of ointment, and will spoil it all.

This desire should be one which continues with us, a passion which bears the test of trial, a longing from which it is quite impossible for us to escape, though we may have tried to do so; a desire, in fact, which grows more intense by the lapse of years, until it becomes a yearning, a pining, a famishing to proclaim the Word. This intense desire is so noble and beautiful a thing, that whenever I perceive it glowing in any young man's bosom, I am always slow to discourage him, even though I may have my doubts as to his abilities. It may be needful, for reasons to be given you further on, to repress the flame, but it should always be reluctantly and wisely done. I have such a profound respect for this "fire in the bones," that if I did not feel it myself, I must leave the ministry at once. If you do not feel the consecrated glow, I beseech you return to your homes and serve God in your proper spheres; but if assuredly the coals of juniper blaze within, do not stifle them, unless, indeed, other considerations of great importance should prove to you that the desire is not a fire of heavenly origin.

2. In the second place, combined with the earnest desire to become a pastor, there must be aptness to teach and some measure of the other qualities needful for the office of a public instructor. A man to prove his call must make a successful trial of these. I do not claim that the first time a man rises to speak he must preach as well as Robert Hall did in his later days. If he preaches no worse than that great man did at the first, he must not be condemned. You are aware that Robert Hall broke down altogether three times, and cried, "If this does not humble me, nothing will!"

Some of the noblest speakers were not in their early days the most fluent. Even Cicero at first suffered from a weak voice and a difficulty of utterance. Still, a man must not consider that he is called to preach until he has proved that he can speak. God certainly has not created behemoth to fly; and should leviathan have a strong desire to ascend with the lark, it would evidently be an unwise aspiration, since he is not furnished with wings. If a man is called to preach, he will be endowed with a degree of speaking ability, which he will cultivate and increase. If the gift of utterance is not there in a measure at the first, it is not likely that it will ever be developed.

I have heard of a gentleman who had a most intense desire to preach, and pressed his suit upon his minister, until after a multitude of rebuffs he obtained permission to preach a trial sermon. That opportunity was the end of his importunity, for upon announcing his text he found himself bereft of every idea but one, which he delivered feelingly, and then descended the rostrum. "My brethren," said he, "if any of you think it an easy thing to preach, I advise you to come up here and have all the conceit taken out of you!"

The trial of your powers will go far to reveal to you your deficiency, if you have not the needed ability. I know of nothing better. We must give ourselves a fair trial in this matter, or we cannot assuredly know whether God has called us or not; and during the probation we must often ask ourselves whether, upon the whole, we can hope to edify others with such discourses.

We must, however, do much more than put it to our own conscience and judgment, for we are poor judges of ourselves. A certain

class of brethren have a great facility for discovering that they have been very wonderfully and divinely helped in their declamations; I would envy them their glorious liberty and self-delight if there were any ground for it; for alas! I very frequently have to bemoan and mourn over my non-success and shortcomings as a speaker.

There is not much dependence to be placed upon our own opinion, but much may be learned from judicious, spiritual-minded people. It is by no means a law which ought to bind all people, but still it is a good old custom in many of our country churches for the young man who aspires to the ministry to preach before the church. It can hardly ever be a very pleasant ordeal for the youthful aspirant, and, in many cases, it will scarcely be a very edifying exercise for the people; but still it may prove a most beneficial piece of discipline, and save the public exposure of rampant ignorance. The church book at Arnsby contains the following entry:

A short account of the Call of Robert Hall, Junior, to the work of the Ministry, by the Church at Arnsby, August 13th, 1780.

"The said Robert Hall was born at Arnsby, May 2nd, 1764; and was, even from his childhood, not only serious, and given to secret prayer before he could speak plainly, but was always wholly inclined to the work of the ministry. He began to compose hymns before he was quite seven years old, and therein revealed marks of piety, deep thought, and genius. Between eight and nine years he wrote several hymns, which were much admired by many, one of which was printed in the Gospel Magazine about that time. He wrote his thoughts on various religious subjects, and select portions of Scripture. He was likewise possessed of an intense inclination for learning, and made such progress that the country master under whom he was could not instruct him any further. He was then sent to Northampton boarding school, under the care of the Rev. John Ryland, where he continued about a year and a half, and made great progress in Latin and Greek. In October, 1778, he went to the Academy at Bristol, under the care of the Rev. Mr. Evans; and on August 13th, 1780, was sent out to the ministry by this church, being sixteen years and three months old. The manner in which the church obtained satisfaction with his abilities for the great work, was his speaking in his turn at conference meetings from various portions of Scripture; in which, and in prayer, he had borne a part for upwards of four years before; and having when at home, at their request, frequently preached on Lord's-day mornings, to their great satisfaction. They therefore earnestly and unanimously requested his being in a solemn manner set apart to public ministry. Accordingly, on the day aforesaid, he was examined by his father before the church, respecting his inclination, motives, and end, in reference to the ministry, and was likewise desired to make a declaration of his religious sentiments. All which being done, to the entire satisfaction of the church, they therefore set him apart by lifting up their right hands, and by solemn prayer. His father then delivered a discourse to him from 2 Timothy 2:1, 'You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' Being thus sent forth, he preached in the afternoon from 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8. 'May the Lord bless him, and grant him great success!'"

Considerable weight is to be given to the judgment of men and women who live close to God, and in most instances their verdict will not be a mistaken one. Yet this appeal is not final nor infallible, and is only to be estimated in proportion to the intelligence and piety of those consulted. I remember well how earnestly I was dissuaded from preaching by as godly a Christian matron as ever breathed; the value of her opinion I endeavored to estimate with candor and patience—but it was outweighed by the judgment of people of wider experience. Young men in doubt will do well to take with them their wisest friends when next they go out to the country chapel or village meeting-room and try to deliver the Word.

I have noted—and our venerable friend, Mr. Rogers, has observed the same—that you, gentlemen, students, as a body, in your judgment of one another, are seldom if ever wrong. There has hardly ever been an instance, take the whole house through, where the general opinion of the entire college concerning a brother has been erroneous. Men are not quite so unable to form an opinion of each other as they are sometimes supposed to be. Meeting as you do in class, in prayer-meeting, in conversation, and in various religious engagements, you gauge each other; and a wise man will be slow to set aside the verdict of the whole house.

I would not complete this point if I did not add that mere ability to edify, and aptness to teach, is not enough; there must be other talents to complete the pastoral character. Sound judgment and solid experience must instruct you. Gentle manners and loving affections must sway you. Firmness and courage must be manifest; and tenderness and sympathy must not be lacking. Gifts administrative in ruling well will be as requisite as gifts instructive in teaching well. You must be fitted to lead, prepared to endure, and able to persevere. In grace, you should be head and shoulders above the rest of the people, able to be their father and counselor. Read carefully the qualifications of a pastor, given in 1 Timothy 3:2-7, and in Titus 1:6-9. If such gifts and graces are not in you and abound, it may be possible for you to succeed as an evangelist, but as a pastor you will be of no account.

3. In order further to prove a man's call, after, a little exercise of his gifts, such as I have already spoken of, he must see a measure of conversion-work going on under his efforts, or he may conclude that he has made a mistake, and, therefore, may go back by the best way he can. It is not to be expected that upon the first or even twentieth effort in public we shall be apprized of success; and a man may even give himself a life trial of preaching if he feels called to do so; but it seems to me, that as a man to be set apart to the ministry, his commission is without seals until souls are won by his instrumentality to the knowledge of Jesus. As a worker, he is to work on whether he succeeds or not, but as a minister he cannot be sure of his vocation until results are apparent.

How my heart leaped for joy when I heard tidings of my first convert! I could never be satisfied with a full congregation, and the kind

expressions of friends. I longed to hear that hearts had been broken, that tears had been seen streaming from the eyes of penitents. How did I rejoice, as one that finds great spoil, over one poor laborer's wife who confessed that she felt the guilt of sin, and had found the Savior under my discourse on Sunday afternoon. I have the cottage in which she lived in my eye now; believe me, it always appears picturesque. I remember well her being received into the church, and her dying, and her going home to Heaven. She was the first seal to my ministry, and, I can assure you, a very precious one indeed. No mother was ever more full of happiness at the sight of her first-born son. Then could I have sung the song of the Virgin Mary, for my soul did magnify the Lord for remembering my low estate, and giving me the great honor to do a work for which all generations should call me blessed, for so I counted the conversion of one soul.

There must be some measure of conversion-work in your Christian labors before you can believe that preaching is to be your life-work. Remember the Lord's words by the prophet Jeremiah; they are very much to the point, and should alarm all fruitless preachers. "I did not send these prophets—yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them—yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds." Jeremiah 23:21, 22.

It is a marvel to me how men continue at ease in preaching year after year without conversions. Have they no compassion for others? no sense of responsibility upon themselves? Dare they, by a vain misrepresentation of divine sovereignty, cast the blame on their Master? Or is it their belief that Paul plants and Apollos waters, and that God gives no increase? Vain are their talents, their philosophy, their rhetoric, and even their orthodoxy, without the signs following. How are they sent of God who bring no men to God? Prophets whose words are powerless, sowers whose seed all withers, fishers who take no fish, soldiers who give no wounds—are these God's men? Surely it were better to be a mud-raker, or a chimney-sweep, than to stand in the ministry as an utterly barren tree!

The meanest occupation confers some benefit upon mankind, but the wretched man who occupies a pulpit and never glorifies his God by conversions is a blank, a blot, an eyesore, a mischief. He is not worth the salt he eats, much less his bread; and if he writes to newspapers to complain of the smallness of his salary, his conscience, if he has any, might well reply, "And what you have, is undeserved!"

Times of drought there may be; ay, and years of leanness may consume the former years of usefulness, but still there will be fruit in the main, and fruit to the glory of God; and meanwhile the transient barrenness will fill the soul with unutterable anguish. Brethren, if the Lord gives you no zeal for souls, keep to the lapstone or the trowel, but avoid the pulpit as you value your heart's peace and your future salvation.

4. A step beyond all this is, however, needful in our inquiry. The will of the Lord concerning pastors is made known through the prayerful judgment of His church. It is needful as a proof of your vocation that your preaching should be acceptable to the people of God. God usually opens doors of utterance for those whom He calls to speak His name. Impatience would push open or break down the door, but faith waits upon the Lord, and in due season her opportunity is awarded her. When the opportunity comes, then comes our trial. Standing up to preach, our spirit will be judged by the assembly, and if it be condemned, or if, as a general rule, the church is not edified, the conclusion may not be disputed, that we are not sent of God.

The signs and marks of a true pastor are laid down in the Word for the guidance of the church; and if in following such guidance the brethren see not in us the qualifications, and do not elect us to office, it is plain enough that however well we may evangelize, the office of the pastor is not for us.

Churches are not all wise, neither do they all judge in the power of the Holy Spirit, but many of them judge after the flesh; yet I had sooner accept the opinion of a company of the Lord's people than my own upon so personal a subject as my own gifts and graces. At any rate, whether you value the verdict of the church or not, one thing is certain, that none of you can be pastors without the loving consent of the flock; and therefore this will be to you a practical indicator if not a correct one. If your call from the Lord is a real one, then you will not long be silent. As surely as the man needs his hour, so surely the hour needs its man.

The church of God is always urgently in need of living ministers; to her a man is always more precious than the gold of Ophir. Formal officials lack and suffer hunger, but the anointed of the Lord need never be without a charge, for there are quick ears which will know them by their speech, and ready hearts to welcome them to their appointed place. Be fit for your work, and you will never be out of it. Do not run about inviting yourselves to preach here and there; be more concerned about your ability than your opportunity, and more earnest about your walk with God, than about either. The sheep will know the God-sent shepherd; the porter of the fold will open to you, and the flock will know your voice.

At the time of my first delivery of this lecture, I had not read John Newton's admirable letter to a friend on this subject; it so nearly tallies with my own thoughts, that at the risk of being thought to be a copyist, which I certainly am not in this instance, I will read you the letter:

"Your case reminds me of my own; my first desires towards the ministry were attended with great uncertainties and difficulties, and the perplexity of my own mind was heightened by the various and opposite judgments of my friends. The advice I have to offer is the result of painful experience and exercise, and for this reason, perhaps, may not be unacceptable to you. I pray our gracious Lord to make it useful.

"I was long distressed, as you are, about what was or was not a proper call to the ministry. It now seems to me an easy point to solve; but, perhaps, it will not be so to you, until the Lord shall make it clear to yourself in your own case. I have not room to say so much as I could. In brief, I think it principally includes three things:

"1. A warm and earnest desire to be employed in this service. I apprehend the man who is once moved by the Spirit of God to this work, will prefer it, if attainable, to thousands of gold and silver; so that, though he is at times intimidated by a sense of its importance and difficulty, compared with his own great insufficiency (for it is to be presumed a call of this sort, if indeed from God, will be accompanied with humility and self-abasement)—yet he cannot give it up. I hold it a good rule to inquire in this point, whether the desire to preach is most fervent in our most lively and spiritual frames, and when we are most laid in the dust before the Lord. If so, it is a good sign. But if, as is sometimes the case, a person is very earnest to be a preacher to others, when he finds but little hungerings and thirstings after grace in his own soul, it is then to be feared that his zeal springs rather from a selfish principle than from the Spirit of God.

"2. Besides this affectionate desire and readiness to preach, there must in due season appear some competent sufficiency as to gifts, knowledge, and utterance. Surely, if the Lord sends a man to teach others, He will furnish him with the means. I believe many have intended well in setting up for preachers, who yet went beyond or before their call in so doing. The main difference between a minister and a private Christian, seems to consist in those ministerial gifts which are imparted to him, not for his own sake, but for the edification of others. But then I say these are to appear in due season; they are not to be expected instantaneously, but gradually, in the use of proper means. They are necessary for the discharge of the ministry, but not necessary as prerequisites to warrant our desires after it. In your case, you are young, and have time before you; therefore, I think you need not as yet perplex yourself with inquiring if you have these gifts already. It is sufficient if your desire is fixed, and you are willing, in the way of prayer and diligence, to wait upon the Lord for them; as yet you need them not.

"3. That which finally evidences a proper call, is a correspondent opening in providence, by a gradual train of circumstances pointing out the means, the time, the place, of actually entering upon the work. And until this coincidence arrives, you must not expect to be always clear from hesitation in your own mind. The principal caution on this head is, not to be too hasty in catching at first appearances. If it is the Lord's will to bring you into His ministry, He has already appointed your place and service, and though you know it not at present, you shall at a proper time. If you had the talents of an angel, you could do no good with them until His hour has come, and until He leads you to the people whom He has determined to bless by your means. It is very difficult to restrain ourselves within the bounds of prudence here, when our zeal is warm. A sense of the love of Christ upon our hearts, and a tender compassion for poor sinners, is ready to prompt us to break out too soon; but he who believes shall not make haste.

I was about five years under this constraint; sometimes I thought I must preach, though it was in the streets. I listened to everything that seemed plausible, and to many things which were not so. But the Lord graciously, and as it were insensibly, hedged up my way with thorns; otherwise, if I had been left to my own spirit, I would have put it quite out of my power to have been brought into such a sphere of usefulness, as He in His good time has been pleased to lead me to. And I can now see clearly, that at the time I would first have gone out, though my intention was, I hope, good in the main—yet I overrated myself, and had not that spiritual judgment and experience which are requisite for so great a service."

Thus much may suffice, but the same subject will be before you if I detail a little of my experience in dealing with aspirants for the ministry. I have constantly to form an opinion as to the advisability of aiding certain men in their attempts to become pastors. This is a most responsible duty, and one which requires no ordinary care. Of course, I do not set myself up to judge whether a man shall enter the ministry or not, but my examination merely aims at answering the question whether this institution shall help him, or leave him to his own resources.

Certain of our charitable neighbors accuse us of having "a parson manufactory" here, but the charge is not true at all. We never tried to make a minister, and would fail if we did; we receive none into the College but those who profess to be ministers already. It would be nearer the truth if they called me a parson killer, for a goodly number of beginners have received their quietus from me; and I have the fullest ease of conscience in reflecting upon what I have so done.

It has always been a hard task for me to discourage a hopeful young brother who has applied for admission to the Pastor's College. My heart has always leaned to the kindest side, but duty to the churches has compelled me to judge with severe discrimination. After hearing what the candidate has had to say, having read his testimonials and seen his replies to questions, when I have felt convinced that the Lord had not called him, I have been obliged to tell him so. Certain of the cases are types of all.

Young brethren apply who earnestly desire to enter the ministry, but it is painfully apparent that their main motive is an ambitious desire to shine among men. These men are from a common point of view to be commended for aspiring, but then the pulpit is never to be the ladder by which ambition is to climb. Had such men entered the army they would never have been satisfied until they had reached the front rank, for they are determined to push their way up—all very laudable and very proper so far; but they have embraced the idea that if they entered the ministry, they would be greatly distinguished. They have felt the buddings of genius, and have regarded themselves as greater than ordinary people, and, therefore, they have looked upon the ministry as a platform upon which to display their supposed abilities.

Whenever this has been visible I have felt bound to refuse the man; believing that such spirits always come to nothing if they enter the Lord's service. We find that we have nothing whereof to glory, and if we had, the very worst place in which to hang it out would be a pulpit; for there we are brought daily to feel our own insignificance and nothingness.

Men who since conversion have betrayed great feebleness of mind and are readily led to embrace strange doctrines, or to fall into evil company and gross sin—I never can find it in my heart to encourage to enter the ministry, let their professions be what they may. Let them, if truly penitent, keep in the rear ranks. Unstable as water, they will not excel.

So, too, those who cannot endure hardness, but are of the kid-gloved order, I refer elsewhere. We want soldiers, not fops. We want earnest laborers, not genteel loiterers. Men who have done nothing up to their time of application to the college, are told to earn their spurs before they are publicly dubbed as knights. Fervent lovers of souls do not wait until they are trained—they serve their Lord at once.

Certain good men appeal to me who are distinguished by enormous vehemence and zeal, and a conspicuous absence of brains; brethren who would talk forever and ever upon nothing—who would stamp and thump the Bible, and get nothing out of it all; earnest, awfully earnest, mountains in labor of the most painful kind; but nothing comes of it all. There are zealots abroad who are not capable of conceiving or uttering five consecutive thoughts, whose capacity is most narrow and their conceit most broad, and these can hammer, and bawl, and rave, and tear, and rage, but the noise all arises from the hollowness of the drum. I conceive that these brethren will do quite as well without education as with it, and therefore I have usually declined their applications.

Another exceedingly large class of men seek the pulpit, they know not why. They cannot teach and will not learn, and yet must be ministers. Like the man who slept on Parnassus, and ever after imagined himself a poet, they have had impudence enough once to thrust a sermon upon an audience, and now nothing will do for them but preaching. They are so hasty to leave off sewing garments, that they will make a rent in the church of which they are members to accomplish their design. The encounter is distasteful, and a pulpit cushion is coveted; the scales and weights they are weary of, and must needs try their hands at the balances of the sanctuary. Such men, like raging waves of the sea usually foam forth their own shame, and we are happy when we bid them adieu.

Physical infirmities raise a question about the call of some excellent men. I would not judge men by their features, but their general physique is no small criterion. That narrow chest does not indicate a man formed for public speech. You may think it odd, but still I feel very well assured, that when a man has a contracted chest, with no distance between his shoulders, the all-wise Creator did not intend him habitually to preach. If he had meant him to speak he would have given him in some measure breadth of chest, sufficient to yield a reasonable amount of lung force. When the Lord means a creature to run, He gives it nimble legs; and if He means another creature to preach, He will give it suitable lungs. A brother who has to pause in the middle of a sentence and work his air-pump, should ask himself whether there is not some other occupation for which he is better adapted. A man who can scarcely get through a sentence without pain, can hardly be called to "Cry aloud and spare not!" There may be exceptions, but is there not weight in the general rule? Brethren with defective mouths and imperfect articulation are not usually called to preach the gospel. The same applies to brethren with no palate, or an imperfect one.

Application was received a short time ago from a young man who had a sort of rotary action of his jaw of the most painful sort to the beholder. His pastor commended him as a very holy young man, who had been the means of bringing some to Christ, and he expressed the hope that I would receive him, but I could not see the propriety of it. I could not have looked at him while preaching without laughter, if all the gold of Tarshish had been my reward; and in all probability nine out of ten of his hearers would have been more sensitive than myself. A man with a big tongue which filled up his mouth and caused indistinctness, another without teeth, another who stammered, another who could not pronounce all the alphabet—I have had the pain of declining on the ground that God had not given them those physical appliances, which are as the prayer-book would put it, "generally necessary."

One brother I have encountered—one did I say? I have met ten, twenty, a hundred brethren, who have pleaded that they were sure, quite sure that they were called to the ministry—they were quite certain of it, because they had failed in everything else. This is a sort of model story: "Sir, I was put into a lawyer's office, but I never could bear the confinement, and I could not feel at home in studying law. Providence clearly stopped up my road, for I lost my situation."

"And what did you do then?"

"Why sir, I was induced to open a grocer's shop."

"And did you prosper?"

"Well, I do not think, Sir, I was ever meant for trade, and the Lord seemed quite to shut my way up there, for I failed and was in great difficulties. Since then I have done a little in life-insurance agency, and tried to get up a school, besides selling tea; but my path is hedged up, and something within me makes me feel that I ought to be a minister."

My answer generally is, "Yes, I see; you have failed in everything else, and therefore you think the Lord has especially endowed you for His service. But I fear you have forgotten that the ministry needs the very best of men, and not those who cannot do anything else."

A man who would succeed as a preacher would probably do right well either as a grocer, or a lawyer, or anything else. A really valuable minister would have excelled at anything. There is scarcely anything impossible to a man who can keep a congregation together for years, and be the means of edifying them for hundreds of consecutive Sabbaths; he must be possessed of some abilities, and be by no means a fool or never-do-well. Jesus Christ deserves the best men to preach His cross, and not the empty-headed and the shiftless.

One young gentleman with whose presence I was once honored, has left on my mind the photograph of his exquisite self. That same face of his looked like the title-page to a whole volume of conceit and deceit. He sent word into my vestry one Sabbath morning that he must see me at once. His audacity admitted him; and when he was before me he said, "Sir, I want to enter your College, and would like to enter it at once."

"Well, Sir," said I, "I fear we have no room for you at present, but your case shall be considered."

"But mine is a very remarkable case, Sir; you have probably never received such an application as mine before."

"Very good, we'll see about it; the secretary will give you one of the application papers, and you can see me on Monday."

He came on the Monday bringing with him the questions, answered in a most extraordinary manner. As to books, he claimed to have read all ancient and modern literature, and after giving an immense list he added, "this is but a selection; I have read most extensively in all departments."

As to his preaching, he could produce the highest testimonials, but hardly thought they would be needed, as a personal interview would convince me of his ability at once. His surprise was great when I said, "Sir, I am obliged to tell you that I cannot receive you."

"Why not, Sir?"

"I will tell you plainly. You are so dreadfully clever that I could not insult you by receiving you into our College, where we have none but rather ordinary men. The president, tutors, and students, are all men of moderate attainments, and you would have to condescend too much in coming among us."

He looked at me very severely, and said with dignity, "Do you mean to say, that because I have an unusual genius, and have produced in myself a gigantic mind such as is rarely seen, I am refused admittance into your College?"

"Yes," I replied, as calmly as I could, considering the overpowering awe which his genius inspired, "for that very reason."

"Then, Sir, you ought to allow me a trial of my preaching abilities; select me any text you like, or suggest any subject you please, and here in this very room I will speak upon it, or preach upon it without deliberation, and you will be surprised."

"No, thank you, I would rather not have the trouble of listening to you."

"Trouble, Sir! I assure you it would be the greatest possible pleasure you could have."

I said it might be, but I felt myself unworthy of the privilege, and so bade him a long farewell. The gentleman was unknown to me at the time, but he has since landed in the police court.

We have occasionally had applications at which, perhaps, you would be amazed, from men who are evidently fluent enough, and who answer all our questions very well, except those upon their doctrinal views, to which repeatedly we have had this answer: "Mr. So-and-so is prepared to receive the doctrines of the College whatever they may be!"

In all such cases we never deliberate a moment; the instantaneous negative is given. I mention it, because it illustrates our conviction that men are not called to the ministry who have no knowledge and no definite belief. When young fellows say that they have not made up their minds upon theology, they ought to go back to the Sunday-school until they have. For a man to come

shuffling into a College, pretending that he holds his mind open to any form of doctrine, and that he is eminently receptive, but has not settled in his mind such things as whether God has an election of grace, or whether he loves his people to the end—seems to me to be a perfect monstrosity.

"Not a novice," says the apostle; yet a man who has not made up his mind on such points as these, is confessedly and egregiously "a novice," and ought to be relegated to the catechism-class until he has learned the first truths of the gospel.

After all, gentlemen, we shall have to prove our call by the practical proof of our ministry in after life, and it will be a lamentable thing for us to start in our course without due examination, for if so, we may have to leave it in disgrace.

On the whole, experience is our surest test, and if God upholds us from year to year, and gives us his blessing, we need make no other trial of our vocation. Our moral and spiritual fitnesses will be tried by the labor of our ministry, and this is the most trustworthy of all tests.

From someone or other I heard in conversation of a plan adopted by Matthew Wilks, for examining a young man who wanted to be a missionary; the drift, if not the detail of the test, commends itself to my judgment though not to my taste.

The young man desired to go to India as a missionary in connection with the London Missionary Society. Mr. Wilks was appointed to consider his fitness for such a post. He wrote to the young man, and told him to call upon him at six o'clock the next morning. The brother lived many miles off, but he was at the house at six o'clock punctually. Mr. Wilks did not, however, enter the room until hours after. The brother waited wonderingly, but patiently. At last, Mr. Wilks arrived, and addressed the candidate thus, in his usual nasal tones, "Well, young man, so you want to be a missionary?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"Yes, Sir, I hope I do."

"And have you had any education?"

"Yes, Sir, a little."

"Well, now, we'll try you; can you spell 'cat'?" The young man looked confused, and hardly knew how to answer so preposterous a question. His mind evidently halted between indignation and submission, but in a moment he replied steadily, "C, A, T, cat."

"Very good," said Mr. Wilks; "now can you spell 'dog'?"

Our young martyr hesitated, but Mr. Wilks said in his coolest manner, "Oh, never mind; don't be bashful; you spelt the other word so well that I should think you will be able to spell this: high as the attainment is, it is not so elevated but what you might do it without blushing."

The youthful Job replied, "D, O, G, dog."

"Well, that is right; I see you will do in your spelling, and now for your arithmetic; how many are twice two?" It is a wonder that Mr. Wilks did not receive "twice two" after the fashion of muscular Christianity, but the patient youth gave the right reply and was dismissed. Matthew Wilks at the committee meeting said, "I cordially recommend that young man; his testimonials and character I have duly examined, and besides that, I have given him a rare personal trial such as few could bear. I tried his self-denial, he was up in the morning early. I tried his temper, and I tried his humility. He can spell 'cat' and 'dog,' and can tell that 'twice two make four,' and he will do for a missionary exceedingly well."

Now, what the old gentleman is thus said to have done with exceedingly bad taste, we may with much propriety do with ourselves. We must try whether we can endure brow-beating, weariness, slander, jeering, and hardship; and whether we can be treated as the scum of the earth, for Christ's sake. If we can endure all these, we have some of those points which indicate the possession of the rare qualities which should meet in a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I gravely question whether some of us will find our vessels, when far out at sea, to be quite so seaworthy as we think them. O my brethren, make sure work of it while you are yet in this retreat—and diligently labor to fit yourselves for your high calling. You will have trials enough, and woe to you if you do not go forth armed from head to foot with armor of proof. You will have to run with horsemen, let not the footmen weary you while in your preliminary studies. The devil is abroad, and with him are many. Prove your own selves, and may the Lord prepare you for the crucible and the furnace which assuredly await you. Your tribulation may not in all respects be so severe as that of Paul and his companions, but you must be ready for a like ordeal.

Let me read you his memorable words, and let me entreat you to pray, while you hear them, that the Holy Spirit may strengthen you

for all that lies before you. "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings. By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love sincere, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report. As deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful—yet always rejoicing; as poor—yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

3 The Preacher's Private Prayer

Of course the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer. He prays as an ordinary Christian, or else he were a hypocrite. He prays more than ordinary Christians, or else he were disqualified for the office which he has undertaken. "It would be wholly monstrous," says Bernard, "for a man to be highest in office and lowest in soul."

Over all his other relationships the pre-eminence of the pastor's responsibility casts a halo, and if true to his Master, he becomes distinguished for his prayerfulness in them all. As a citizen, his country has the advantage of his intercession. As a neighbor those under his shadow are remembered in supplication. He prays as a husband and as a father; he strives to make his family devotions a model for his flock; and if the fire on the altar of God should burn low anywhere else, it is well tended in the house of the Lord's chosen servant—for he takes care that the morning and evening sacrifice shall sanctify his dwelling.

But there are some of his prayers which concern his office, and of those our plan in these lectures leads us to speak most. He offers peculiar supplications as a minister, and he draws near to God in this respect, over and above all his approaches in his other relationships.

I take it that as a minister, he is always praying. Whenever his mind turns to his work, whether he is in it or out of it, he ejaculates a petition, sending up his holy desires as well-directed arrows to the skies. He is not always in the act of prayer, but he lives in the spirit of it. If his heart is in his work, he cannot eat or drink, or take recreation, or go to his bed, or rise in the morning, without evermore feeling a fervency of desire, a weight of anxiety, and a simplicity of dependence upon God; thus, in one form or other he continues in prayer.

If there is any man under Heaven, who is compelled to carry out the precept, "Pray without ceasing," surely it is the Christian minister. He has peculiar temptations, special trials, singular difficulties, and remarkable duties. He has to deal with God in solemn relationships, and with men in mysterious interests. He therefore needs much more grace than common men, and as he knows this, he is led constantly to cry to the strong for strength, and say, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help."

Alleine once wrote to a dear friend, "Though I am apt to be unsettled and quickly set off the hinges—yet, methinks, I am like a bird out of the nest, I am never quiet until I am in my old way of communion with God. I am like the needle in the compass, that is restless until it be turned towards the pole. I can say, through grace, with the church, 'With my soul have I desired you in the night, and with my spirit within me have I sought you early.' My heart is early and late with God; 'tis the business and delight of my life to seek him."

Such must be the even tenor of your way, O men of God. If you as ministers are not very prayerful, you are much to be pitied. If, in the future, you shall be called to sustain pastorates, large or small, if you become lax in secret devotion, not only will you need to be pitied, but your people also; and, in addition to that, you shall be blamed, and the day comes in which you shall be ashamed and confounded.

It may scarcely be needful to commend to you the sweet uses of private devotion, and yet I cannot forbear. To you, as the ambassadors of God, the mercy-seat has a virtue beyond all estimate; the more familiar you are with the court of Heaven, the better shall you discharge your heavenly trust. Among all the formative influences which go to make up a man honored of God in the ministry, I know of none more mighty than his own familiarity with the mercy-seat.

All that a college course can do for a student is coarse and external compared with the spiritual and delicate refinement obtained by communion with God. While the unformed minister is revolving upon the wheel of preparation, prayer is the tool of the great potter by which he molds the vessel. All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. We grow, we wax mighty, we prevail in private prayer.

Your prayers will be your ablest assistants while your discourses are yet upon the anvil. While other men, like Esau, are hunting for their portion—you, by the aid of prayer, will find the savory meat near at home, and may say in truth what Jacob said so falsely, "The Lord brought it to me." If you can dip your pens into your hearts, appealing in earnestness to the Lord—you will write well. If you can

gather your matter on your knees at the gate of Heaven, you will not fail to speak well. Prayer, as a mental exercise, will bring many subjects before the mind, and so help in the selection of a topic, while as a high spiritual engagement it will cleanse your inner eye that you may see truth in the light of God. Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures until you open them with the key of prayer. How wonderfully were the books opened to Daniel when he was in supplication! How much Peter learned upon the housetop! The prayer-closet is the best study. The commentators are good instructors, but the Author Himself is far better, and prayer makes a direct appeal to Him and enlists Him in our cause. It is a great thing to pray one's self into the spirit and marrow of a text; working into it by sacred feeding thereon, even as the worm bores its way into the kernel of the nut.

Prayer supplies a lever for the uplifting of ponderous truths. One marvels how the stones of Stonehenge could have been set in their places; it is even more to be inquired after whence some men obtained such admirable knowledge of mysterious doctrines: was not prayer the potent machinery which wrought the wonder? Waiting upon God often turns darkness into light. Persevering inquiry at the sacred oracle uplifts the veil and gives grace to look into the deep things of God.

A certain Puritan divine at a debate was observed frequently to write upon the paper before him; upon others curiously seeking to read his notes, they found nothing upon the page but the words, "More light, Lord," "More light, Lord," repeated scores of times. This is a most suitable prayer for the student of the Word when preparing his discourse.

You will frequently find fresh streams of thought leaping up from the passage before you, as if the rock had been struck by Moses' rod; new veins of precious ore will be revealed to your astonished gaze as you quarry God's Word and use diligently the hammer of prayer. You will sometimes feel as if you were entirely shut up, and then suddenly a new road will open before you. He who has the key of David opens, and no man shuts.

If you have ever sailed down the Rhine, the water scenery of that majestic river will have struck you as being very like in effect to a series of lakes. Before and behind the vessel appears to be enclosed in massive walls of rock, or circles of vine-clad terraces, until on a sudden you turn a corner, and before you the rejoicing and abounding river flows onward in its strength.

So the laborious student often finds it with a text; it appears to be fast closed against you, but prayer propels your vessel, and turns its prow into fresh waters, and you behold the broad and deep stream of sacred truth flowing in its fullness, and bearing you with it. Is not this a convincing reason for abiding in supplication? Use prayer as a boring rod, and wells of living water will leap up from the Word. Who will be content to thirst, when living waters are so readily to be obtained!

The best and holiest men have ever made prayer the most important part of pulpit preparation. It is said of M'Cheyne, "Anxious to give his people on the Sabbath what had cost him somewhat, he never, without an urgent reason, went before them without much previous meditation and prayer. His principle on this subject was embodied in a remark he made to some of us who were conversing on the matter. Being asked his view of diligent preparation for the pulpit, he reminded us of Exodus 27:20, 'Beaten oil—beaten oil for the lamps of the sanctuary.' And yet his prayerfulness was greater still. Indeed, he could not neglect fellowship with God before entering the congregation. He needed to be bathed in the love of God. His ministry was so much a bringing out of views that had first sanctified his own soul, that the healthiness of his soul was absolutely needful to the vigor and power of his ministrations." "With him the commencement of all labor invariably consisted in the preparation of his own soul. The walls of his chamber were witnesses of his prayerfulness and of his tears, as well as of his cries."

Prayer will singularly assist you in the delivery of your sermon. In fact, nothing can so gloriously fit you to preach as descending fresh from the mount of communion with God to speak with men. None are so able to plead with men, as those who have been wrestling with God on their behalf.

It is said of Alleine, "He poured out his very heart in prayer and preaching. His supplications and his exhortations were so affectionate, so full of holy zeal, life and vigor, that they quite overcame his hearers; he melted over them, so that he thawed and mollified, and sometimes dissolved the hardest hearts."

There could have been none of this sacred dissolving of heart if his mind had not been previously exposed to the tropical rays of the Sun of Righteousness by private fellowship with the risen Lord.

A truly pathetic delivery, in which there is no affectation, but much affection, can only be the offspring of prayer. There is no rhetoric like that of the heart, and no school for learning it but the foot of the cross. It were better that you never learned a rule of human oratory, but were full of the power of heaven-born love, than that you should master Quintilian, Cicero, and Aristotle, and remain without the apostolic anointing.

Prayer may not make you eloquent after the human mode, but it will make you truly so, for you will speak out of the heart; and is not that the meaning of the word eloquence? It will bring fire from Heaven upon your sacrifice, and thus prove it to be accepted of the Lord.

As fresh springs of thought will frequently break up during preparation in answer to prayer, so will it be in the delivery of the sermon. Most preachers who depend upon God's Spirit will tell you that their freshest and best thoughts are not those which were premeditated, but ideas which come to them, flying as on the wings of angels; unexpected treasures brought on a sudden by celestial hands, seeds of the flowers of paradise, wafted from the mountains of myrrh.

Often when I have felt hampered, both in thought and expression, my secret groaning of heart has brought me relief, and I have enjoyed more than usual liberty. But how dare we pray in the battle, if we have never cried to the Lord while buckling on the harness! The remembrance of his wrestlings at home comforts the fettered preacher when in the pulpit; God will not desert us unless we have deserted him. You, brethren, will find that prayer will ensure you strength equal to your day.

As the tongues of fire came upon the apostles, when they sat watching and praying, even so will they come upon you. You will find yourselves, when you might perhaps have flagged, suddenly upborne, as by a seraph's power. Wheels of fire will be fastened to your chariot, which had begun to drag right heavily, and steeds angelic will be in a moment harnessed to your fiery car, until you climb the heavens like Elijah, in a rapture of flaming inspiration.

After the sermon, how would a conscientious preacher give vent to his feelings and find solace for his soul, if access to the mercy seat were denied him? Elevated to the highest pitch of excitement, how can we relieve our souls but in importunate pleadings. Or depressed by a fear of failure, how shall we be comforted but in moaning out our complaint before our God. How often have some of us tossed to and fro upon our couch half the night because of conscious shortcomings in our sermons! How frequently have we longed to rush back to the pulpit again to say over again more vehemently, what we have uttered in so cold a manner! Where could we find rest for our spirits but in confession of sin, and passionate entreaty that our infirmity or folly might in no way hinder the Spirit of God!

It is not possible in a public assembly to pour out all our heart's love to our flock. Like Joseph, the affectionate minister will seek where to weep; his emotions, however freely he may express himself, will be pent up in the pulpit, and only in private prayer can he draw up the sluices and bid them flow forth.

If we cannot prevail with men for God—we will, at least, endeavor to prevail with God for men. We cannot save them, or even persuade them to be saved, but we can at least bewail their madness and entreat the intervention of the Lord. Like Jeremiah, we can make it our resolve, "If you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and my eye shall weep sore and run down with tears."

To such pathetic appeals the Lord's heart can never be indifferent; in due time the weeping intercessor will become the rejoicing winner of souls. There is a distinct connection between importunate agonizing in prayer, and true success—even as between the travail and the birth, the sowing in tears and the reaping in joy.

"How is it that your seed comes up so soon?" said one gardener to another. "Because I steep it," was the reply. We must steep all our teachings in tears, "when none but God is near," and their growth will surprise and delight us.

Could any one wonder at Brainerd's success, when his diary contains such notes as this: "Lord's Day, April 25th—This morning spent about two hours in sacred duties, and was enabled, more than ordinarily, to agonize for immortal souls; though it was early in the morning, and the sun scarcely shone at all—yet my body was quite wet with sweat."

The secret of Luther's power lay in the same direction. Theodorus said of him: "I overheard him in prayer, but with what life and spirit did he pray! It was with so much reverence, as if he were speaking to God—yet with so much confidence as if he were speaking to his friend."

My brethren, let me beseech you to be men of prayer. Great talents you may never have, but you will do well enough without them if you abound in intercession. If you do not pray over what you have sown, God's sovereignty may possibly determine to give a blessing, but you have no right to expect it; and if it comes it will bring no comfort to your own heart.

I was reading yesterday a book by Father Faber, late of the Oratory, at Brompton, a marvelous compound of truth and error. In it he relates a legend to this effect. A certain preacher, whose sermons converted men by scores, received a revelation from Heaven that not one of the conversions was owing to his talents or eloquence, but all to the prayers of an illiterate lay-brother, who sat on the pulpit steps, pleading all the time for the success of the sermon.

It may in the all-revealing day be so with us. We may discover, after having labored long and wearily in preaching, that all the honor belongs to another builder, whose prayers were gold, silver, and precious stones—while our sermonizings being apart from prayer, were but hay and stubble.

When we are done with preaching, we shall not, if we are true ministers of God, be done with praying, because the whole church,

with many tongues, will be crying, in the language of the Macedonian, "Come over and help us" in prayer.

If you are enabled to prevail in prayer you will have many requests to offer for others who will flock to you, and beg a share in your intercessions, and so you will find yourselves commissioned with errands to the mercy-seat for friends and hearers. Such is always my lot, and I feel it a pleasure to have such requests to present before my Lord.

Never can you be short of themes for prayer, even if no one should suggest them to you. Look at your congregation. There are always sick folk among them, and many more who are soul-sick. Some are unsaved, others are seeking and cannot find. Many are desponding, and not a few believers are backsliding or mourning. There are widows' tears and orphans' sighs to be put into our bottle, and poured out before the Lord.

If you are a genuine minister of God you will stand as a priest before the Lord, spiritually wearing the ephod and the breast-plate whereon you bear the names of the children of Israel, pleading for them within the veil.

I have known brethren who have kept a list of people for whom they felt bound especially to pray, and I doubt not such a record often reminded them of what might otherwise have slipped their memory.

Nor will your people wholly engross you; the nation and the world will claim their share. The man who is mighty in prayer may be a wall of fire around his country, her guardian angel and her shield.

We have all heard how the enemies of the Protestant cause dreaded the prayers of Knox more than they feared armies of ten thousand men. The famous Welch was also a great intercessor for his country; he used to say, "he wondered how a Christian could lie in his bed all night and not rise to pray." When his wife, fearing that he would catch a cold, followed him into the room to which he had withdrawn, she heard him pleading in broken sentences, "Lord, will you not grant me Scotland?" O that we were thus wrestling at midnight, crying, "Lord, will you not grant us our hearers' souls?"

The minister who does not earnestly pray over his work, must surely be a vain and conceited man. He acts as if he thought himself sufficient of himself, and therefore needed not to appeal to God. Yet what a baseless pride to conceive that our preaching can ever be in itself so powerful that it can turn men from their sins, and bring them to God without the working of the Holy Spirit. If we are truly humble-minded we shall not venture down to the fight until the Lord Almighty has clothed us with all power, and said to us, "Go in this your might."

The preacher who neglects to pray much must be very careless about his ministry. He cannot have comprehended his calling. He cannot have computed the value of a soul, or estimated the meaning of eternity. He must be a mere official, tempted into a pulpit because the piece of bread which belongs to the priest's office is very necessary to him—or a detestable hypocrite who loves the praise of men, and cares not for the praise of God. He will surely become a mere superficial talker, best approved where grace is least valued, and a vain show most admired. He cannot be one of those who plough deep and reap abundant harvests. He is a mere loiterer, not a laborer. As a preacher he has a name to live, and is dead. He limps in his life like the lame man in the Proverbs, whose legs were not equal, for his praying is shorter than his preaching.

I am afraid that, more or less, most of us need self-examination as to this matter. If any man here should venture to say that he prays as much as he ought, as a student, I would gravely question his statement. If there be a minister, deacon, or elder present who can say that he believes he is occupied with God in prayer to the full extent to which he might be, I would be pleased to know him. I can only say, that if he can claim this excellence, he leaves me far behind, for I can make no such claim. I wish I could; and I make the confession with no small degree of shame-facedness and confusion, but I am obliged to make it. If we are not more negligent than others, this is no consolation to us; the shortcomings of others are no excuses for us.

How few of us could compare ourselves with Mr. Joseph Alleine, whose character I have mentioned before? "At the time of his health," writes his wife, "he did rise constantly at or before four of the clock, and would be much troubled if he heard blacksmiths or other craftsmen at their trades before he was at communion with God; saying to me often, 'How this noise shames me. Does not my Master deserve more than theirs?' From four until eight he spent in prayer, holy contemplation, and singing psalms, in which he much delighted and did daily practice alone, as well as in the family. Sometimes he would suspend the routine of parochial engagements, and devote whole days to these secret exercises, in order to which, he would contrive to be alone in some empty room, or else in some sequestered spot in the open valley. Here there would be much prayer and meditation on God and Heaven."

Could we read Jonathan Edwards' description of David Brainerd and not blush? "His life," says Edwards, "shows the right way to success in the works of the ministry. He sought it as a resolute soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle; or as a man that runs a race for a great prize. Animated with love to Christ and souls, how did he labor always fervently, not only in word and doctrine, in public and private, but in prayers day and night, 'wrestling with God' in secret, and 'travailing in birth,' with unutterable groans and agonies! 'until Christ were formed' in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent! How did he thirst for a blessing upon his ministry, 'and watch for souls as one that must give account!' How did he 'go forth in the strength of the Lord God, seeking and depending on the

special influence of the Spirit to assist and succeed him! And what was the happy fruit at last, after long waiting and many dark and discouraging appearances? Like a true son of Jacob, he persevered in wrestling through all the darkness of the night, until the breaking of the day."

Might not Henry Martyn's journal shame us, where we find such entries as these; "Sept. 24th. The determination with which I went to bed last night, of devoting this day to prayer and fasting, I was enabled to put into execution. In my first prayer for deliverance from worldly thoughts, depending on the power and promises of God, for fixing my soul while I prayed, I was helped to enjoy much abstinence from the world for nearly an hour. Then read the history of Abraham, to see how familiarly God had revealed himself to mortal men of old. Afterwards, in prayer for my own sanctification, my soul breathed freely and ardently after the holiness of God, and this was the best season of the day." We might perhaps more truly join with him in his lament after the first year of his ministry that "he judged he had dedicated too much time to public ministrations, and too little to private communion with God."

How much of blessing we may have missed through remissness in supplication, we can scarcely guess. None of us can know how poor we are in comparison with what we might have been if we had lived habitually nearer to God in prayer. Vain regrets and surmises are useless, but an earnest determination to amend will be far more useful. We not only ought to pray more, but we must. The fact is, the secret of all ministerial success lies in prevalence at the mercy-seat.

One bright blessing which private prayer brings down upon the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something, better understood than named. It is a dew from the Lord, a divine presence which you will recognize at once when I say it is "an unction from the holy One." What is it? I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into words what is meant by preaching with unction; yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence. Samaria, in famine, typifies a discourse without it; Jerusalem, with her feasts of fat things full of marrow, may represent a sermon enriched with it. Everyone knows what the freshness of the morning is when orient pearls abound on every blade of grass, but who can describe it, much less produce it of itself?

Such is the mystery of spiritual anointing; we know, but we cannot tell to others what it is. It is as easy as it is foolish to counterfeit it, as some do who use expressions which are meant to betoken fervent love, but oftener indicate sickly sentimentalism or mere cant. "Dear Lord!" "Sweet Jesus!" "Precious Christ!" are by them poured out wholesale, until one is nauseated. These familiarities may have been not only tolerable, but even beautiful when they first fell from a saint of God, speaking, as it were, out of the excellent glory. But when repeated flippantly they are not only intolerable, but indecent, if not profane. Some have tried to imitate unction by unnatural tones and whines; by turning up the whites of their eyes, and lifting their hands in a most ridiculous manner.

M'Cheyne's tone and rhythm one hears from Scotchmen continually: we much prefer his spirit to his mannerism. All mere mannerism without divine unction is as foul carrion of all life bereft, obnoxious, mischievous.

Certain brethren aim at inspiration through exertion and loud shouting; but it does not come. Some we have known to stop the discourse, and exclaim, "God bless you!" Others gesticulate wildly, and drive their finger nails into the palms of their hands as if they were in convulsions of celestial ardor. Bah! The whole thing smells of the dramatic theater.

The getting up of fervor in hearers by the simulation of it in the preacher is a loathsome deceit to be scorned by honest men. "To affect feeling," says Richard Cecil, "is nauseous and soon detected, but to feel is the readiest way to the hearts of others."

Unction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless; yet it is in itself priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Jesus. To the secret pleader with God, this secret is committed; upon him rests the dew of the Lord, about him is the perfume which makes glad the heart. If the anointing which we bear comes not from the Lord Almighty, then we are deceivers. And since only in prayer can we obtain this divine unction, let us continue instant, constant, fervent in supplication. Let your fleece lie on the threshing-floor of supplication until it is wet with the dew of Heaven. Go not to minister in the temple, until you have washed in the laver. Think not to be a messenger of grace to others, until you have seen the God of grace for yourselves, and had the word from his mouth.

Time spent in quiet prostration of soul before the Lord is most invigorating. David "sat before the Lord;" it is a great thing to hold these sacred sittings; the mind being receptive, like an open flower drinking in the sunbeams; or the sensitive photographic plate accepting the image before it. Quietude, which some men cannot abide, because it reveals their inward poverty, is as a palace of cedar to the wise, for along its hallowed courts the King in his beauty deigns to walk.

Priceless as the gift of utterance may be, the practice of silence in some aspects far excels it. Do you think me a Quaker? Well, be it so. Herein I follow George Fox most lovingly; for I am persuaded that we most of us think too much of speech, which after all is but the shell of thought. Quiet contemplation, still worship, unuttered rapture—these are mine when my best jewels are before me. Brethren, rob not your heart of the deep sea joys; miss not the far-down life, by forever babbling among the broken shells and foaming surges of the shore.

I would seriously recommend to you, when settled in the ministry, the celebration of extraordinary seasons of devotion. If your ordinary prayers do not keep up the freshness and vigor of your souls, and you feel that you are flagging—then get alone for a week, or even a month if possible. We have occasional holidays, why not frequent holy days? We hear of our richer brethren finding time for a journey to Jerusalem; could we not spare time for the less difficult and far more profitable journey to the heavenly city?

Isaac Ambrose, once pastor at Preston, who wrote that famous book, *Looking unto Jesus*, always set apart one month in the year for seclusion in a hut in a woods at Garstang. No wonder that he was so mighty a divine, when he could regularly spend so long a time in the mount with God.

I notice that the Romanists are accustomed to secure what they call "Retreats," where a number of priests will retire for a time into perfect quietude, to spend the whole of the time in fasting and prayer, so as to inflame their souls with ardor. We may learn from our adversaries. It would be a great thing every now and then for a band of truly spiritual brethren to spend a day or two with each other in real burning agony of prayer. Pastors alone could use much more freedom than in a mixed company. Times of humiliation and supplication for the whole church, will also benefit us if we enter into them heartily.

Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has heaven-gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central glory. I look forward to our month of special devotion, as mariners reckon upon reaching land. Even if our public work were laid aside to give us space for special prayer, it might be a great gain to our churches. A voyage to the golden rivers of fellowship and meditation, would be well repaid by a freight of sanctified feeling and elevated thought. Our silence might be better than our voices if our solitude were spent with God.

That was a grand action of old Jerome, when he laid all his pressing engagements aside to achieve a purpose to which he felt a call from Heaven. He had a large congregation, as large a one as any of us need want; but he said to his people, "Now it is of necessity that the New Testament should be translated, you must find another preacher; the translation must be made; I am bound for the wilderness, and shall not return until my task is finished." Away he went with his manuscripts, and prayed and labored, and produced a work—the Latin Vulgate—which will last as long as the world stands; on the whole a most wonderful translation of Holy Scripture.

As learning and prayerful retirement together could thus produce an immortal work, if we were sometimes to say to our people when we felt moved to do so, "Dear friends, we really must be gone for a little while to refresh our souls in solitude"—our profiting would soon be apparent, and if we did not write Latin Vulgates—yet we would do immortal work, such as would abide the fire.

LECTURE IV Our Public Prayer

It has sometimes been the boast of Episcopalians that they go to their churches to pray and worship God, but that Dissenters merely assemble to hear sermons. Our reply to this is, that albeit there may be some professors who are guilty of this evil, it is not true of the people of God among us, and these are the only people who ever will in any church really enjoy devotion. Our congregations gather together to worship God, and we assert, and feel no hesitation in so asserting, that there is as much true and acceptable prayer offered in our ordinary Nonconformist services, as in the best and most pompous performances of the Church of England.

Moreover, if the observation is meant to imply that the hearing of sermons is not worshipping God, it is founded on a gross mistake, for rightly to listen to the gospel is one of the noblest parts of the adoration of the Most High. It is a mental exercise, when rightly performed, in which all the faculties of the spiritual man are called into devotional action. Reverently hearing the word exercises our humility, instructs our faith, irradiates us with joy, inflames us with love, inspires us with zeal, and lifts us up towards Heaven.

Many a time a sermon has been a kind of Jacob's ladder upon which we have seen the angels of God ascending and descending, and the covenant God himself at the top thereof. We have often felt when God has spoken through His servants into our souls, "This is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of Heaven." We have magnified the name of the Lord and praised Him with all our heart while He has spoken to us by His Spirit which He has given unto men.

Hence there is not the wide distinction to be drawn between preaching and prayer that some would have us admit; for the one part of the service softly blends into the other, and the sermon frequently inspires the prayer and the hymn.

True preaching is an acceptable adoration of God by the manifestation of His gracious attributes: the testimony of His gospel, which pre-eminently glorifies Him; and the obedient hearing of revealed truth, are an acceptable form of worship to the Most High, and perhaps one of the most spiritual in which the human mind can be engaged.

Nevertheless, as the old Roman poet tells us, it is right to learn from our enemies, and therefore it may be possible that our liturgical opponents have pointed out to us what is in some instances a weak place in our public services. It is to be feared that our exercises

are not in every case molded into the best form, or presented in the most commendable fashion. There are meeting-houses in which the supplications are neither so devout nor so earnest as we desire. In other places the earnestness is so allied with ignorance, and the devotion so marred with rant, that no intelligent believer can enter into the service with pleasure. Praying in the Holy Spirit is not universal among us, neither do all pray with the understanding as well as with the heart. There is room for improvement, and in some quarters there is an imperative demand for it.

Let me, therefore, very earnestly caution you, beloved brethren, against spoiling your services by your prayers: make it your solemn resolve that all the engagements of the sanctuary shall be of the best kind.

Be assured that free prayer is the most scriptural, and should be the most excellent form of public supplication. If you lose faith in what you are doing, you will never do it well; settle it in your minds therefore, that before the Lord you are worshipping in a manner which is warranted by the word of God, and accepted of the Lord.

The expression, "reading prayers," to which we are now so accustomed, is not to be found in Holy Scripture, rich as it is in words for conveying religious thought; and the phrase is not there because the thing itself had no existence.

Where in the writings of the apostles do we meet with the bare idea of a liturgy? Prayer in the assemblies of the early Christians was unrestricted to any form of words. Tertullian writes, "we pray without a prompter, because from the heart." Justin Martyr describes the presiding minister as praying "according to his ability."

It would be difficult to discover when and where liturgies began; their introduction was gradual, and as we believe, co-extensive with the decline of purity in the church. The introduction of them among Nonconformists, would mark the era of our decline and fall. The subject tempts me to linger, but it is not the point in hand, and therefore I pass on, only remarking that you will find the matter of liturgies ably handled by Dr. John Owen, whom you will do well to consult.

Be it ours to prove the superiority of extempore prayer by making it more spiritual and earnest than liturgical devotion.

It is a great pity when the observation is forced from the hearer, "Our minister preaches far better than he prays." This is not after the model of our Lord; He spoke as never man spake—and as for His prayers, they so impressed His disciples that they said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

All our faculties should concentrate their energy, and the whole man should be elevated to his highest point of vigor while in public prayer, the Holy Spirit meanwhile baptizing soul and spirit with His sacred influence. But slovenly, careless, lifeless talk in the guise of prayer, made to fill up a certain space in the service, is a weariness to man, and an abomination to God. Had free prayer been universally of a higher order, a liturgy would never have been thought of, and today forms of prayer have no better apology than the feebleness of extemporaneous devotions.

The secret is that we are not so really devout at heart as we should be. Habitual communion with God must be maintained, or our public prayers will be vapid or formal. If there be no melting of the glacier high up in the ravines of the mountain, there will be no descending rivulets to cheer the plain. Private prayer is the drill ground for our more public exercises, neither can we long neglect it without being out of order when before the people.

Our prayers must never grovel, they must soar and mount. We need a heavenly frame of mind. Our addresses to the throne of grace must be solemn and humble, not flippant and loud, or formal and careless. The colloquial form of speech is out of place before the Lord; we must bow reverently and with deepest awe. We may speak boldly with God, but still He is in Heaven and we are upon earth, and we are to avoid presumption. In supplication we are peculiarly before the throne of the Infinite, and as the courtier in the king's palace puts on another deportment and another manner than that which he exhibits to his fellow courtiers, so should it be with us.

We have noticed in the churches of Holland, that as soon as the minister begins to preach every man puts his hat on, but the instant he turns to pray everybody takes his hat off: this was the custom in the older Puritanic congregations of England, and it lingered long among the Baptists; they wore their caps during those parts of the service which they conceived were not direct worship, but took them off as soon as there was a direct approach to God, either in song or in prayer. I think the practice unseemly, and the reason for it erroneous.

I have urged that the distinction between prayer and hearing is not great, and I feel sure no one would propose to return to the old custom or the opinion of which it was the index; but still there is a difference, and inasmuch as in prayer we are more directly talking with God rather than seeking the edification of our fellow men—we must put our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

Let the Lord alone be the object of your prayers. Beware of having an eye to the auditors. Beware of becoming rhetorical to please the listeners. Prayer must not be transformed into "a veiled sermon." It is little short of blasphemy to make devotion an occasion for

display. Fine prayers are generally very wicked prayers. In the presence of the Lord Almighty it ill becomes a sinner to parade the feathers and finery of eloquent speech, with the view of winning applause from his fellow mortals. Hypocrites who dare to do this have their reward, but it is one to be dreaded.

A heavy sentence of condemnation was passed upon a minister when it was flatteringly said that his prayer was the most eloquent ever offered to a Boston congregation. We may aim at exciting the yearnings and aspirations of those who hear us in prayer; but every word and thought must be Godward, and only so far touching upon the people as may be needful to bring them and their wants before the Lord. Remember the people in your prayers, but do not mold your supplications to win their esteem. Look up, look up with both eyes.

Avoid all vulgarities in prayer. I must acknowledge to having heard some, but it would be unprofitable to recount them; the more especially as they become less frequent every day. We seldom now meet with the vulgarities of prayer which were once so common in Methodist prayer-meetings, much commoner probably by report than in reality. Uneducated people must, when in earnest, pray in their own way, and their language will frequently shock the fastidious if not the devout; but for this allowance must be made, and if the spirit is evidently sincere we may forgive uncomely expressions.

I once, at a prayer-meeting, heard a poor man pray thus: "Lord, watch over these young people during the feast time, for you know, Lord, how their enemies watch for them as a cat watches for mice." Some ridiculed the expression, but it appeared to me to be natural and expressive, considering the person using it. A little gentle instruction and a hint or two will usually prevent a repetition of anything objectionable in such cases, but we, who occupy the pulpit, must be careful to be quite clear ourselves.

The biographer of that remarkable American Methodist preacher, Jacob Gruber, mentions as an instance of his ready wit, that after having heard a young Calvinistic minister violently attack his creed, he was asked to conclude with prayer, and among other petitions, prayed that the Lord would bless the young man who had been preaching, and grant him much grace, "that his heart might become as soft as his head." To say nothing of the bad taste of such public censure upon a fellow minister, every right-minded man will see that the throne of the Most High is not the place for uttering such vulgar witticisms. Most probably the young orator deserved a castigation for his offence against charity, but the older one sinned ten times more in his lack of reverence. Choice words are for the King of kings, not such as ribald tongues have defiled.

Another fault equally to be avoided in prayer is an unhallowed and sickening superabundance of endearing words. When "Dear Lord," and "Blessed Lord," and "Sweet Lord," come over and over again as vain repetitions, they are among the worst of blots. I must confess I should feel no revulsion in my mind to the words, "Dear Jesus," if they fell from the lips of a Rutherford, or a Hawker, or a Herbert. But when I hear fond and familiar expressions hackneyed by people not at all remarkable for spirituality, I am inclined to wish that they could, in some way or other, come to a better understanding of the true relation existing between man and God. The word "dear" has come from daily use to be so common, and so small, and in some cases so silly and affected a monosyllable, that interlarding one's prayers with it is not to edification.

The strongest objection exists to the constant repetition of the word "Lord," which occurs in the early prayers of young converts, and even among students. The words, "O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!" grieve us when we hear them so perpetually repeated. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain," is a great commandment, and although the law may be broken unwittingly—yet its breach is still a sin and a very solemn one. God's name is not to be a stop-gap to make up for our lack of words. Take care to use most reverently the name of the infinite Jehovah. The Jews in their sacred writings either leave a space for the word "Jehovah," or else write the word, "Adonai," because they conceive that holy name to be too sacred for common use. We need not be so superstitious, but it were well to be scrupulously reverent. A profusion of "ohs!" and other interjections may be well dispensed with; young speakers are often at fault here.

Avoid that kind of prayer which may be called—though the subject is one on which language has not given us many terms—a sort of peremptory demanding of God. It is delightful to hear a man wrestle with God, and say, "I will not let you go except you bless me," but that must be said softly, and not in a hectoring spirit, as though we could command and exact blessings from the Lord of all. Remember, it is still a man wrestling, even though permitted to wrestle with the eternal I AM. Jacob halted on his thigh after that night's holy conflict, to let him see that God is awesome, and that his prevailing power did not lie in himself. We are taught to say, "Our Father," but still it is, "Our Father who is in Heaven." Familiarity there may be, but holy familiarity; boldness, but the boldness which springs from grace and is the work of the Spirit; not the boldness of the rebel who carries a brazen front in the presence of his offended king; but the boldness of the child who fears because he loves, and loves because he fears. Never fall into a vainglorious style of impertinent address to God; he is not to be assailed as an antagonist, but entreated as our Lord and God. Humble and lowly let us be in spirit, and so let us pray.

Pray when you profess to pray, and don't talk about it. Business men say, "A place for everything and everything in its place." Preach in the sermon and pray in the prayer. Disquisitions upon our need of help in prayer are not prayer. Why do not men go at once to prayer—why stand beating about the bush; instead of saying what they ought to do and want to do, why not set to work in God's

name and do it? In downright earnestness, address yourself to intercession, and set your face towards the Lord. Plead for the supply of the great and constant needs of the church, and do not fail to urge, with devout fervor, the special requirements of the present time and audience. Let the sick, the poor, the dying, the heathen, the Jew, and all forgotten classes of people, be mentioned as they press upon your heart. Pray for your people as saints and sinners—not as if they were all saints. Mention the young and the aged; the impressed and the careless; the devout and the backsliding. Never turn to the right hand or to the left, but plough on in the furrow of real prayer.

Let your confessions of sin and your thanksgivings be truthful and to the point; and let your petitions be presented as if you believed in God and had no doubt as to the efficacy of prayer. I say this, because so many pray in such a formal manner as to lead observers to conclude that they thought it a very decent thing to pray, but, after all, a very poor and doubtful business as to any practical result. Pray as one who has tried and proved his God, and therefore comes with undoubting confidence to renew his pleadings. Remember to pray to God right through the prayer, and never fall to talking or preaching—much less, as some do, to scolding and grumbling.

As a rule, if called upon to preach, conduct the prayer yourself; and if you should be highly esteemed in the ministry, as I trust you may be, make a point, with great courtesy, but equal firmness, to resist the practice of choosing men to pray with the idea of honoring them by giving them something to do. Our public devotions ought never to be degraded into opportunities for compliment. I have heard prayer and singing now and then called "the preliminary services," as if they were but a preface to the sermon; this is rare I hope among us—if it were common it would be to our deep disgrace.

I endeavor invariably to take all the service myself for my own sake, and I think also for the people's. I do not believe that "anybody will do for the praying." No, sirs, it is my solemn conviction that the prayer is one of the most weighty, useful, and honorable parts of the service, and that it ought to be even more considered than the sermon. There must be no putting up of anybodies and nobodies to pray, and then the selection of the abler man to preach. It may happen through weakness, or upon a special occasion, that it may be a relief to the minister to have someone to offer prayer for him; but if the Lord has made you love your work you will not often or readily fulfill this part of it by proxy. If you delegate the service at all, let it be to one in whose spirituality and present preparedness you have the fullest confidence; but to pitch on a giftless brother unawares, and put him forward to get through the devotions, is shameful.

Appoint the ablest man to pray, and let the sermon be slurred sooner than the approach to Heaven. Let the Infinite Jehovah be served with our best; let prayer addressed to the Divine Majesty be carefully weighed, and presented with all the powers of an awakened heart and a spiritual understanding. He who has been by communion with God prepared to minister to the people, is usually of all men present the most fit to engage in prayer. To lay out a program which puts up another brother in his place, is to mar the harmony of the service, to rob the preacher of an exercise which would brace him for his sermon, and in many instances to suggest comparisons between one part of the service and the other which ought never to be tolerated.

If unprepared brethren are to be sent into the pulpit to do my praying for me when I am engaged to preach, I do not see why I might not be allowed to pray, and then retire to let these brethren do the sermonizing. I am not able to see any reason for depriving me of the holiest, sweetest, and most profitable exercise which my Lord has allotted me; if I may have my choice, I will sooner yield up the sermon than the prayer. Thus much I have said in order to impress upon you that you must highly esteem public prayer, and seek of the Lord for the gifts and graces necessary to its right discharge.

Those who despise all extempore prayer will probably catch at these remarks and use them against it, but I can assure them that the faults adverted to are not common among us, and are indeed almost extinct; while the scandal caused by them never was, at the worst, so great as that caused by the way in which the liturgical service is often performed. Far too often is the church service hurried through in a manner as undevout as if it were a ballad-singer's ditty. The words are parroted without the slightest appreciation of their meaning; not sometimes, but very frequently, in the places set apart for Episcopal worship, you may see the eyes of the people, and the eyes of the choristers, and the eyes of the parson himself, wandering about in all directions, while evidently from the very tone of the reading there is no feeling of sympathy with what is being read. I have been at funerals when the burial service of the church of England has been galloped through so indecorously that it has taken all the grace I had to prevent my throwing something at the creature's head. I have felt so indignant that I have not known what to do, to hear, in the presence of mourners whose hearts were bleeding, a man rattling through the service as if he were paid by the piece, and had more work to follow, and therefore desired to get it through as quickly as possible. What effect he could think he was producing, or what good result could come from words jerked forth and hurled out with vengeance and vehemence, I cannot imagine. It is really shocking to think of how that very wonderful burial service is murdered, and made into an abomination by the mode in which it is frequently read. I merely mention this because, if they criticize our prayers too severely, we can bring a formidable countercharge to silence them. Better far, however, for us to amend our own blunders, than find fault with others.

In order to make our public prayer what it should be, the first necessary is, that it must be a matter of the heart. A man must be really in earnest in supplication. It must be true prayer, and if it be such, it will, like love, cover a multitude of sins. You can pardon a

man's familiarities and his vulgarities too, when you clearly see that his inmost heart is speaking to his Maker, and that it is only the man's defects of education which create his faults, and not any moral or spiritual vices of his heart.

The pleader in public must be in earnest; for a sleepy prayer—what can be a worse preparation for a sermon? A sleepy prayer—what can make people more dislike going up to the house of God at all? Cast your whole soul into the exercise. If ever your whole manhood was engaged in anything, let it be in drawing near unto God in public. So pray, that by a divine attraction, you draw the whole congregation with you up to the throne of God. So pray, that by the power of the Holy Spirit resting on you, you express the desires and thoughts of everyone present, and stand as the one voice for the hundreds of beating hearts which are glowing with fervor before the throne of God.

Next to this, our prayers must be appropriate. I do not say go into every minute detail of the circumstances of the congregation. As I have said before, there is no need to make the public prayer a gazette of the week's events, or a register of the births, deaths, and marriages of your people—but the general movements that have taken place in the congregation should be noted by the minister's careful heart. He should bring the joys and sorrows of his people alike before the throne of grace, and ask that the divine blessing may rest upon his flock in all their movements, their exercises, engagements, and holy enterprises, and that the forgiveness of God may be extended to their shortcomings and innumerable sins.

Then, by way of negative rule, I should say, do not let your prayer be long. I think it was John Macdonald who used to say, "If you are in the spirit of prayer, do not be long, because other people will not be able to keep pace with you in such unusual spirituality; and if you are not in the spirit of prayer, do not be long, because you will then be sure to weary the listeners."

Livingstone says of Robert Bruce, of Edinburgh, "No man in his time spoke with such evidence and power of the Spirit. No man had so many seals of conversion. Yes, many of his hearers thought no man, since the apostles, spoke with such power. He was very short in prayer when others were present, but every sentence was like a strong bolt shot up to Heaven. I have heard him say that he wearied when others were long in prayer; but, being alone, he spent much time in wrestling and prayer."

A man may, on special occasions, if he be unusually moved and carried out of himself, pray for twenty minutes in the long morning prayer, but this should not often happen. My friend, Dr. Charles Brown, of Edinburgh, lays it down, as a result of his deliberate judgment, that ten minutes is the limit to which public prayer ought to be prolonged.

Our Puritan forefathers used to pray for three-quarters of an hour, or more, but then you must recollect that they did not know that they would ever have the opportunity of praying again before an assembly, and therefore, took their fill of it; and besides, people were not inclined in those days to quarrel with the length of prayers or of sermons so much as they do nowadays.

You cannot pray too long in private. We do not limit you to ten minutes there, or ten hours, or ten weeks if you like. The more you are on your knees alone the better. We are now speaking of those public prayers which come before or after the sermon, and for these ten minutes is a better limit than fifteen. Only one in a thousand would complain of you for being too short, while scores will murmur at your being wearisome in length.

"He prayed me into a good frame of mind," George Whitfield once said of a certain preacher, "and if he had stopped there, it would have been very well; but he prayed me out of it again by keeping on." The abundant long-suffering of God has been exemplified in his sparing some preachers, who have been great sinners in this direction; they have done much injury to the piety of God's people by their long-winded orations, and yet God, in his mercy, has permitted them still to officiate in the sanctuary. Alas! for those who have to listen to pastors who pray in public for five-and-twenty minutes, and then ask God to forgive their "shortcomings"!

Do not be too long, for several reasons. First, because you weary yourselves and the people. Secondly, because being too long in prayer puts your people out of heart for hearing the sermon. All those dry, dull, prolix talkifications in prayer do but blunt the attention, and the ear gets, as it were, choked up. Nobody would think of blocking up Ear-gate with mud or stones when he meant to storm the gate. No, let the portal be cleared that the battering-ram of the gospel may work upon it when the time comes to use it.

Long prayers either consist of repetitions, or else of unnecessary explanations which God does not require; or else they degenerate into downright preachings, so that there is no difference between the praying and the preaching, except that in the one the minister has his eyes shut, and in the other he keeps them open.

It is not necessary in prayer to rehearse the Westminster Assembly's Catechism. It is not necessary in prayer to relate the experience of all the people who are present, or even your own. It is not necessary in prayer to string a selection of texts of Scripture together, and quote David, and Daniel, and Job, and Paul, and Peter, and every other body, under the title of "your servant of old." It is necessary in prayer to draw near unto God, but it is riot required of you to prolong your speech until everyone is longing to hear the word "Amen"

One little hint I cannot withhold—never appear to be closing, and then start off again for another five minutes. When friends make up

their minds that you are about to conclude, they cannot with a jerk proceed again in a devout spirit. I have known men tantalize us with the hope that they were drawing to a close, and then take a fresh lease two or three times; this is most unwise and unpleasant.

Another rule is—do not use cant phrases. My brethren, have done with those vile things altogether; they have had their day, and let them die. These pieces of spiritual bombast cannot be too much reprobated. Some of them are pure inventions; others are passages taken from the Apocrypha; others are texts fathered upon Scripture, but which have been fearfully mangled since they came from the Author of the Bible.

In the Baptist Magazine for 1861, I made the following remarks upon the common vulgarities of prayer-meetings. "Cant phrases are a great evil. Who can justify such expressions as the following?

'We would not rush into your presence as the unthinking horse into the battle.' As if horses ever did think, and as if it were not better to exhibit the spirit and energy of the horse than the sluggishness and stupidity of the donkey! As the verse from which we imagine this fine sentence to be derived has more to do with sinning than with praying, we are glad that the phrase is on its last legs.

'Go from heart to heart, as oil from vessel to vessel,' is probably a quotation from the nursery romance of Ali Baba, and the Forty Thieves, but as destitute of sense, Scripture, and poetry, as ever sentence could be conceived to be. We are not aware that oil runs from one vessel to another in any very mysterious or wonderful manner; it is true it is rather slow in coming out, and is therefore an apt symbol of some people's earnestness; but surely it would be better to have the grace direct from Heaven than to have it out of another vessel—a Popish idea which the metaphor seems to insinuate, if indeed it has any meaning at all.

'Your poor unworthy dust,' an epithet generally applied to themselves by the proudest men in the congregation, and not seldom by the most moneyed and groveling, in which case the last two words are not so very inappropriate.

We have heard of a good man who, in pleading for his children and grandchildren, was so completely beclouded in the blinding influence of this expression, that he exclaimed, 'O Lord, save your dust, and your dust's dust, and your dust's dust's dust.'

When Abraham said, 'I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes,' the utterance was forcible and expressive; but in its misquoted, perverted, and abused form, the sooner it is consigned to its own element the better.

A miserable conglomeration of perversions of Scripture, uncouth similes, and ridiculous metaphors, constitute a sort of spiritual slang, the offspring of unholy ignorance, unmanly imitation, or graceless hypocrisy; they are at once a dishonor to those who constantly repeat them, and an intolerable nuisance to those whose ears are jaded with them.

Dr. Charles Brown, of Edinburgh, in an admirable address at a meeting of the New College Missionary Association, gives instances of current misquotations indigenous to Scotland, which sometimes, however, find their way across the Tweed. By his permission, I shall quote at length.

"There is what might be called an unhappy, sometimes, quite grotesque, mingling of Scripture texts. Who is not familiar with the following words addressed to God in prayer, 'You are the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, and the praises thereof! which is but a jumble of two glorious texts, each glorious taken by itself—both marred, and one altogether lost indeed, when thus combined and mingled. The one is Isaiah 57:15, Thus says the high and lofty One, that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy.' The other is Psalm 22:3, You are holy, O you that inhabits the praises of Israel.' The inhabiting of the praises of eternity, to say the least, is meager; there were no praises in the past eternity to inhabit. But what a glory is there in God's condescending to inhabit, take up his very abode, in the praises of Israel, of the ransomed church.

Then there is an example nothing less than grotesque under this head, and yet one in such frequent use that I suspect it is very generally regarded as having the sanction of Scripture. Here it is, 'We would put our hand on our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, and cry out, Unclean, unclean! God be merciful to us sinners.' This is no fewer than four texts joined, each beautiful by itself.

First, Job 40:4, 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer you? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.'

Second, Lamentations 3:29, 'He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.'

Third, Leviticus 13:45, where the leper is directed to put a covering upon his upper lip, and to cry, Unclean, unclean.

And fourth, the publican's prayer.

But how incongruous a man's first putting his hand on his mouth, then putting his mouth in the dust, and, last of all, crying out, etc.!

The only other example I give is an expression nearly universal among us, and, I suspect, almost universally thought to be in Scripture, 'In your favor is life, and your loving-kindness is better than life.' The fact is, that this also is just an unhappy combination of two passages, in which the term life is used in altogether different, and even incompatible senses, namely, Psalm 63:3, 'Your

loving-kindness is better than life,' where, evidently, life means the present temporal life.

"A second class may be described as unhappy alterations of Scripture language. Need I say that the 130th Psalm, 'Out of the depths,' etc., is one of the most precious in the whole book of the Psalms? Why must we have the words of David and of the Holy Spirit thus given in public prayer, and so constantly that our pious people come all to adopt it into their social and family prayers, 'There is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared, and plenteous redemption that you may be sought after,' or 'unto'? How precious the simple words as they stand in the Psalm (verse 4), 'There is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared' (verses 7, 8); 'With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities!' Again, in this blessed Psalm, the words of the third verse, 'If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' too seldom are left us in their naked simplicity, but must undergo the following change, 'If you were strict to mark iniquity,' etc. I remember in my old college days, we used to have it in a much more offensive shape, 'If you were strict to mark and rigorous to punish!' Another favorite change is the following, 'You are in Heaven, and we upon earth; therefore let our words be few and well ordered.' Solomon's simple and sublime utterance (full of instruction, surely, on the whole theme I am dealing with) is, 'God is in Heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.' Ecclesiastes 5:2.

For another example under this class see how Habakkuk's sublime words are tortured, 'You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on sin without abhorrence.' The words of the Holy Spirit are (Hebrews 1:13), 'You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and can not look on iniquity.' Need I say that the power of the figure, 'can not look on iniquity' is nearly lost when you add that God can look on it, only not without abhorrence?

"A third class is made up of meaningless pleonasm, vulgar, common-place redundancies of expression, in quoting from the Scriptures. One of these has become so universal, that I venture to say you seldom miss it, when the passage referred to comes up at all. 'Be in the midst of us' (or, as some prefer to express it, somewhat unfortunately, as I think, 'in our midst'), 'to bless us, and to do us good.' What additional idea is there in the last expression, 'and to do us good'? The passage referred to is Exodus 20:24, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you.' Such is the simplicity of Scripture. Our addition is, 'Bless us, and do us good.' In Daniel 4:35, we read the noble words, 'None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What do you?' The favorite change is, 'None can stay your hand from working.' 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him!' This is changed, 'Neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things.'

Constantly we hear God addressed as 'the hearer and answerer of prayer,' a mere vulgar and useless pleonasm, for the Scripture idea of God's hearing prayer is just his answering it—'O you that hear prayer, unto you shall all flesh come;' 'Hear my prayer O Lord;' 'I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications.' Whence, again, that commonplace of public prayer, 'Your consolations are neither few nor small'? The reference, I suppose, is to those words of Job, 'Are the consolations of God small with you?'

So one scarce ever hears that prayer of the seventy-fourth Psalm, 'Have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty,' without the addition, 'horrid cruelty;' nor the call to prayer in Isaiah, 'Keep not silence, and give him no rest, until he establish, and until he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth,' without the addition, 'the whole earth,' nor that appeal of the Psalmist, 'Whom have I in Heaven but you, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you,' without the addition, 'none in all the earth.'

These last may seem small matters indeed. And so they are, nor were worth finding fault with, did they occur but occasionally. But viewed as stereotyped commonplaces, weak enough in themselves, and occurring so often as to give an impression of their having Scripture authority, I humbly think they ought to be discountenanced and discarded—banished wholly from our worship.

It will, perhaps, surprise you to learn that the only Scripture authority for that favorite, and somewhat peculiar expression, about the 'wicked rolling sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue,' is the following words in the book of Job (20:12), 'Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue.'"

But enough of this. I am only sorry to have felt bound in conscience to be so long upon so unhappy a subject. I cannot, however, leave the point without urging upon you literal accuracy in all quotations from the word of God.

It ought to be a point of honor among ministers always to quote Scripture correctly. It is difficult to be always correct, and because it is difficult, it should be all the more the object of our care. In the halls of Oxford or Cambridge it would be considered almost treason or felony for a fellow to misquote Tacitus, or Virgil, or Homer. But for a preacher to misquote Paul, or Moses, or David, is a far more serious matter, and quite as worthy of the severest censure. Mark, I said a "fellow," not a freshman, and from a pastor we expect, at least, equal accuracy in his own department as from the holder of a fellowship.

You who so unwaveringly believe in the verbal-inspiration theory (to my intense satisfaction), ought never to quote at all until you can give the precise words, because, according to your own showing, by the alteration of a single word you may miss altogether

God's sense of the passage. If you cannot make extracts from Scripture correctly, why quote it at all in your petitions? Make use of an expression fresh from your own mind, and it will be quite as acceptable to God as a scriptural phrase defaced or clipped.

Vehemently strive against garblings and perversions of Scripture, and renounce forever all cant phrases, for they are the disfigurement of free prayer.

I have noticed a habit among some—I hope you have not fallen into it—of praying with their eyes open. It is unnatural, unfitting, and disgusting. Occasionally the opened eye uplifted to Heaven may be suitable and impressive, but to be gazing about while professing to address the unseen God is detestable. In the earliest ages of the church the fathers denounced this unseemly practice. Action in prayer should be very little used, if at all. It is scarcely lovely to lift and move the arm, as if in preaching. The outstretched arms however, or the clasped hands, are natural and suggestive when under strong holy excitement. The voice should accord with the matter, and should never be boisterous, or self-asserting. Humble and reverent let those tones be in which man talks with his God. Does not even nature itself teach you this? If grace does not, I despair.

With special regard to your prayers in the Sabbath services, a few sentences may be useful. In order to prevent custom and routine from being enthroned among us, it will be well to vary the order of service as much as possible. Whatever the free Spirit moves us to do, that let us do at once.

I was not until lately aware of the extent to which the control of deacons has been allowed to intrude itself upon ministers in certain benighted churches. I have always been accustomed to conduct religious services in the way I have thought most suitable and edifying, and I never have heard so much as a word of objection, although I trust I can say I live on the dearest intimacy with my officers; but a brother minister told me this morning that on one occasion he prayed in the morning service at the commencement instead of giving out a hymn, and when he retired into the vestry after service the deacons informed him that they would have no innovations.

We hitherto understood that Baptist churches are not under bondage to traditions and fixed rules as to modes of worship, and yet these poor creatures, these would-be lords, who cry out loudly enough against a liturgy, would bind their minister with rubrics made by custom. It is time that such nonsense were forever silenced. We claim to conduct service as the Holy Spirit moves us, and as we judge best. We will not be bound to sing here and pray there, but will vary the order of service to prevent monotony.

Mr. Hinton, I have heard, once preached the sermon at the commencement of the service, so that those who came late might at any rate have an opportunity to pray. And why not? Irregularities would do good, monotony works weariness. It will frequently be a most profitable thing to let the people sit quite still in profound silence for two or five minutes. Solemn silence makes noble worship.

True prayer is not the noisy sound
That clamorous lips repeat,
But the deep silence of a soul
That clasps Jehovah's feet.

Vary the order of your prayers, then, for the sake of maintaining attention, and preventing people going through the whole thing as a clock runs on until the weights are down.

Vary the length of your public prayers. Do you not think it would be much better if sometimes instead of giving three minutes to the first prayer and fifteen minutes to the second, you gave nine minutes to each? Would it not be better sometimes to be longer in the first, and not so long in the second prayer? Would not two prayers of tolerable length be better than one extremely long and one extremely short? Would it not be as well to have a hymn after reading the chapter, or a verse or two before the prayer? Why not sing four times, occasionally? Why not be content with two hymns, or only one, occasionally? Why sing after sermon? Why, on the other hand, do some never sing at the close of the service? Is a prayer after sermon always, or even often, advisable? Is it not sometimes most impressive? Would not the Holy Spirit's guidance secure us a variety at present unknown? Let us have anything so that our people do not come to regard any form of service as being appointed, and so relapse into the superstition from which they have escaped.

Vary the current of your prayers in intercession. There are many topics which require your attention: the church in its weakness, its backslidings, its sorrows, and its comforts; the outside world, the neighborhood, unconverted hearers, the young people, the nation. Do not pray for all these every time, or otherwise your prayers will be long and probably uninteresting. Whatever topic shall come uppermost to your heart, let that be uppermost in your supplications. There is a way of taking a line of prayer, if the Holy Spirit shall guide you therein, which will make the service all of a piece, and harmonize with the hymns and discourse.

It is very useful to maintain unity in the service where you can; not slavishly, but wisely, so that the effect is one. Certain brethren do not even manage to keep unity in the sermon, but wander from Britain to Japan, and bring in all imaginable subjects; but you who have attained to the preservation of unity in the sermon might go a little farther, and exhibit a degree of unity in the service, being

careful in both the hymn, and the prayer, and the chapter, to keep the same subject prominent.

Hardly commendable is the practice, common with some preachers, of rehearsing the sermon in the last prayer. It may be instructive to the audience, but that is an object altogether foreign to prayer. It is stilted, scholastic, and unsuitable; do not imitate the practice.

As you would avoid a viper, keep from all attempts to work up spurious fervor in public devotion. Do not labor to seem earnest. Pray as your heart dictates, under the leading of the Spirit of God, and if you are dull and heavy tell the Lord so. It will be no ill thing to confess your deadness, and bewail it, and cry for quickening; it will be real and acceptable prayer; but simulated ardor is a shameful form of lying. Never imitate those who are earnest. You know a good man who groans, and another whose voice grows shrill when he is carried away with zeal, but do not therefore moan or squeak in order to appear as zealous as they are. Just be natural the whole way through, and ask of God to be guided in it all.

Lastly—this is a word I utter in confidence to yourselves—prepare your prayer. You say with astonishment, "Whatever can you mean by that?" Well, I mean what some do not mean. The question was once discussed in a society of ministers, "Was it right for the minister to prepare his prayer beforehand?" It was earnestly asserted by some that it was wrong; and very properly so. It was with equal earnestness maintained by others that it was right; and they were not to be gainsaid. I believe both parties to have been right. The first brethren understood by preparing the prayer, the studying of expressions, and the putting together of a train of thought, which they all said was altogether opposed to spiritual worship, in which we ought to leave ourselves in the hand of God's Spirit to be taught of him both as to matter and words. In these remarks we altogether agree; for if a man writes his prayers and studies his petitions, then let him use a liturgy at once. But the brethren in opposition meant by preparation quite another thing, not the preparation of the head, but of the heart, which consists in the solemn consideration beforehand of the importance of prayer, meditation upon the needs of men's souls, and a remembrance of the promises which we are to plead; and thus coming before the Lord with a petition written upon the fleshy tables of the heart.

This is surely better than coming to God at random, rushing before the throne at haphazard, without a definite errand or desire. "I never am tired of praying," said one man, "because I always have a definite errand when I pray." Brethren, are your prayers of this sort? Do you strive to be in a fit frame to lead the supplications of your people? Do you order your cause in coming before the Lord?

I feel, my brethren, that we ought to prepare ourselves by private prayer for public praying. By living near to God we ought to maintain prayerfulness of spirit, and then we shall not fail in our vocal pleadings. If anything beyond this is to be tolerated, it would be the commitment to memory of the Psalms and parts of Scripture containing promises, supplications, praises, and confessions, such as may be helpful in the act of prayer.

It is said of Chrysostom, that he had learned his Bible by heart, so as to be able to repeat it at his pleasure; it is no wonder that he was called golden-mouthed. Now, in our converse with God, no speech can be more appropriate than the words of the Holy Spirit, "Do as you have said," will always prevail with the Most High. We counsel, therefore, the committing to memory of the inspired devotional exercises of the word of truth, and then your continued reading of the Scriptures will keep you always furnished with fresh supplications, which will be as ointment poured forth, filling the whole house of God with its fragrance, when you present your petitions in public before the Lord.

Seeds of prayer thus sown in the memory will yield a constant golden harvest, as the Spirit shall warm your soul with hallowed fire in the hour of congregational prayer. As David used the sword of Goliath for after victories, so may we at times employ a petition already answered, and find ourselves able to say with the son of Jesse, "There is none like unto it," as God shall yet again fulfill it in our experience.

Let your prayers be earnest, full of fire, vehemence, prevalence. I pray the Holy Spirit to instruct every student of this College so to offer public prayer, that God shall always be served of his best. Let your petitions be plain and heart-felt; and while your people may sometimes feel that the sermon was below the mark, may they also feel that the prayer compensated for all.

LECTURE 5 Sermons—their Matter

Sermons should have real teaching in them, and their doctrine should be solid, substantial, and abundant. We do not enter the pulpit to talk for talk's sake—we have instructions to convey important to the last degree, and we cannot afford to utter pretty nothings. Our range of subjects is all but boundless, and we cannot, therefore, be excused if our discourses are threadbare and devoid of substance. If we speak as ambassadors for God, we need never complain of lack of matter, for our message is full to overflowing. The entire gospel must be presented from the pulpit. The whole faith once delivered to the saints must be proclaimed by us. The truth as it is in Jesus must be instructively declared, so that the people may not merely hear, but know, the joyful sound.

We serve not at the altar of "the unknown God," but we speak to the worshipers of Him of whom it is written, "those who know Your name will put their trust in You."

To divide a sermon well may be a very useful art, but how if there is nothing to divide? A mere division maker is like an excellent carver with an empty dish before him. To be able to deliver an exordium which shall be appropriate and attractive, to be at ease in speaking with propriety during the time allotted for the discourse, and to wind up with a respectable peroration, may appear to mere religious performers to be all that is requisite.

But the true minister of Christ knows that the true value of a sermon must lie, not in its fashion and manner, but in the truth which it contains. Nothing can compensate for the absence of teaching; all the rhetoric in the world is but as chaff to the wheat, in contrast to the gospel of our salvation. However beautiful the sower's basket it is a miserable mockery if it be without seed. The grandest discourse ever delivered, is an ostentatious failure if the doctrine of the grace of God is absent from it; it sweeps over men's heads like a cloud, but it distributes no rain upon the thirsty earth; and therefore the remembrance of it to souls taught wisdom by an experience of pressing need is one of disappointment, or worse.

A man's style may be as fascinating as that of the authoress of whom one said that she should write with a crystal pen dipped in dew upon silver paper, and use for pounce the dust of a butterfly's wing; but to an audience whose souls are in instant jeopardy, what will mere elegance be but "altogether lighter than vanity"?

Horses are not to be judged by their bells or their trappings, but by limb and bone and blood. Just so, sermons, when criticized by judicious hearers, are largely measured by the amount of gospel truth and force of gospel spirit which they contain. Brethren, weigh your sermons. Do not retail them by the yard, but deal them out by the pound. Set no store by the quantity of words which you utter, but strive to be esteemed for the quality of your matter. It is foolish to be lavish in words, and niggardly in truth. He must be very destitute of wit who would be pleased to hear himself described after the manner of the world's great poet, who says, "Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice: his reasons are as two grains of wheat hidden in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day before you find them; and when you have them they are not worth the search."

Rousing appeals to the affections are excellent, but if they are not backed up by instruction they are a mere flash in the pan, powder consumed and no shot sent home. Rest assured that the most fervid revivalism will wear itself out in mere smoke, if it is not maintained by the fuel of teaching. The divine method is to put the law in the mind, and then write it on the heart; the judgment is enlightened, and then the passions subdued. Read Hebrews 8:10, and follow the model of the covenant of grace.

Gouge's note on that place may with fitness be quoted here: "Ministers are herein to imitate God, and, to their best endeavor, to instruct people in the mysteries of godliness, and to teach them what to believe and practice—and then to stir them up in act and deed, to do what they are instructed to do. Their labor otherwise is like to be in vain. Neglect of this course is a main cause that men fall into many errors as they do in these days."

I may add that this last remark has gained more force in our times; it is among uninstructed flocks that the wolves of popery make havoc; sound teaching is the best protection from the heresies which ravage right and left among us.

Sound information upon scriptural subjects your hearers crave for, and must have. Accurate explanations of Holy Scripture they are entitled to, and if you are "an interpreter, one of a thousand," a real messenger of Heaven, you will yield them plenteously. Whatever else may be present, the absence of edifying, instructive truth, like the absence of flour from bread, will be fatal. Estimated by their solid contents rather than their superficial area, many sermons are very poor specimens of godly discourse.

I believe the remark is too well grounded that if you attend to a lecturer on astronomy or geology, during a short course you will obtain a tolerably clear view of his system. But if you listen, not only for twelve months, but for twelve years, to the common run of preachers, you will not arrive at anything like an idea of their system of theology. If it is so, it is a grievous fault, which cannot be too much deplored.

Alas! the indistinct utterances of many concerning the grandest of eternal realities, and the dimness of thought in others with regard to fundamental truths, have given too much occasion for the criticism! Brethren, if you are not theologians you are in your pastorates just nothing at all. You may be fine rhetoricians, and be rich in polished sentences; but without knowledge of the gospel, and aptness to teach it, you are but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Verbiage is too often the fig-leaf which does duty as a covering for theological ignorance. Sounding periods are offered instead of sound doctrine, and rhetorical flourishes in the place of robust thought. Such things ought not to be. The abounding of empty declamation, and the absence of food for the soul, will turn a pulpit into a box of bombast, and inspire contempt instead of reverence! Unless we are instructive preachers, and really feed the people—we may be great quoters of elegant poetry, and mighty retailers of second-hand windbags, but we shall be like Nero of old, fiddling while Rome was burning, and sending vessels to Alexandria to fetch sand for the arena while the populace starved for lack of corn.

We insist upon it, that there must be abundance of matter in sermons, and next, that this matter must be congruous to the text. The discourse should spring out of the text as a rule, and the more evidently it does so the better; but at all times, to say the least, it should have a very close relationship thereto.

In the matter of spiritualizing and accommodation very large latitude is to be allowed; but liberty must not degenerate into license, and there must always be a connection, and something more than a remote connection—a real relationship between the sermon and its text.

I heard the other day of a remarkable text, which was appropriate or inappropriate, as you may think. A squire of a parish had given away a number of bright scarlet cloaks to the oldest matrons of the parish. These resplendent beings were required to attend the parish church on the following Sunday, and to sit in front of the pulpit, from which one of the avowed successors of the apostles edified the saints from the words, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." It is reported that on a subsequent occasion, when the same benefactor of the parish had given a bushel of potatoes to every man who had a family, the topic on the following Sunday was, "And they said, It is manna."

I cannot tell whether the matter in that case was congruous to the selection of the text; I suppose it may have been, for the probabilities are that the whole performance was foolish throughout. Some brethren are done with their text as soon as they have read it. Having paid all due honor to that particular passage by announcing it, they feel no necessity further to refer to it. They touch their hats, as it were, to that part of Scripture, and pass on to fresh fields and pastures new.

Why do such men take a text at all? Why limit their own glorious liberty? Why make Scripture a horsing-block by which to mount upon their unbridled Pegasus? Surely the words of inspiration were never meant to be boot-hooks to help a Talkative to draw on his seven-leagued boots in which to leap from pole to pole.

The surest way to maintain variety is to keep to the mind of the Holy Spirit in the particular passage under consideration. No two texts are exactly similar; something in the connection or drift of the passage gives to each apparently identical text a shade of difference. Keep to the Spirit's track, and you will never repeat yourself or be short of matter: his paths drop fatness.

A sermon, moreover, comes with far greater power to the consciences of the hearers when it is plainly the very word of God—not a lecture about the Scripture, but Scripture itself opened up and enforced. It is due to the majesty of inspiration that when you profess to be preaching from a verse you do not thrust it out of sight to make room for your own thinkings.

Brethren, if you are in the habit of keeping to the precise sense of the Scripture before you, I will further recommend you to hold to the very words of the Holy Spirit. For, although in many cases topical sermons are not only allowable, but very proper, those sermons which expound the exact words of the Holy Spirit are the most useful and the most agreeable to the major part of our congregations. They love to have the words themselves explained and expounded. The many are not always sufficiently capable of grasping the sense apart from the language—of gazing, so to speak, upon the truth disembodied. But when they hear the precise words reiterated again and again, and each expression dwelt upon after the manner of such preachers as Mr. Jay, of Bath, they are more edified, and the truth fixes itself more firmly upon their memories. Let your matter, then, be copious, and let it grow out of the inspired word, as violets and primroses spring up naturally from the sod, or as the virgin honey drops from the comb.

Take care that your sermons are always weighty, and full of really important teaching. Build not with wood, hay, and stubble, but with gold, silver, and precious stones. It is scarcely needful to warn you against the grosser degradations of pulpit eloquence, or the example of the notorious orator Henley might be instanced. That loquacious adventurer, whom Pope has immortalized in his "Dunciad," was accustomed to make the passing events of the week the themes of his buffoonery on week days, and theological topics suffered the same fate on Sundays. His forte lay in his low wit and in tuning his voice and balancing his hands. The satirist says of him, "How fluent nonsense trickles from his tongue."

Gentlemen, it were better never to have been born, than to have the like truthfully said of us; we are on peril of our souls bound to deal with the solemnities of eternity and with no earth-born topics.

There are, however, other and more inviting methods of wood and hay-building, and it behooves you not to be duped by them. This remark is necessary, especially to those gentlemen who mistake high-flying sentences for eloquence, and latinized utterances for great depth of thought. Certain homiletical instructors, by their example, if not by their precepts, encourage great swelling words, and, therefore, are most perilous to young preachers.

Think of a discourse commencing with such an amazing and stupendous assertion as the following, which by its native grandeur will strike you at once with a sense of the sublime and beautiful: "Man is moral." This genius might have added, "A cat has four feet." There would have been as much novelty in the one information as the other.

I remember a sermon by a would-be profound writer which quite stunned the reader with grenadier words of six-feet length, but

which, when properly boiled down, came to as much essence of meat as this—Man has a soul, his soul will live in another world, and therefore he should take care that it occupies a happy place. No one can object to the teaching, but it is not so novel as to need a blast of trumpets and a procession of bedizened phrases to introduce it to public attention.

The art of saying commonplace things elegantly, pompously, grandiloquently, bombastically, is not lost among us, although its utter extinction were "a consummation devoutly to be wished." Sermons of this sort have been held up as models, and yet they are mere bits of bladder which would lie on your finger-nail, blown out until they remind you of those colored balloons which itinerant dealers carry about the streets to sell at a half-penny a-piece for the delectation of the extremely juvenile. The parallel, I am sorry to say, holding good a little further, for in some cases these discourses contain just a tinge of poison by way of coloring, which some of the weaker sort have found out to their cost.

It is infamous to ascend your pulpit and pour over your people rivers of language, cataracts of words, in which mere platitudes are held in solution like infinitesimal grains of homoeopathic medicine in an Atlantic of utterance. Better far give the people masses of unprepared truth in the rough, like pieces of meat from a butcher's block, chopped off anyhow, bone and all, and even dropped down in the sawdust—than ostentatiously and delicately hand them out upon a china dish a delicious slice of nothing at all, decorated with the parsley of poetry, and flavored with the sauce of affectation.

It will be a happy circumstance if you are so guided by the Holy Spirit as to give a clear testimony to all the doctrines which constitute or lie around the gospel. No truth is to be kept back. The doctrine of reserve, so detestable in the mouths of Jesuits, is not one whit the less villainous when accepted by Protestants.

It is not true that some doctrines are only for the initiated; there is nothing in the Bible which is ashamed of the light. The sublimest views of divine sovereignty have a practical bearing, and are not, as some think, mere metaphysical subtleties. The distinctive utterances of Calvinism have their bearing upon every-day life and ordinary experience, and if you hold such views, or the opposite, you have no dispensation permitting you to conceal your beliefs. Cautious reticence is, in nine cases out of ten, cowardly betrayal. The best policy is never to be politic, but to proclaim every atom of the truth so far as God has taught it to you.

Harmony requires that the voice of one doctrine shall not drown the rest, and it also demands that the gentler notes shall not be omitted because of the greater volume of other sounds. Every note appointed by the great minstrel must be sounded, each note having its own proportionate power and emphasis; the passage marked with forte must not be softened, and those with piano must not be rolled out like thunder, but each must have its due hearing. All revealed truth in harmonious proportion must be your theme.

Brethren, if you resolve in your pulpit utterances to deal with important verities, you must not forever hover around the mere angles of truth. Those doctrines which are not vital to the soul's salvation, nor even essential to practical Christianity—are not to be considered upon every occasion of worship. Bring in all the features of truth in due proportion, for every part of Scripture is profitable; and you are not only to preach the truth, but the whole truth.

Do not insist perpetually upon one truth alone. A nose is an important feature in the human countenance, but to paint a man's nose alone is not a satisfactory method of taking his likeness. A doctrine may be very important, but an exaggerated estimate of it may be fatal to an harmonious and complete ministry. Do not make minor doctrines main points. Do not paint the details of the background of the gospel picture with the same heavy brush as the great objects in the foreground of it. For instance, the great problems of sublapsarianism and supralapsarianism, the trenchant debates concerning eternal filiation, the earnest dispute concerning the double procession, and the pre or post millenarian schemes, however important some may deem them—are practically of very little concern to that godly widow woman, with seven children to support by her needle, who wants far more to hear of the loving-kindness of the God of providence, than of these profound mysteries. If you preach to her on the faithfulness of God to his people, she will be cheered and helped in the battle of life; but difficult questions will perplex her or send her to sleep. She is, however, the type of hundreds of those who most require your care. Our great master theme is the good news from Heaven; the tidings of mercy through the atoning death of Jesus, mercy to the chief of sinners upon their believing in Jesus.

We must throw all our strength of judgment, memory, imagination, and eloquence into the delivery of the gospel; and not give to the preaching of the cross our random thoughts while wayside topics engross our deeper meditations. Depend upon it, if we brought the intellect of a Locke or a Newton, and the eloquence of a Cicero, to bear upon the simple doctrine of "believe and live," we would find no surplus strength.

Brethren, first and above all things, keep to plain evangelical doctrines; whatever else you do or do not preach, be sure incessantly to bring forth the soul-saving truth of Christ and him crucified.

I know a minister whose shoe latchet I am unworthy to unloose, whose preaching is often little better than sacred miniature painting — I might almost say holy trifling. He is great upon the ten toes of the beast, the four faces of the cherubim, the mystical meaning of badgers' skins, and the typical bearings of the poles of the ark, and the windows of Solomon's temple. But the sins of business men,

the temptations of the times, and the needs of the age, he scarcely ever touches upon. Such preaching reminds me of a lion engaged in mouse-hunting, or a man-of-war cruising after a lost water-bottle. Topics scarcely in importance equal to what Peter calls "old wives' fables" are made great matters of by those microscopic divines to whom the nicety of a point is more attractive than the saving of souls.

You will have read in Todd's "Student's Manual" that Harcatius, king of Persia, was a notable mole-catcher; and Briantes, king of Lydia, was equally an expert at filing needles; but these trivialities by no means prove them to have been great kings. It is much the same in the ministry; there is such a thing as baseness of mental occupation unfitting the rank of an ambassador of Heaven.

Among a certain order of minds at this time the Athenian desire of telling or hearing some new thing appears to be predominant. They boast of new light, and claim a species of inspiration which warrants them in condemning all who are out of their brotherhood, and yet their grand revelation relates to a mere circumstantial of worship, or to an obscure interpretation of prophecy; so that, at sight of their great fuss and loud cry concerning so little, we are reminded of

"Ocean into tempest tossed
To waft a feather or to drown a fly."

Worse still are those who waste time in insinuating doubts concerning the authenticity of texts, or the correctness of Biblical statements concerning natural phenomena.

Painfully do I call to mind hearing one Sabbath evening a deliverance called a sermon, of which the theme was a clever inquiry as to whether an angel did actually descend, and stir the pool at Bethesda, or whether it was an intermitting spring, concerning which Jewish superstition had invented a legend. Dying men and women were assembled to hear the way of salvation, and they were put off with such vanity as this! They came for bread—and received a stone! The sheep looked up to the shepherd, and were not fed. Seldom do I hear a sermon, and when I do I am grievously unfortunate, for one of the last I was entertained with was intended to be a justification of Joshua for destroying the Canaanites, and another went to prove that it was not good for man to be alone. How many souls were converted in answer to the prayers before these sermons I have never been able to ascertain, but I shrewdly suspect that no unusual rejoicing disturbed the serenity of the golden streets.

Believing my next remark to be almost universally unneeded, I bring it forward with diffidence—do not overload a sermon with too much matter. All truth is not to be comprised in one discourse. Sermons are not to be bodies of divinity. There is such a thing as having too much to say, and saying it until hearers are sent home loathing rather than longing. An old minister walking with a young preacher, pointed to a cornfield, and observed, "Your last sermon had too much in it, and it was not clear enough, or sufficiently well-arranged. It was like that field of wheat, it contained much crude food, but none fit for use. You should make your sermons like a loaf of bread, fit for eating, and in convenient form."

It is to be feared that human heads are not so capacious for theology as they once were, for our forefathers rejoiced in sixteen ounces of divinity, undiluted and unadorned, and could continue receiving it for three or four hours at a stretch. But our more degenerate, or perhaps more busy, generation requires about an ounce of doctrine at a time, and that must be the concentrated extract or essential oil, rather than the entire substance of divinity. We must in these times say a great deal in a few words, but not too much, nor with too much amplification. One thought fixed on the mind will be better than fifty thoughts made to flit across the ear. One ten-penny nail driven home and clenched will be more useful than a score of tin-tacks loosely fixed, to be pulled out again in an hour.

Our matter should be well arranged according to the true rules of mental architecture. Not practical inferences at the basis and doctrines as the topstones. Not metaphors in the foundations, and propositions at the summit. Not the more important truths first and the minor teachings last, after the manner of an anticlimax. The thought must climb and ascend; one stair of teaching leading to another; one door of reasoning conducting to another, and the whole elevating the hearer to a chamber from whose windows truth is seen gleaming in the light of God.

In preaching, have a place for everything, and everything in its place. Never allow truths to fall from you pell-mell. Do not let your thoughts rush as a mob, but make them march as a troop of soldiery. Order, which is Heaven's first law, must not be neglected by Heaven's ambassadors.

Your doctrinal teaching should be clear and unmistakable. To be so it must first of all be clear to yourself. Some men think in smoke, and preach in a cloud. Your people do not want a luminous haze, but the solid terra firma of truth. Philosophical speculations put certain minds into a semi-intoxicated condition, in which they either see everything double, or see nothing at all.

Sensational writers have half crazed many honest men who have conscientiously read their lucubrations out of a notion that they ought to be abreast of the age, as if such a necessity might not also require us to attend the theaters in order to be able to judge the new plays, or frequent the turf that we might not be too bigoted in our opinions upon racing and gambling.

For my part, I believe that the chief readers of heterodox books are ministers, and that if they would not notice them they would fall still-born from the press. Let a minister keep clear of mystifying himself, and then he is on the road to becoming intelligible to his people. No man can hope to be felt who cannot make himself understood. If we give our people refined truth, pure Scriptural doctrine, and all so worded as to have no needless obscurity about it, we shall be true shepherds of the sheep, and the profiting of our people will soon be apparent.

Endeavor to keep the matter of your sermonising as fresh as you can. Do not rehearse five or six doctrines with unvarying monotony of repetition. Buy a theological barrel-organ, brethren, with five tunes accurately adjusted, and you will be qualified to practice as an ultra-Calvinistic preacher at Zoar and Jireh, if you also purchase at some vinegar factory a good supply of bitter, acrid abuse of Arminians, and duty-faith men. Brains and grace are optional, but the organ and the wormwood are indispensable. It is ours to perceive and rejoice in a wider range of truth. All that these good men hold of grace and sovereignty we maintain as firmly and boldly as they; but we dare not shut our eyes to other teachings of the word, and we feel bound to make full proof of our ministry, by declaring the whole counsel of God. With abundant themes diligently illustrated by fresh metaphors and experiences—we shall not weary, but, under God's hand, shall win our hearers' ears and hearts.

Let your teachings grow and advance. Let them deepen with your experience, and rise with your soul-progress. I do not mean preach new truths; for, on the contrary, I hold that man happy who is so well taught from the first that, after fifty years of ministry, he has never had to recant a doctrine or to mourn an important omission. But I mean, let our depth and insight continually increase, and where there is spiritual advance it will be so. Timothy could not preach like Paul. Our earlier productions must be surpassed by those of our riper years. We must never make these our models; they will be best burned, or only preserved to be mourned over because of their superficial character. It were ill, indeed, if we knew no more after being many years in Christ's school. Our progress may be slow, but progress there must be, or there will be cause to suspect that the inner life is lacking or sadly unhealthy. Set it before you as most certain that you have not yet attained, and may grace be given you to press forward towards that which is yet beyond. May you all become able ministers of the New Testament, and not a whit behind the very chief of preachers, though in yourselves you will still be nothing.

The word "sermon" is said to signify a thrust, and, therefore, in sermonising it must be our aim to use the subject in hand with energy and effect, and the subject must be capable of such employment.

To choose mere moral themes will be to use a wooden dagger; but the great truths of revelation are as sharp swords. Keep to doctrines which stir the conscience and the heart. Remain unwaveringly the champions of a soul-winning gospel. God's truth is adapted to man, and God's grace adapts man to it. There is a key which, under God, can wind up the musical box of man's nature—get it, and use it daily. Hence I urge you to keep to the old-fashioned gospel, and to that only, for assuredly it is the power of God unto salvation.

Of all I would wish to say this is the sum: My brethren, preach Christ, always and evermore. He is the whole gospel. His person, offices, and work must be our one great, all-comprehending theme. The world needs still to be told of its Savior, and of the way to reach him. Justification by faith should be far more than it is the daily testimony of Protestant pulpits; and if with this master-truth there should be more generally associated the other great doctrines of grace, the better for our churches and our age. If with the zeal of Methodists we can preach the doctrine of Puritans, a great future is before us. The fire of Wesley, and the fuel of Whitfield, will cause a burning which shall set the forests of error on fire, and warm the very soul of this cold earth.

We are not called to proclaim philosophy and metaphysics, but the simple gospel. Man's fall, his need of a new birth, forgiveness through Christ's atonement, and salvation as the result of faith, these are our battle-axe and weapons of war. We have enough to do to learn and teach these great truths, and accursed be that learning which shall divert us from our mission, or that willful ignorance which shall cripple us in its pursuit.

More and more am I jealous lest any views upon prophecy, church government, politics, or even systematic theology, should withdraw one of us from glorying in the cross of Christ. Salvation is a theme for which I would gladly enlist every holy tongue. I am greedy after witnesses for the glorious gospel of the blessed God. O that Christ crucified were the universal burden of men of God.

Your guess at the number of the beast, your Napoleonic speculations, your conjectures concerning a personal Antichrist—forgive me, I count them but mere bones for dogs. While men are dying, and Hell is filling, it seems to me the truest drivel to be muttering about an Armageddon at Sebastopol or Sadowa or Sedan, and peeping between the folded leaves of destiny to discover the fate of Germany. Blessed are they who read and hear the words of the prophecy of the Revelation, but the like blessing has evidently not fallen on those who pretend to expound it, for generation after generation of them have been proved to be in error by the mere lapse of time, and the present race will follow to the same inglorious sepulcher. I would sooner pluck one single brand from the burning, than explain all mysteries. To win a soul from going down into the pit, is a more glorious achievement than to be crowned in the arena of theological controversy as Doctor Sufficietissimus. To have faithfully unveiled the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ

will be in the final judgment accounted worthier service than to have solved the problems of the religious Sphinx, or to have cut the Gordian knot of Apocalyptic difficulty. Blessed is that ministry of which Christ is all.

LECTURE 6 On the Choice of a Text

I trust, my brethren, that we all feel very deeply the importance of conducting every part of divine worship with the utmost possible efficiency. When we remember that the salvation of a soul may hang, instrumentally, upon the choice of a hymn—we should not consider so small a matter as the selection of the hymns to be a trifle. An ungodly stranger, stepping into one of our services at Exeter Hall, was brought to the cross by the words of Wesley's verse, "Jesus, lover of my soul." "Does Jesus love me?" said he: "then why should I live in enmity to him?"

When we reflect, too, that God may very especially bless an expression in our prayer to the conversion of a wanderer; and that prayer in the unction of the Holy Spirit, may minister greatly to the edification of God's people, and bring unnumbered blessings down upon them—we shall endeavor to pray with the best gift and the highest grace within our reach. Since, also, in the reading of the Scriptures comfort and instruction may be plenteously distributed, we shall pause over our opened Bibles, and devoutly seek to be guided to that portion of Holy Writ which shall be most likely to be made useful.

With regard to the sermon, we shall be most anxious, first of all, respecting the selection of the text. No one among us looks upon the sermon in so careless a light as to conceive that a text picked up at random will be suitable for every, or indeed, for any occasion. We are not all of Sydney Smith's mind, when he recommended a brother at a loss for a text, to preach from "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia;" as though anything would do for a sermon.

I hope we all make it a matter of very earnest and serious consideration, every week, what shall be the subjects upon which we shall address our people on the Sabbath morning and evening; for, although all Scripture is good and profitable—yet it is not all equally appropriate for every occasion. To everything there is a season; and everything is the better for being seasonable.

A wise householder labors to give to each one of the family his portion of food in due season; he does not serve out rations indiscriminately, but suits the viands to the needs of the guests. Only a mere official, the slave of routine, the lifeless automaton of formalism, will be content to snatch at the first subject which comes to hand. The man who plucks topics as children in the meadows gather buttercups and daisies, just as they offer themselves, may act in accordance with his position in a church into which a patron may have thrust him, and out of which the people cannot eject him; but those who profess to be called of God, and selected to their positions by the free choice of believers, will need to make fuller proof of their ministry than can be found in such carelessness.

Among many gems we have to select the jewel most appropriate for the setting of the occasion. We dare not rush into the King's banquet hall with a confusion of provisions as though the entertainment were to be a vulgar scramble, but as well-mannered servitors we pause and ask the great Master of the feast, "Lord, what would you have us set upon your table this day?"

Some texts have struck us as most unhappily chosen. We wonder what Mr. Disraeli's rector did with the words, "In my flesh shall I see God," when lately preaching at a village harvest home! Exceedingly unfortunate was the funeral text for a murdered clergyman (Mr. Plow), from, "So he gives his beloved sleep." Most manifestly idiotic was he who selected "Judge not, that you be not judged," for a sermon before the judges at an assize.

Do not be misled by the sound and seeming fitness of scriptural words. Mr. Athanase Coquerel confesses to having preached on a third visit to Amsterdam, from the words, "This is the third time I am coming to you," 2 Corinthians 13:1. Well may he add, that he "found great difficulty in afterwards putting into this discourse what was fitting to the occasion." A parallel case was that of one of the sermons on the death of the Princess Charlotte from, "She was sick and died." It is still worse to select words out of a miserable facetiousness, as in the case of a recent sermon on the death of Abraham Lincoln, from the sentence, "Abraham is dead."

It is said that a student, who it is to be hoped never emerged from the shell, preached a sermon in public, before his tutor, Dr. Philip Doddridge. Now the good man was accustomed to place himself immediately in front of the student, and look him full in the face. Judge therefore of his surprise, if not indignation, when the text announced ran in these words, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip?"

Fools sometimes become students: let us hope none of that order may dishonor our Alma Mater. I pardon the man who preached before that drunken Solomon, James I of England and James VI of Scotland, from James 1:6; the temptation was too great to be resisted. But let the wretch be forever execrated, if such a man ever lived, who celebrated the decease of a deacon by a tirade from, "It came to pass that the beggar died." I forgive the liar who attributed such an outrage to me, but I hope he will not try his infamous arts upon any one else.

As we would avoid a careless accidental pitching upon topics, so would we equally avoid a monotonous regularity. I have heard of a divine who had fifty-two Sunday sermons, and a few extra ones for holy days, from which he was accustomed to preach in regular order, year after year. In his case, there would be no need that the people should entreat that the same things should be spoken to them on the next Sabbath-day, nor would there be much wonder if imitators of Eutychus should be found in other places beside the third loft.

It is not very long ago since a clergyman said to a farmer friend of mine, "Do you know, Mr. D _____, I was turning over my sermons the other day, and really the parsonage is so damp, especially in my study, that my sermons have become quite musty." My friend, who although he was church-warden, attended a Dissenting place of worship, was not so rude as to say that he thought it very likely, but as the village venerables had frequently heard the aforesaid discourses, it is possible they were musty in more senses than one.

There are people in the ministry who, having accumulated a little stock of sermons, repeat them ad nauseam, with horrible regularity. Itinerating brethren must be far more subject to this temptation than those who are stationed for several years in one place. If they fall victims to the habit, it must surely be the end of their usefulness, and send an intolerable death-chill into their hearts, of which their people must soon be conscious while they hear them parroting forth their time-worn productions. The very best invention for promoting spiritual idleness must be the plan of acquiring a two or three years' stock of sermons, and repeating them in order again and again. As we, my brethren, hope to live for many years, if not for life, in one place, rooted to the spot by the mutual affection which will grow up between ourselves and our people, we have need of a far different method from that which may suit a sluggard or an itinerant evangelist.

It must be burdensome to some, and very easy to others, I would imagine, to find their subject, as they do whose lot is cast in the Episcopal establishment, where the preacher usually refers to the gospel or the epistle, or the lesson for the day, and feels himself bound—not by any law, but by a sort of precedent—to preach from a verse in either the one or the other. When Advent and Epiphany, and Lent and Whitsuntide, bring their stereotyped round, no man needs to agonize at heart over the question, "What shall I say unto this people?" The voice of the church is clear and distinct, "Master, say on; there is your work, give yourself wholly to it." There may be some advantages connected with this pre-arrangement, but the Episcopalian public do not appear to have been made partakers of them, for their public writers are always groaning over the dreariness of sermons, and bemoaning the sad condition of a longsuffering laity who are compelled to listen to them.

The slavish habit of following the course of the sun and the revolution of the months, instead of waiting upon the Holy Spirit is, to my mind, quite enough to account for the fact that in many churches, their own writers being judges, the sermons are nothing better than specimens of "that decent debility which alike guards their authors from ludicrous errors, and precludes them from striking beauties."

Be it then taken for granted, that we all feel it to be most important, not only to preach the truth, but to preach the right truth for each particular occasion; our effort will be to descant upon such subjects as shall be best adapted to our people's needs, and most likely to prove a channel of grace to their hearts.

Is there any difficulty in obtaining texts? I remember, in my earlier days, reading somewhere in a volume of lectures upon Homiletics, a statement which considerably alarmed me at the time; it was something to this effect: "If any man shall find a difficulty in selecting a text, he had better at once go back to the grocer's shop, or to the plough, for he evidently has not the capacity required for a minister." Now, as such had been very frequently my cross and burden, I inquired within myself whether I should resort to some form of secular labor, and leave the ministry; but I have not done so, for I still have the conviction that, although condemned by the sweeping judgment of the lecturer, I follow a call to which God has manifestly set his seal. I was so much in trouble of conscience through the aforesaid severe remark, that I asked my grandfather, who had been in the ministry some fifty years, whether he was ever perplexed in choosing his theme. He told me frankly that this had always been his greatest trouble, compared with which, preaching in itself was no anxiety at all. I remember the venerable man's remark, "The difficulty is not because there are not enough texts, but because there are so many, that I am in a strait between them."

Brethren, we are sometimes like the lover of choice flowers, who finds himself surrounded by all the beauties of the garden, with permission to select but one. How long he lingers between the rose and the lily, and how great the difficulty to prefer one among ten thousand blooming lovelinesses! To me still, I must confess, my text selection is a very great embarrassment—an embarrassment of riches, very different from the bewilderment of poverty. The anxiety of attending to the most pressing of so many truths, all clamoring for a hearing, so many duties all needing enforcing, and so many spiritual needs of the people all demanding supply. I confess that I frequently sit hour after hour praying and waiting for a subject, and that this is the main part of my study. Much hard labor have I spent in manipulating topics, ruminating upon points of doctrine, making skeletons out of verses and then burying every bone of them in the catacombs of oblivion; sailing on and on over leagues of broken water, until I see the red lights and make sail direct to the desired haven.

I believe that almost any Saturday in my life I make enough outlines of sermons, if I felt at liberty to preach them, to last me for a month, but I no more dare to use them than an honest mariner would run to shore a cargo of contraband goods. Themes flit before the mind one after another, like images passing across the photographer's lens, but until the mind is like the sensitive plate, which retains the picture, the subjects are valueless to us.

What is the right text? How do you know it? When a verse gives your mind a hearty grip, from which you cannot release yourself, you will need no further direction as to your proper theme. Like the fish, you nibble at many baits, but when the hook has fairly pierced you, you will wander no more. When the text gets a hold of us, we may be sure that we have a hold of it, and may safely deliver our souls upon it.

To use another simile: you get a number of texts in your hand, and try to break them up; you hammer at them with might and main, but your labor is lost; at last you find one which crumbles at the first blow, and sparkles as it falls in pieces, and you perceive jewels of the rarest radiance flashing from within. It grows before your eye like the fabled seed which developed into a tree while the observer watched it. It charms and fascinates you, or it weights you to your knees and loads you with the burden of the Lord. Know then that this is the message which the Lord would have you deliver; and, feeling this, you will become so bound by that scripture that you will never feel at rest until you have yielded your whole mind to its power, and have spoken upon it as the Lord shall give you utterance. Wait for that elect word, even if you wait until within an hour of the service.

This may not be understood by cool, calculating men, who are not moved by impulses as we are, but to some of us these things are a law in our hearts against which we dare not offend. We tarry at Jerusalem until power is given.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit." This is one of the articles of the creed, but it is scarcely believed among professors so as to be acted on. Many ministers appear to think that they are to choose the text; they are to discover its teaching; they are to find a discourse in it. We do not think so. We are to use our own volitions, of course, as well as our understandings and affections, for we do not pretend that the Holy Spirit will compel us to preach from a text against our wills. He does not deal with us as though we were musical boxes, to be wound up and set to a certain tune; but that glorious inspirer of all truth deals with us as with rational intelligences, who are swayed by spiritual forces congruous to our natures. Still, devout minds evermore desire that the choice of the text should rest with the all-wise Spirit of God, and not with their own fallible understandings, and therefore they humbly put themselves into his hand, asking him to condescend to direct them to the portion of food in due season which he has ordained for his people.

Gurnall says, "Ministers have no ability of their own for their work. Oh! how long may they sit tumbling their books over, and puzzling their brains, until God comes to their help, and then—as Jacob's venison—it is brought to their hand. If God drops not down his assistance, we write with a pen that has no ink. If any one need walk dependently upon God more than another, the minister is he."

If any one inquire of me, "How shall I obtain the most proper text?" I should answer, "Cry to God for it." Harrington Evans, in his "Rules for Sermons," lays down as the first, "Seek God in prayer for choice of a passage. Inquire why such a passage is decided upon. Let the question be fairly answered. Sometimes the answer may be such as ought to decide the mind against the choice."

If prayer alone should not guide you to the desired treasure, it will in any case be a profitable exercise to you to have prayed. The difficulty of settling upon a topic, if it makes you pray more than usual, will be a very great blessing to you. Praying is the best studying. Praying over the Scripture is as the treading of grapes in the wine-vat, the threshing of grain on the barn floor, the melting of gold from the ore. Prayer is twice blessed; it blesses the pleading preacher, and the people to whom he ministers. When your text comes in answer to prayer, it will be all the dearer to you. It will come with a divine savor and unction altogether unknown to the formal orator to whom one theme is as good as another.

After prayer, we are bound with much earnestness to use fitting means for concentrating our thoughts, and directing them in the best channel.

Consider the condition of your hearers. Reflect upon their spiritual state as a whole and as individuals, and prescribe the medicine adapted to the current disease, or prepare the food suitable for the prevailing necessity. Let me caution you, however, against considering the whims of your hearers, or the peculiarities of the wealthy and influential. Do not give too much weight to the gentleman and lady who sit in the green pew, if you are so unfortunate as to possess such an abominable place of distinction in a house where all are on a level. Let the large contributor be considered by all means as much as others, and let not his spiritual infirmities be neglected; but he is not everybody, and you will grieve the Holy Spirit if you think him to be so. Look at the poor in the aisles with equal interest, and select topics which are within their range of thought, and which may cheer them in their many sorrows. Do not allow your heads to be turned by respect to those one-sided members of the congregation, who have a sweet tooth for one portion of the Scripture, and turn a deaf ear to other parts of truth; never go out of your way either to give them a feast or a scolding. It may be satisfactory to think that they are pleased, if they are good people, and one respects their predilections, but faithfulness demands that we should not become mere pipers to our hearers, playing such tunes as they may demand of us, but

should remain as the Lord's mouth to declare all his counsels. I return to the remark, think over what your people really need for their edification, and let that be your theme.

That famous apostle of the north of Scotland, Dr. Macdonald, gives an instance to the point in his *Diary of Work in St. Kilda*: "Friday, May 27. At our morning exercise this day, I read and gave some illustrations of Romans 12, which afforded me an opportunity of stating the connection between faith and practice; and that the doctrines of grace are according to godliness, and lead to holiness in heart and life. This I deemed necessary, as from the high ground I had occupied for some days past, I was afraid the people might veer towards Antinomianism, an extreme as dangerous as Arminianism, if not more so."

Consider what sins appear to be most rife in the church and congregation—worldliness, covetousness, prayerlessness, anger, pride, lack of brotherly love, slander, and such like evils.

Take into account, affectionately, the trials of your people, and seek for a balm for their wounds. It is not necessary to go into minute details, either in the prayer or in the sermon, as to all these trials of your congregation. Certain trials will occur, at particular junctures, to many in the congregation, and as these afflictions will invite your mind into new fields of thought, you will do ill to be deaf to their call.

Again, we must watch the spiritual state of our people, and if we notice that they are falling into a backsliding condition; if we fear that they are likely to be inoculated by any mischievous heresy or perverse imagining. If anything, in fact, in the whole physiological character of the church should strike our mind, we must hasten to prepare a sermon which, by God's grace, may stay the plague. These are the indications among his hearers which the Spirit of God gives to the careful, observant pastor as to his line of action.

The careful shepherd often examines his flock, and governs his mode of treatment by the state in which he finds it. He will be likely to supply one sort of food but sparingly, and another in greater abundance, and medicine in its due quantity, according as his practiced judgment finds the one or the other necessary. We shall be rightly directed if we do but associate ourselves with "that great Shepherd of the sheep."

Do not, however, let us allow our preaching right home to our people to degenerate into scolding them. They call the pulpit "The Coward's Castle" and it is a very proper name for it in some respects, especially when fools mount the platform and impudently insult their hearers by holding up their faults or infirmities to public derision. There is a personality—an offensive, wanton, unjustifiable personality—which is to be studiously avoided; it is of the earth, earthy, and is to be condemned in unmeasured terms. While there is another personality, wise, spiritual, heavenly, which is to be aimed at unceasingly. The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, and therefore you can leave the word of God to wound and kill, and need not be yourselves cutting in phrase and manner.

God's truth is searching—leave it to search the hearts of men without offensive additions from yourself. He is a mere bungler in portrait painting who needs to write the name under the picture when it is hung up in the family parlor where the person himself is sitting. Compel your hearers to perceive that you speak of them, though you have not even in the remotest degree named them, or pointed them out. Occasions may possibly occur when you may be bound to go as far as Hugh Latimer, when speaking upon bribery—he said, "He who took the silver basin and ewer for a bribe, thinks that it will never come out. But he may not know that I know it, and I know it not alone; there be more beside me that know it. Oh, briber and bribery! He was never a good man that will so take bribes; nor can I believe that he who is a briber will be a good justice." Here was as much prudent reticence as bold disclosure; and if you go no further than this, no man dare, for shame sake, accuse you of too great personality.

In the next place, the minister in looking after his text, should consider what his previous topics have been. It would be unwise to insist perpetually upon one doctrine to the neglect of others. Some of our profounder brethren may be able to deal with the same subject in a series of discourses, and may be able, by a turn of the kaleidoscope, to present new forms of beauty with no change of subject; but the most of us, who are of less fertile abilities, will find it best to study variety, and deliver ourselves upon a wide range of truth.

I think it well frequently to look over the list of my sermons, and see whether any doctrine has escaped my attention, or any Christian grace has been neglected in my ministrations.

It is well to inquire whether we have been too doctrinal lately, or too practical, or too exclusively experimental. We do not desire to degenerate into Antinomians, nor, on the other hand, to descend to be mere teachers of a cold morality, but our ambition is to make full proof of our ministry. We would give every portion of Scripture its fair share in our heart and head. Doctrine, precept, history, type, psalm, proverb, experience, warning, promise, invitation, threatening, or rebuke—we would include the whole of inspired truth within the circle of our teachings.

Let us abhor all one-sidedness, all exaggeration of one truth and disparagement of another; and let us endeavor to paint the portrait of truth with balanced features and blended colors, lest we dishonor her by presenting distortion instead of symmetry, and a

caricature for a faithful copy.

Supposing, however, that you have prayed in that little room of yours, have wrestled hard and supplicated long, and have thought over your people and their needs, and still you cannot meet with the text—well, do not fret about it, nor give way to despair. If you were about to go a warfare at your own charges, it would be a very miserable thing to be short of powder, and the battle so near; but as your Captain has to provide, there is no doubt that all in good time he will serve out the ammunition. If you trust in God, he will not, he cannot, fail you. Continue pleading and watching, for to the industrious student heavenly help is certain. If you had gone up and down idly all the week, and given no heed to proper preparation, you could not expect divine aid; but if you have done your best, and are now waiting to know your Lord's message, your face shall never be ashamed.

Two or three incidents have occurred to me which may seem rather odd to you, but then I am an odd man. When I lived at Cambridge, I had, as usual, to preach in the evening at a neighboring village, to which I had to walk. After reading and meditating all day, I could not meet with the right text. Do what I would, no response came from the sacred oracle, no light flashed from the Urim and Thummim. I prayed, I meditated, I turned from one verse to another, but the mind would not take hold, or I was, as Bunyan would say, "much tumbled up and down in my thoughts." Just then I walked to the window and looked out. On the other side of the narrow street in which I lived, I saw a poor solitary canary bird upon the slates, surrounded by a crowd of sparrows, who were all pecking at it as if they would tear it to pieces. At that moment the verse came to my mind, "My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her." I walked off with the greatest possible composure, considered the passage during my long and lonely walk, and preached upon the peculiar people, and the persecutions of their enemies, with freedom and ease to myself, and I believe with comfort to my rustic audience. The text was sent to me, and if the ravens did not bring it, certainly the sparrows did.

At another time, while laboring at Water-beach, I had preached on the Sunday morning, and gone home to dinner, as was my custom, with one of the congregation. Unfortunately, there were three services, and the afternoon sermon came so close upon the back of the morning, that it was difficult to prepare the soul, especially as the dinner is a necessary but serious inconvenience where a clear brain is required. Alas! for those afternoon services in our English villages, they are usually a doleful waste of effort. Roast beef and pudding lie heavy on the hearers' souls, and the preacher himself is deadened in his mental processes while digestion claims the mastery of the hour. By a careful measuring of diet, I remained, on that occasion, in an earnest, lively condition—but to my dismay, I found that the pre-arranged line of thought was gone from me. I could not find the trail of my prepared sermon, and press my forehead as I might, the missing topic would not come. Time was brief, the hour was striking, and in some alarm I told the honest farmer that I could not for the life of me recollect what I had intended to preach about.

"Oh!" he said, "never mind; you will be sure to have a good word for us." Just at that moment a blazing block of wood fell out of the fire upon the hearth at my feet, smoking into one's eyes and nose at a great rate. "There," said the farmer, "there's a text for you, sir: 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?'" No, I thought, it was not plucked out, for it fell out of itself. Here was a text, an illustration, and a leading thought as a nest egg for more. Further light came, and the sermon was certainly not worse than my more prepared effusions; it was better in the best sense, for one or two came forward declaring themselves to have been aroused and converted through that afternoon's sermon. I have always considered that it was a happy circumstance that I had forgotten the text from which I had intended to preach.

At New Park Street I once passed through a very singular experience, of which witnesses are present in this room. I had passed happily through all the early parts of divine service in the evening of the Sabbath, and was giving out the hymn before sermon. I opened the Bible to find the text, which I had carefully studied as the topic of discourse, when on the opposite page another passage of Scripture sprang upon me like a lion from a thicket, with vastly more power than I had felt when considering the text which I had chosen.

The people were singing and I was sighing. I was in a strait between two, and my mind hung as in the balances. I was naturally desirous to run in the track which I had carefully planned, but the other text would take no refusal, and seemed to tug at my skirts, crying, "No, no, you must preach from me. God would have you follow me." I deliberated within myself as to my duty, for I would neither be fanatical nor unbelieving, and at last I thought within myself, "Well, I would like to preach the sermon which I have prepared, and it is a great risk to run to strike out a new line of thought, but still as this text constrains me, it may be of the Lord, and therefore I will venture upon it, come what may."

I almost always announce my divisions very soon after the exordium, but on this occasion, contrary to my usual custom, I did not do so, for a reason which some of you may probably guess. I passed through the first head with considerable liberty, speaking perfectly extemporaneously both as to thought and word. The second point was dwelt upon with a consciousness of unusual quiet efficient power, but I had no idea what the third would or could be, for the text yielded no more matter just then, nor can I tell even now what I could have done, had not an event occurred upon which I had never calculated.

I had brought myself into great difficulty by obeying what I thought to be a divine impulse, and I felt comparatively easy about it,

believing that God would help me, and knowing that I could at least close the service should there be nothing more to be said. I had no need to deliberate, for in one moment we were in total darkness—the gas had gone out, and as the aisles were choked with people, and the place everywhere crowded, it was a great peril, but a great blessing. What was I to do then? The people were a little frightened, but I quieted them instantly by telling them not to be at all alarmed, though the gas was out, for it would soon be re-lighted; and as for myself, having no manuscript, I could speak just as well in the dark as in the light, if they would be so good as to sit and listen. Had my discourse been ever so elaborate, it would have been absurd to have continued it, and so as my plight was, I was all the less embarrassed. I turned at once mentally to the well-known text which speaks of the child of light walking in darkness, and the child of darkness walking in the light, and found appropriate remarks and illustrations pouring in upon me, and when the lamps were again lit, I saw before me an audience as enrapt and subdued as ever a man beheld in his life.

The odd thing of all was, that some few church-meetings afterwards, two people came forward to make confession of their faith, who professed to have been converted that evening; but the first owed her conversion to the former part of the discourse, which was on the new text that came to me, and the other traced his awakening to the latter part, which was occasioned by the sudden darkness. Thus, you see, Providence befriended me. I cast myself upon God, and his arrangements quenched the light at the proper time for me. Some may ridicule, but I adore; others may even censure, but I rejoice.

Anything is better than mechanical sermonising, in which the direction of the Spirit is practically ignored. Every Holy Spirit preacher, I have no doubt, will have such recollections clustering around his ministry. I say, therefore, watch the course of Providence; cast yourselves upon the Lord's guidance and help. If you have solemnly done your best to get a text, and the subject does not start up before you, go up into the pulpit firmly convinced that you will receive a message when the time comes, even though you have not a word at that moment.

In the life of Samuel Drew, a famous Methodist preacher, we read, "While stopping at a friend's house, in Cornwall, after preaching, a person who had attended the service, observing to him, that he had, on that occasion, surpassed his usual ability; and other individuals concurring in the opinion, Mr. Drew said, 'If it be true, it is the more singular, because my sermon was entirely unpremeditated. I went into the pulpit designing to address you from another text, but looking upon the Bible, which lay open, that passage from which you heard me speak just now, 'Prepare to meet your God, O Israel,' arrested my attention so forcibly as to put to flight my former ideas; and though I had never considered the passage before, I resolved instantly to make it the subject of my discourse.'" Mr. Drew did well to be obedient to the heavenly direction.

Under certain circumstances you will be absolutely compelled to cast away the well-studied discourse, and rely upon the present help of the Holy Spirit, using purely extempore speech. You may find yourself in the position of the late Kingman Nott, when preaching in the National Theater, New York. In one of his letters, he says, "The building was filled full, and mostly with young men and boys of the roughest type. I went with a sermon in my mind, but as soon as I came upon the stage, greeted with a 'Hi! hi!' and saw the motley and uproarious crowd I had to do with, I let all thoughts of the sermon go, and catching up the parable of the Prodigal Son, tried to interest them in that, and succeeded in keeping most of them inside the house, and tolerably attentive." What a simpleton would he have been had he persevered in his unsuitable prelection! Brethren, I beseech you, believe in the Holy Spirit, and practically carry out your faith.

As a further assistance to a poor stranded preacher, who cannot launch his mind for lack of a wave or two of thought, I recommend him in such a case, to turn again and again to the Word of God itself, and read a chapter, and ponder over its verses one by one; or let him select a single verse, and get his mind fully exercised upon it. It may be that he will not find his text in the verse or chapter which he reads, but the right word will come to him through his mind being actively engaged upon holy subjects. According to the relation of thoughts to each other, one thought will suggest another, and another, until a long procession will have passed before the mind, out of which one or other will be the predestined theme.

Read also good suggestive books, and get your mind aroused by them. If men wish to get water out of a pump which has not been lately used, they first pour water down, and then the pump works. Reach down one of the Puritans, and thoroughly study the work, and speedily you will find yourself like a bird on the wing, mentally active and full of motion.

By way of precaution, however, let me remark, that we ought to be always in training for text-getting and sermon-making. We should constantly preserve the holy activity of our minds. Woe unto the minister who dares to waste an hour. Read John Foster's "Essay on the Improvement of Time," and resolve never to lose a second of it. A man who goes up and down from Monday morning until Saturday night, and indolently dreams that he is to have his text sent down by an angelic messenger in the last hour or two of the week—tempts God, and deserves to stand speechless on the Sabbath. We have no leisure as ministers; we are never off duty, but are on our watchtowers day and night.

Students, I tell you solemnly, nothing will excuse you from the most rigid economy of time; it is at your peril that you trifle with it. The leaf of your ministry will soon wither unless, like the blessed man in the first Psalm, you meditate in the law of the Lord both day and night. I am most anxious that you should not throw away time in religious dissipation, or in gossiping and frivolous talk. Beware of

running about from this meeting to that, listening to mere twaddle, and contributing your share to the general blowing up of windbags. A man great at tea-drinkings, evening parties, and Sunday-school excursions, is generally little everywhere else. Your pulpit preparations are your first business, and if you neglect these, you will bring no credit upon yourself or your office. Bees are making honey from morning until night, and we should be always gathering stores for our people. I have no belief in that ministry which ignores laborious preparation.

You who are ready to preach in a hop, skip, and jump, will pardon me if I take a pew somewhere else. Habitual mental exercise in the direction of our work is advisable. Ministers should always be making their hay, but especially while the sun shines. Do you not find yourself sometimes wonderfully ready at sermonising? Mr. Jay said that when he felt in such a condition, he would take out his paper and jot down texts and divisions of sermons, and keep them in store, that they might serve him at times when his mind was not so ready. The lamented Thomas Spencer wrote, "I keep a little book, in which I enter every text of Scripture which comes into my mind with power and sweetness. Were I to dream of a passage of Scripture I should enter it, and when I sit down to compose I look over the book, and have never found myself at a loss for a subject."

Watch for subjects as you go about the city or the country. Always keep your eyes and ears open, and you will hear and see angels. The world is full of sermons—catch them on the wing. A sculptor believes, whenever he sees a rough block of marble, that there is a noble statue concealed within it, and that he has only to chip away the superfluities and reveal it. So do you believe that there is within the husk of everything the kernel of a sermon for the wise man. Be wise, and see the heavenly in its earthly pattern. Hear the voices from the skies, and translate them into the language of men. Always a preacher be you, O man of God, foraging for the pulpit, in all provinces of nature and art, storing and preparing at all hours and seasons.

I am asked whether it is a good thing to announce arrangements, and publish lists of projected sermons. I answer, Every man in his own order. I am not a judge for others; but I dare not attempt such a thing, and would signally fail if I were to venture upon it. Precedents are much against my opinion, and at the head of them the sets of discourses by Matthew Henry, John Newton, and a host of others. Still I can only speak my own personal impressions, and leave each man to be a law unto himself. Many eminent divines have delivered valuable courses of sermons upon pre-arranged topics, but we are not eminent, and must counsel others like ourselves to be cautious how they act. I dare not announce what I shall preach from tomorrow, much less what I shall preach from in six weeks' or six months' time, the reason being partly this, that I am conscious of not possessing those peculiar gifts which are necessary to interest an assembly in one subject or set of subjects, for any length of time. Brethren of extraordinary research and profound learning can do it, and brethren with none of these, and no common sense, may pretend to do it, but I cannot. I am obliged to owe a great deal of my strength to variety rather than profundity. It is questionable whether the great majority of list preachers had not far better burn their programs if they would succeed.

I have a very lively, or rather a deadly, recollection of a certain series of discourses on the Hebrews, which made a deep impression on my mind of the most undesirable kind. I wished frequently that the Hebrews had kept the epistle to themselves, for it sadly bored one poor Gentile lad. By the time the seventh or eighth discourse had been delivered, only the very good people could stand it: these, of course, declared that they never heard more valuable expositions, but to those of a more carnal judgment it appeared that each sermon increased in dullness. Paul, in that epistle, exhorts us to suffer the word of exhortation, and we did so.

Are all courses of sermons like this? Perhaps not, and yet I fear the exceptions are few, for it is even said of that wonderful expositor, Joseph Caryl, that he commenced his famous lectures upon Job with eight hundred hearers, and closed the book with only eight! A prophetic preacher enlarged so much upon "the little horn" of Daniel, that one Sabbath morning he had but seven hearers remaining. They doubtless thought it

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings,
Should play one tune so long!"

Ordinarily, and for ordinary men, it seems to me that pre-arranged discourses are a mistake, are never more than an apparent benefit, and generally a real mischief. Surely to go through a long epistle must require a great deal of genius in the preacher, and demand a world of patience on the part of the hearers. I am moved by a yet deeper consideration in what I have now said: it strikes me that many a truly living, earnest preacher, would feel a program to be a fetter. Should the preacher announce for next Lord's day a topic full of joy, requiring liveliness and exaltation of spirit, it is very possible that he may, from various causes, find himself in a sad and burdened state of mind; nevertheless, he must put the new wine into his old bottle, and go up to the wedding feast wearing his sackcloth and ashes, and worst of all, this he may be bound to repeat for a whole month. Is this quite as it should be? It is important that the speaker should be in tune with his theme, but how is this to be secured unless the election of the topic is left to influences which shall work at the time?

A man is not a steam engine, to run on metals, and it is unwise to fix him in one groove. Very much of the preacher's power will lie in his whole soul being in accord with the subject, and I should be afraid to appoint a subject for a certain date lest, when the time come, I should not be in the key for it. Besides, it is not easy to see how a man can exhibit dependence upon the guidance of the

Spirit of God, when he has already prescribed his own route.

Perhaps you will say, "That is a singular objection, for why not rely upon him for twenty weeks as well as for one?" True, but we have never had a promise to warrant such faith. God promises to give us grace according to our days, but he says nothing of endowing us with a reserve fund for the future.

"Day by day the manna fell;
Oh, to learn this lesson well!"

Even so will our sermons come to us, fresh from Heaven, when required. I am jealous of anything which should hinder your daily dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and therefore I register the opinion already given. To you, my younger brethren, I feel safe in saying with authority, leave ambitious attempts at elaborate series of discourses to older and abler men. We have but a small share of mental gold and silver; let us invest our little capital in useful goods which will obtain a ready market, and leave the wealthier merchants to deal in more expensive and cumbrous articles. We know not what a day may bring forth—let us wait for daily teaching, and do nothing which might preclude us from using those materials which providence may today or tomorrow cast in our way.

Perhaps you will ask whether you should preach from texts which people select for you, and request you to preach upon! My answer would be, as a rule, never; and if there must be exceptions let them be few. Let me remind you that you do not keep a shop to which customers may come and give their orders. When a friend suggests a topic, think it over, and consider whether it be appropriate, and see whether it comes to you with power. Receive the request courteously, as you are in duty bound to do as a gentleman and a Christian; but if the Lord whom you serve does not cast his light upon the text, do not preach from it, let whoever persuade you.

I am quite certain that if we will wait upon God for our subjects, and make it a matter of prayer that we may be rightly directed, we shall be led forth by a right way; but if we are puffed up with the idea that we can very easily choose for ourselves, we shall find that even in the selection of a subject, without Christ we can do nothing. Wait upon the Lord, hear what he would speak, receive the word direct from God's mouth, and then go forth as an ambassador fresh from the court of Heaven. "Wait, I say, on the Lord."

LECTURE 7 On Spiritualizing

Many writers upon Homiletics condemn in unmeasured terms even the occasional spiritualizing of a text. "Select texts," say they, "which give a plain, literal sense; never travel beyond the obvious meaning of the passage; never allow yourself to accommodate or adapt; it is an artifice of men of artificial culture, a trick of mountebanks, a miserable display of bad taste and impudence." Honor to whom honor is due, but I humbly beg leave to dissent from this learned opinion, believing it to be more fastidious than correct, more plausible than true. A great deal of real good may be done by occasionally taking forgotten, quaint, remarkable, out-of-the-way texts; and I feel persuaded that if we appeal to a jury of practical, successful preachers, who are not theorizers, but men actually in the field, we shall have a majority in our favor. It may be that the learned rabbis of this generation are too sublime and celestial to condescend to men of low estate; but we who have no high culture, or profound learning, or enchanting eloquence to boast of, have deemed it wise to use the very method which the grandees have proscribed; for we find it one of the best ways of keeping out of the rut of dull formality, and it yields us a sort of salt with which to give flavor to unpalatable truth. Many great soul-winners have felt it meet to give a bonus to their ministry, and to arrest their people's attention by now and then striking out a path which had not been trodden heretofore. Experience has not taught them that they were in error, but the reverse.

Within limit, my brethren, be not afraid to spiritualize, or to take singular texts. Continue to look out passages of Scripture, and not only give their plain meaning, as you are bound to do—but also draw from them meanings which may not lie upon their surface. Take the advice for what it is worth, but I seriously recommend you to show the superfine critics that everybody does not worship the golden image which they have set up.

I counsel you to employ spiritualizing within certain limits and boundaries, but I pray you do not, under cover of this advice, rush headlong into incessant and injudicious "imaginings," as George Fox would call them. Do not drown yourselves because you are recommended to bathe, or hang yourselves on an oak because tannin is described as a valuable astringent. An allowable thing carried to excess is a vice, even as fire is a good servant in the grate, but a bad master when raging in a burning house. Too much even of a good thing surfeits and disgusts, and in no case is this fact more sure than in the one before us.

The first rule to be observed is this—do not violently strain a text by illegitimate spiritualizing. This is a sin against common sense. How dreadfully the word of God has been mauled and mangled by a certain band of preachers who have laid texts on the rack to make them reveal what they never would have otherwise spoken. Mr. Slopdash, of whom Rowland Hill tells us in his Village Dialogues, is but a type of a numerous generation. That worthy is described as delivering himself of a discourse upon, "I had three white baskets on my head," from the dream of Pharaoh's baker. Upon this the "thrice-anointed ninny-hammer," as a friend of mine

would call him, discoursed upon the doctrine of the Trinity!

A dear minister of Christ, a venerable and excellent brother, one of the most instructive ministers in his county, told me that he missed one day a laboring man and his wife from his chapel. He missed them again and again, Sunday after Sunday, and one Monday, meeting the husband in the street, he said to him, "Well, John, I have not seen you lately."

"No sir," was the reply, "We did not seem to profit under your ministry as we used to do."

"Indeed, John, I am very sorry to hear it."

"Well, me and my missis likes the doctrines of grace, and therefore we've gone to hear Mr. Bawler lately."

"Oh! you mean the good man at the High Calvinist Meeting?"

"Yes, sir, and we are so happy; we get right good food there, sixteen ounces to the pound. We were getting half starved under your ministry—though I always shall respect you sir."

"All right, my friend; of course you ought to go where you get good for your soul, I only hope it is good; but what did you get last Sunday?"

"Oh! we had a most refreshing time, sir. In the morning we had—I don't seem to like to tell you—however, we had really a most precious time."

"Yes, but what was it, John?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Bawler led us blessedly into that passage, 'Are you a man given to appetite? Put a knife to your throat when you sit before a ruler.'

"Whatever did he make out of that?"

"Well, sir, I can tell you what he made out of it, but I would like to know first what you would have said upon it."

"I don't know, John; I don't think I would have taken it at all, but if I must have spoken about it, I should have said that a person given to eating and drinking should take care what he was about when he was in the presence of great men, or he would ruin himself. Gluttony even in this life is ruinous."

"Ah!" said the man, "that is your dead-letter way of rendering it. As I told my missis the other day, ever since we have been to hear Mr. Bawler, the Bible has been opened up to us so that we can see a great deal more in it than we used to do."

"Yes, but what did Mr. Bawler tell you about his text?"

"Well, he said a man given to appetite was a young convert, who is sure to have a tremendous appetite for preaching, and always wants food; but he aren't always nice about what sort of food it is."

"What next, John?"

"He said that if the young convert went to sit before a ruler—that is to say, a legal preacher, or a duty-faith man, it would be the worse for him."

"But how about the knife, John?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Bawler said it was a very dangerous thing to hear legal preachers, it would be sure to ruin the man; and he might just as well cut his throat at once, sir!"

The subject was, I suppose, the mischievous effects of young Christians listening to any preachers but those of the hyper school; and the moral drawn from it was, that sooner than this brother should go to hear his former minister, he had better cut his throat! That was accommodating considerably! You critics, we give over such dead horses as these to your doggish teeth. Rend and devour as you will, we will not upbraid.

We have heard of another performer who delivered his mind upon Proverbs 21:17. "He who loves pleasure shall be a poor man: he who loves wine and oil shall not be rich." The Proverbs are a favorite field for spiritualizers to disport themselves withal. Our worthy disposed of the proverb in this fashion: "'He who loves pleasure,' that is, the Christian who enjoys the means of grace, 'shall be a poor man,' that is, he shall be poor in spirit; 'and he who loves wine and oil,' that is to say, rejoices in covenant provisions, and enjoys the oil and wine of the gospel, 'shall not be rich,' that is, he shall not be rich in his own esteem;" showing the excellence of those who are poor in spirit, and how they shall enjoy the pleasures of the gospel—a very proper sentiment, but my carnal eyes fail

to see it in the text.

You have all heard of William Huntingdon's famous rendering of the passage in Isaiah 11:8: "The nursing child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den." "'The nursing child,' that is, the babe in grace, 'shall play on the hole of the asp, 'the asp,' that is, the Arminian: 'the hole of the asp,' that is, the Arminian's mouth." Then follows an account of the games in which simple minds are more than a match for Arminian wisdom.

Professors of the other school of divinity have usually had the good sense not to return the compliment, or the Antinomians might have found themselves ranked with cockatrices, and their opponents boastfully defying them at the mouths of their dens. Such abuse only injures those who use it. Theological differences are better expounded and enforced, than by such buffoonery.

Ludicrous results sometimes arise from sheer stupidity inflated with conceit. One instance may suffice. A worthy minister told me the other day that he had been preaching lately to his people upon the nine and twenty knives of Ezra. I am sure he would handle these edged tools discreetly, but I could not refrain from saying that I hoped he had not imitated the very sage interpreter who saw in that odd number of knives a reference to the four-and-twenty elders of the Apocalypse.

A passage in the Proverbs reads as follows: "For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: for a servant when he reigns; and a fool when he is filled with meat: for an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress." A raving spiritualizer declares that this is a sweet picture of the work of grace in the soul, and shows what it is that disquiets Arminians, and sets them by the ears. "'A servant when he reigns,' that is, poor servants like ourselves, when we are made to reign with Christ; 'a fool when he is filled with meat,' that is, poor foolish men like us, when we are fed with the finest of the wheat of gospel truth; 'an odious woman when she is married,' that is, a sinner when he is united to Christ; 'A handmaid that is heir to her mistress,' that is, when we poor handmaids that were under the law, bondslaves, come into the privileges of Sarah, and become heirs to our own mistress."

These are a few specimens of ecclesiastical curiosities which are as numerous and valuable as the relics which are every day gathered so plentifully on the battle-field of Waterloo, and accepted by the more verdant as priceless treasures. But we have surfeited you, and have no wish to waste more of your time. From all such rank absurdity need you be admonished to turn away! Such maunderings dishonor the Bible, are an insult to the common-sense of the hearers, and a deplorable lowering of the minister. This, however, is no more the spiritualizing which we recommend to you, than the thistle in Lebanon is the cedar of Lebanon. Avoid that childish trifling and outrageous twisting of texts which will make you a wise man among fools, but a fool among wise men.

Our second is, never spiritualize upon indelicate subjects. It is needful to say this, for the Slopdash family are never more at home than when they speak in a way to crimson the cheek of modesty. There is a kind of beetle which breeds in filth, and this creature has its prototype among men. Do I not at this moment call to mind a savory divine who enlarged with wonderful gusto and sensuous unction upon the concubine cut into ten pieces: Greenacre himself could not have done it better. What abominable things have been said upon some of the sterner and more horrifying similes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel! Where the Holy Spirit is veiled and chaste—these men have torn away the veil, and spoken as none but naughty tongues would venture to do.

I am not squeamish, indeed, far from it, but explanations of the new birth by analogies suggested by a monthly nurse, expositions of the rite of circumcision, and minute descriptions of married life—would arouse my temper and make me feel inclined to command with Jehu that the shameless one should be thrown down from the exalted position disgraced by such brazen-faced impudence. I aver that no pure mind ought to be subjected to the slightest breath of indelicacy from the pulpit. Caesar's wife must be without suspicion, and Christ's ministers must be without speck in their lives or stain in their speech. Gentlemen, the kissing and hugging which some preachers delight in is disgusting: Solomon's Song had better be let alone than dragged in the mire as it often is. Young men especially must be scrupulously, jealously modest and pure in word. An old man is pardoned, I scarce know why, but a young man is utterly without excuse should he overstep the strict line of delicacy.

Next, and thirdly, never spiritualize for the sake of showing what an uncommonly clever fellow you are. Such an intention will be wicked, and the method used will be foolish. Only an egregious simpleton will seek to be noted for doing what nine out of ten could do quite as well. A certain probationer once preached a sermon upon the word "but," thus hoping to ingratiate himself with the congregation, who would, he thought, be enraptured with the powers of a brother who could enlarge so marvelously upon a mere conjunction. His subject appears to have been, the fact that whatever there may be of good in a man's character, or admirable in a man's position, there is sure to be some difficulty, some trial in connection with us all. "Naaman was a great man with his master, but _____." When the orator descended from the pulpit the deacons said, "Well, sir, you have given us a singular sermon, but—you are not the man for the place; that we can see very clearly."

Alas! for wit when it becomes so common, and withal puts a weapon into the hand of its own adversaries! Remember that spiritualizing is not such a wonderful display of ingenuity, even if you are able to do it well, and that without discretion it is the most

ready method of revealing your egregious folly.

Gentlemen, if you aspire to emulate Origen in wild, daring, interpretations, it may be as well to read his life and note attentively the follies into which even his marvelous mind was drawn by allowing a wild imagination to usurp absolute authority over his judgment; and if you set yourselves to rival the vulgar declaimers of a past generation, let me remind you that the cap and bells do not now command the same patronage as fell to their share a few years ago.

Our fourth caution is, never pervert Scripture to give it a novel and so-called spiritual meaning, lest you be found guilty of that solemn curse with which the roll of inspiration is guarded and closed. Mr. Cook, of Maidenhead, felt himself obliged to separate from William Huntingdon because of his making the seventh commandment to mean the Lord speaking to his Son and saying, "You shall not covet the devil's wife, that is, the non-elect." One can only say, horrible! Perhaps it would be an insult to your reason and your religion to say, loathe the thought of such profanity. You instinctively shrink from it.

Once more, in no case allow your audience to forget that the narratives which you spiritualize are facts, and not mere myths or parables. The first sense of the passage must never be drowned in the outflow of your imagination; it must be distinctly declared and allowed to hold the first rank. Your accommodation of it must never thrust out the original and native meaning, or even push it into the background.

The Bible is not a compilation of clever allegories or instructive poetical traditions; it teaches literal facts and reveals tremendous realities—let your full persuasion of this truth be manifest to all who attend your ministry. It will be an ill day for the church if the pulpit should even appear to endorse the skeptical hypothesis that Holy Scripture is but the record of a refined mythology, in which globules of truth are dissolved in seas of poetic and imaginary detail.

However, there is a legitimate range for spiritualizing, or rather for the particular gift which leads men to spiritualize. For instance, you have frequently been shown that the types yield ample scope for the exercise of a sanctified ingenuity. Why need you go about to find "odious women" to preach upon, when you have before you the tabernacle in the wilderness, with all its sacred furniture, the burnt-offering, the peace-offering, and all the various sacrifices which were offered before God? Why struggle for novelties when the temple and all its glories are before you? The largest capacity for typical interpretation will find abundant employment in the undoubted symbols of the Word of God, and it will be safe to enter upon such an exercise, because the symbols are of divine appointment.

When you have exhausted all the Old Testament types, you have left to you an heirloom of a thousand metaphors. Benjamin Keach, in his laborious treatise, proves most practically what mines of truth lie concealed in the metaphors of Scripture. His work, by the way, is open to much criticism on the score of making metaphors run not only on all-fours, but on as many legs as a centipede; but it does not deserve the condemnation of Dr. Adam Clarke, when he says it has done more to debase the taste both of preachers and people than any other work of the kind.

A discreet explanation of the poetical allusions of Holy Scripture will be most acceptable to your people, and, with God's blessing, not a little profitable.

But supposing you have expounded all the usually accepted types, and have cast light upon the emblems and figurative expressions, must your imagination and delight in similitudes go to sleep? By no means. When the apostle Paul finds a mystery in Melchizedek, and speaking of Hagar and Sarah, says, "Which things are an allegory," he gives us a precedent for discovering scriptural allegories in other places besides the two mentioned. Indeed, the historical books not only yield us here and there an allegory, but seem as a whole to be arranged with a view to symbolic teaching.

A passage from Mr. Andrew Jukes' preface to his work on the types of Genesis, will show how, without violence, a most elaborate theory may be constructed by a devout mind: "As a base or ground for what is to follow, we first are shown what springs from man, and all the different forms of life, which either by nature or grace can grow out of the root of old Adam. This is the book of Genesis.

Then we see, that be it bad or good which has come out of Adam, there must be redemption; so an elect people by the blood of the Lamb are saved from Egypt. This is Exodus.

After redemption is known, we come to the experience of the elect as needing access, and learning the way of it, to God the Redeemer in the sanctuary. This we get in Leviticus.

Then in the wilderness of this world, as pilgrims from Egypt, the house of bondage, to the promised land beyond Jordan, the trials of the journey are learned, from that land of wonders and man's wisdom to the land flowing with milk and honey. This is the book of Numbers.

Then comes the desire to exchange the wilderness for the better land, from entering which for a season after redemption is known the elect yet shrink; answering to the desire of the elect at a certain stage to know the power of the resurrection, to live even now as

in heavenly places. The rules and precepts which must be obeyed, if this is to be done, come next. Deuteronomy, a second giving of the law, a second cleansing, tells the way of progress.

After which Canaan is indeed reached. We go over Jordan: we know practically the death of the flesh, and what it is to be circumcised, and to roll away the reproach of Egypt. We know now what it is to be risen with Christ, and to wrestle, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers in heavenly places. This is Joshua.

Then comes the failure of the elect in heavenly places, failure arising from making leagues with Canaanites instead of overcoming them. This is Judges.

After which the different forms of rule, which the church may know, pass in review in the books of Kings, from the first setting up of rule in Israel down to its extinction, when for their sin the rule of Babylon supersedes that of the elect.

When this is known with all its shame, we see the remnants of the elect, each according to its measure, doing what may be done, if possible, to restore Israel; some, like Ezra, returning to build the temple, that is, to restore the forms of true worship; and some coming up, like Nehemiah, to build the wall, that is, to reestablish, by Gentile permission, a feeble imitation of the ancient polity; while a third remnant in Esther is seen in bonds, but faithful, providentially saved, though God's name (and this is characteristic of their state) never appears throughout the whole record."

I would be far from recommending you to become as fanciful as the ingenious author I have just quoted sometimes becomes, through the large indulgence of his tendency to mysticism, but nevertheless, you will read the Word with greatly increased interest if you are a sufficiently careful reader to have noticed the general run of the books of the Bible, and their consecutiveness as a system of types.

Then, too, the faculty which turns to spiritualizing will be well employed in generalizing the great universal principles evolved by minute and separate facts. This is an ingenious, instructive, and legitimate pursuit. Perhaps you might not elect to preach upon, "Take it by the tail," but the remark arising from it is natural enough, "there is a way of taking everything." Moses took the serpent by the tail, so there is a mode of grasping our afflictions and finding them stiffen in our hands into a wonder-working rod. There is a way of holding the doctrines of grace, a way of encountering ungodly men, and so on.

In hundreds of scriptural incidents you may find great general principles which may nowhere be expressed in so many words.

Take the following instances from Mr. Jay. From Psalm 74:14, "You broke the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gave him to be food to the people inhabiting the wilderness," he teaches the doctrine that the greatest foes of God's pilgrim people shall be slain, and the remembrance of the mercy shall refresh the saints.

From Genesis 35:8, "But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel, under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth," he discourses upon good servants, and the certainty of death.

Upon 2 Samuel 15:15, "And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king shall appoint," he shows that such language may with propriety be adopted by Christians, and addressed to Christ.

Should anyone take exception to the form of spiritualizing which Mr. Jay so efficiently and judiciously indulged in, he must be a person whose opinion need not sway you in the least. After my own ability I have taken the liberty to do the same, and the outlines of many sermons of the kind may be found in my little work entitled Evening by Evening, and a less liberal sprinkling in its companion, Morning by Morning.

The parables of our Lord in their expounding and enforcement afford the amplest scope for a matured and disciplined imagination, and if these have all passed before you, the miracles still remain, rich in symbolical teaching. There can be no doubt that the miracles are the acted sermons of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have his "word sermons" in his matchless teaching, and his "deed sermons" in his peerless acts. Despite many doctrinal failures, you will find Trench, on the miracles, most helpful in this direction. All our Lord's mighty works are full of teaching. Take the story of the healing of the deaf and dumb man. The poor creature's maladies are eminently suggestive of man's lost estate, and our Lord's mode of procedure most instructively illustrates the plan of salvation. "Jesus took him aside from the multitude"—the soul must be made to feel its own individuality, and must be led into loneliness. He "put his fingers into his ears," the source of the mischief indicated; sinners are convinced of their state. "And spat"—the gospel is a simple and a despised means, and the sinner, in order to salvation, must humble himself to receive it. He "touched his tongue," further pointing out where the mischief lay—our sense of need grows on us. He "looked up to heaven"—Jesus reminded his patient that all strength must come from above—a lesson which every seeker must learn. "He sighed," showing that the sorrows of the Healer are the means of our healing. And then he said, "Ephphatha, Be opened". Here was the effectual word of grace which wrought an immediate, perfect, and lasting cure. From this one exposition learn all, and ever believe that the miracles of Christ are a great picture gallery, illustrating His work among the sons of men.

Let it be an instruction, however, to all who handle either the parables or the metaphors, to be discreet. Dr. Gill is one whose name must ever be mentioned with honor and respect in this house in which his pulpit still stands, but his exposition of the parable of the Prodigal Son strikes me as being sadly absurd in some points. The learned commentator tells us, "the fatted calf" was the Lord Jesus Christ! Really, one shudders to see spiritualizing come to this. Then also there is his exposition of the Good Samaritan. The donkey on which the wounded man was placed is again our Lord Jesus, and the two pence which the Good Samaritan gave to the host, are the Old and New Testament, or the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Mr. Bunyan is the chief, and head, and lord of all allegorists, and is not to be followed by us into the deep places of typical and symbolical utterance. He was a swimmer, we are but mere waders, and must not go beyond our depth.

With this I close, re-asserting the opinion, that guided by discretion and judgment, we may occasionally employ spiritualizing with good effect to our people; certainly we shall interest them and keep them awake.

LECTURE 8 On the Voice

Our first rule with regard to the voice would be—do not think too much about it, for recollect the sweetest voice is nothing without something to say, and however well it may be managed, it will be like a well-driven cart with nothing in it, unless you convey by it important and seasonable truths to your people.

Demosthenes was doubtless right in giving a first, second, and third place to a good delivery; but of what value will that be if a man has nothing to deliver? A man with a surpassingly excellent voice who is destitute of a well-informed head, and an earnest heart, will be "a voice crying in the wilderness." Such a man may shine in the choir, but he is useless in the pulpit. Whitfield's voice, without his heart-power, would have left no more lasting effects upon his hearers than Paganini's fiddle.

You are not singers but preachers: your voice is but a secondary matter; do not be fops with it, as so many are. A trumpet need not be made of silver, a ram's-horn will suffice; but it must be able to endure rough usage, for trumpets are for war's conflicts, not for the drawing-rooms of fashion.

On the other hand, do not think too little of your voice, for its excellence may greatly conduce to the result which you hope to produce. Plato, in confessing the power of eloquence, mentions the tone of the speaker. "So strongly," says he, "does the speech and the tone of the orator ring in my ears, that scarcely in the third or fourth day do I recollect myself, and perceive where on the earth I am; and for a while I am willing to believe myself living in the isles of the blessed."

Exceedingly precious truths may be greatly marred by being delivered in monotonous tones. I once heard a most esteemed minister, who mumbled sadly, compared to "a humble bee in a pitcher," a vulgar metaphor no doubt, but so exactly descriptive, that it brings to my mind the droning sound at this instant most distinctly, and reminds me of the parody upon Gray's Elegy:

"Now fades the glimmering subject from the sight,
And all the air a sleepy stillness holds,
Save where the parson hums his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the slumbering folds."

What a pity that a man who from his heart delivered doctrines of undoubted value, in language the most appropriate, should commit ministerial suicide by harping on one string, when the Lord had given him an instrument of many strings to play upon! Alas! alas! for that dreary voice, it hummed and hummed like a mill-wheel to the same unmusical tune—whether its owner spoke of Heaven or Hell, eternal life or everlasting wrath. It might be, by accident, a little louder or softer, according to the length of the sentence, but its tone was still the same, a dreary waste of sound, a howling wilderness of speech in which there was no possible relief, no variety, no music, nothing but horrible sameness.

When the wind blows through the Aeolian harp, it swells through all the chords, but the heavenly wind, passing through some men, spends itself upon one string, and that, for the most part, the most out of tune of the whole. Grace alone could enable hearers to edify under the drum—drum—drum of some divines. I think an impartial jury would bring in a verdict of justifiable slumbering in many cases where the sound emanating from the preacher lulls to sleep by its reiterated note.

Dr. Guthrie charitably traces the slumbers of a certain Scotch congregation to bad ventilation in the meeting-house; this has something to do with it, but a bad condition of the valves of the preacher's throat might be a still more potent cause. Brethren, in the name of everything that is sacred, ring the whole chime in your steeple, and do not dun your people with the ding-dong of one poor cracked bell.

When you do pay attention to the voice, take care not to fall into the habitual and common affectations of the present day. Scarcely one man in a dozen in the pulpit talks like a man. This affectation is not confined to Protestants, for one remarks, "Everywhere else, men speak: they speak at the bar and the tribune; but they no longer speak in the pulpit, for there we only meet with a factitious and artificial language, and a false tone. This style of speaking is only tolerated in the church, because, unfortunately, it is so general there; elsewhere it would not be endured. What would be thought of a man who should converse in a similar way in a drawing-room? He would certainly provoke many a smile.

Some time ago there was a warder at the Pantheon—a good sort of fellow in his way—who, in enumerating the beauties of the monument, adopted precisely the tone of many of our preachers, and never failed thereby to excite the hilarity of the visitors, who were as much amused with his style of address as with the objects of interest which he pointed out to them.

A man who has not a natural and true delivery, should not be allowed to occupy the pulpit; from thence, at least, everything that is false should be summarily banished. In these days of mistrust everything that is false should be set aside; and the best way of correcting one's self in that respect, as regards preaching, is frequently to listen to certain monotonous and vehement preachers. We shall come away in such disgust, and with such a horror of their delivery, that we shall prefer condemning ourselves to silence rather than imitate them. The instant you abandon the natural and the true, you forego the right to be believed, as well as the right of being listened to."

You may go all round, to church and chapel alike, and you will find that by far the larger majority of our preachers have a holy tone for Sundays. They have one voice for the parlor and the draw-room, and quite another tone for the pulpit; so that, if not double-tongued sinfully, they certainly are so literally. The moment some men shut the pulpit door, they leave their own personal manhood behind them, and become as official as the parish beadle. There they might almost boast with the Pharisee, that they are not as other men are, although it would be blasphemy to thank God for it. No longer are they carnal and speak as men, but a whine, a broken hum-haw, an ore rotundo, or some other graceless mode of noise-making, is adopted, to prevent all suspicion of being natural and speaking out of the abundance of the heart. When that ministerial gown is once on, how often does it prove to be the shroud of the man's true self, and the effeminate emblem of officialism!

There are two or three modes of speech which I dare say you will recognize as having frequently heard. That dignified, doctorial, inflated, bombastic style, which I just now called the ore rotundo, is not quite so common now as it used to be, but it is still admired by some. When a reverend gentleman was once blowing off steam in this way, a man in the aisle said he thought the preacher "had swallowed a dumpling," but another whispered, "No, Jack, he aren't swaller'd un; he's got un in his mouth a-wobblin." I can imagine Dr. Johnson talking in that fashion at Bolt Court; and from men to whom it is natural it rolls with Olympian grandeur, but in the pulpit away forever with all imitation of it; if it comes naturally, well and good, but to mimic it is treason to common decency; indeed, all mimicry in the pulpit near akin to an unpardonable sin.

There is another style, at which I beseech you not to laugh. It is a method of enunciation said to be very ladylike, mincing, delicate, servant-girlified, dawdling, Dundrearyish, I know not how else to describe it. We have, most of us, had the felicity of hearing these, or some others, of the extensive genus of falsettos, high-stilts, and affectations. I have heard many different varieties, from the fullness of the Johnsonian to the thinness of the genteel whisper; from the roaring of the Bulls of Bashan up to the chip, chip, chip of a chaffinch.

Understand, that where even these horrors of sound are natural, I do not condemn them—let every creature speak in its own tongue; but the fact is, that in nine cases out of ten, these sacred brogues, which I hope will soon be dead languages, are unnatural and strained. I am persuaded that these tones and semitones and monotones are Babylonian, that they are not at all the Jerusalem dialect; for the Jerusalem dialect has this one distinguishing mark, that it is a man's own mode of speech, and is the same out of the pulpit as it is in it.

Our friend of the affected ore rotundo school was never known to talk out of the pulpit as he does in, or to say in the parlor in the same tone which he uses in the pulpit. He would make himself ludicrous if he did so, but the pulpit is to be favored with the scum of his voice, which the parlor would not tolerate.

I maintain that the best notes a man's voice is capable of should be given to the proclamation of the gospel, and these are such as nature teaches him to use in earnest conversation. Ezekiel served his Master with his most musical and melodious powers, so that the Lord said, "You are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." Although this, alas! was of no use to Israel's hard heart, as nothing will be but the Spirit of God—yet it well befit the prophet to deliver the word of the Lord in the best style of voice and manner.

In the next place, if you have any idiosyncrasies of speech, which are disagreeable to the ear, correct them, if possible. It is admitted that this is much more easy for the teacher to inculcate than for you to practice. Yet to young men in the morning of their ministry, the difficulty is not insuperable. Brethren from the country have a flavor of their rustic diet in their mouths, reminding us irresistibly of the

calves of Essex, the swine of Berkshire, or the runts of Suffolk. Who can mistake the Yorkshire or Somersetshire dialects, which are not merely provincial pronunciations, but tones also? It would be difficult to discover the cause, but the fact is clear enough, that in some counties of England men's threats seem to be furred up, like long-used teakettles, and in others, they ring like brass music, with a wicked metallic sound. Beautiful these variations of nature may be in their season and place, but my taste has never been able to appreciate them.

A sharp discordant squeak, like a rusty pair of scissors, is to be got rid of at all hazards; so also is a thick, inarticulate utterance in which no word is complete, but nouns, adjectives, and verbs are made into a kind of hash. Equally objectionable is that ghostly speech in which a man talks without using his lips, ventriloquising most horribly; sepulchral tones may fit a man to be an undertaker, but Lazarus is not called out of his grave by hollow moans.

One of the surest ways to kill yourself is to speak from the throat instead of the mouth. This misuse of nature will be terribly avenged by her; escape the penalty by avoiding the offence.

It may be well in this place to urge you as soon as you detect yourself interposing hum-haw pretty plentifully in your discourse, to purge yourself of the insinuating but ruinous habit at once. There is no need whatever for it, and although those who are now its victims may never be able to break the chain—you, who are beginners in oratory, must scorn to wear the galling yoke.

It is even needful to say, open your mouths when you speak, for much of inarticulate mumbling is the result of keeping the mouth half closed. It is not in vain that the evangelists have written of our Lord, "He opened His mouth and taught them." Open wide the doors from which such goodly truth is to march forth.

Moreover, brethren, avoid the use of the nose as an organ of speech, for the best authorities are agreed that it is intended to smell with. Time was, when the nasal twang was the correct thing, but in this degenerate age you had better obey the evident suggestion of nature, and let the mouth keep to its work without the interference of the olfactory instrument.

Should an American student be present he must excuse my pressing this remark upon his attention. Abhor the practice of some men, who will not bring out the letter "r;" such a habit is "vewy wuinous and wediculous, vewy wetched and wepwehensible."

Now and then a brother has the felicity to possess a most winning and delicious lisp. This is perhaps among the least of evils, where the brother himself is little and winning, but it would ruin any being who aimed at manliness and force. I can scarcely conceive of Elijah lisping to Ahab, or Paul prettily chipping his words on Mars' Hill.

There may be a peculiar pathos about a weak and watery eye, and a faltering style; we will go further, and admit that where these are the result of intense passion, they are sublime. But some possess them by birth, and use them rather too freely—it is, to say the least, unnecessary for you to imitate them. Speak as educated nature suggests to you, and you will do well; but let it be educated, and not raw, crude, uncultivated nature.

Demosthenes took, as you know, unbounded pains with his voice, and Cicero, who was naturally weak, made a long journey into Greece to correct his manner of speaking. With far nobler themes, let us not be less ambitious to excel. "Deprive me of everything else," says Gregory, of Nazianzen, "but leave me eloquence, and I shall never regret the voyages which I have made in order to study it."

Always speak so as to be heard. I know a man who weighs sixteen stone, and ought to be able to be heard half-a-mile, who is so gracelessly indolent, that in his small place of worship you can scarcely hear him in the front of the gallery. What is the use of a preacher whom men cannot hear? Modesty should lead a voiceless man to give place to others who are more fitted for the work of proclaiming the messages of the King. Some men are loud enough, but they are not distinct; their words overlap each other, play at leap-frog, or trip each other up.

Distinct utterance is far more important than wind-power. Do give a word a fair chance, do not break its back in your vehemence, or run it off its legs in your haste. It is hateful to hear a big fellow mutter and whisper when his lungs are quite strong enough for the loudest speech; but at the same time, let a man shout ever so lustily, he will not be well heard unless he learns to push his words forward with due space between.

To speak too slowly is miserable work, and subjects active-minded hearers to the disease called the "horrors." It is impossible to hear a man who crawls along at a mile an hour. One word today and one tomorrow is a kind of slow-fire which martyrs only could enjoy.

Excessively rapid speaking, tearing and raving into utter rant, is quite as inexcusable; it is not, and never can be powerful, except with idiots, for it turns what should be an army of words into a mob, and most effectually drowns the sense in floods of sound. Occasionally, one hears an infuriated orator of indistinct utterance, whose impetuosity hurries him on to such a confusion of sounds, that at a little distance one is reminded of Lucan's lines:

"Her gabbling tongue a muttering tone confounds,
Discordant and unlike to human sounds;
It seemed of dogs the bark, of wolves the howl,
The doleful screeching of the midnight owl;
The hiss of snakes, the hungry lion's roar,
The bound of billows beating on the shore;
The groan of winds among the leafy wood,
And burst of thunder from the rending cloud!
'Twas these, all these in one."

It is an infliction not to be endured twice, to hear a brother who mistakes perspiration for inspiration, tear along like a wild horse with a hornet in its ear until he has no more wind, and must needs pause to pump his lungs full again; a repetition of this indecency several times in a sermon is not uncommon, but is most painful. Pause soon enough to prevent that "hough, hough," which rather creates pity for the breathless orator than sympathy with the subject in hand.

Your audience ought not to know that you breathe at all—the process of respiration should be as unobserved as the circulation of the blood. It is indecent to let the mere animal function of breathing cause any hiatus in your discourse.

Do not as a rule exert your voice to the utmost in ordinary preaching. Two or three earnest men, now present, are tearing themselves to pieces by needless bawling; their poor lungs are irritated, and their larynx inflamed by boisterous shouting, from which they seem unable to refrain. Now it is all very well to "Cry aloud and spare not," but "Do yourself no harm" is apostolic advice. When people can hear you with half the amount of voice, it is as well to save the superfluous force for times when it may be needed. "Waste not, want not" may apply here as well as elsewhere. Be a little economical with that enormous volume of sound. Do not give your hearers head-aches when you mean to give them heart-aches. You aim to keep them from sleeping in their pews, but remember that it is not needful to burst the drums of their ears. "The Lord is not in the wind." Thunder is not lightning. Men do not hear in proportion to the noise created; in fact, too much noise stuns the ear, creates reverberations and echoes, and effectually injures the power of your sermons.

Adapt your voice to your audience; when twenty thousand are before you, draw out the stops and give the full peal, but not in a room which will only hold a score or two. Whenever I enter a place to preach, I unconsciously calculate how much sound is needed to fill it, and after a few sentences my key is pitched. If you can make the man at the end of the chapel hear, if you can see that he is catching your thought, you may be sure that those nearer can hear you, and no more force is needed, perhaps a little less will do—watch and see. Why speak so as to be heard in the street when there is nobody there who is listening to you? Whether indoors or out, see that the most remote hearers can follow you, and that will be sufficient.

By the way, I may observe, that brethren should, out of mercy to the weak, always attend carefully to the force of their voices in sick rooms, and in congregations where some are known to be very infirm. It is a cruel thing to sit down by a sick man's bedside, and shout out "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD!" If you act so thoughtlessly, the poor man will say as soon as you are down stairs, "Dear me! how my head aches. I am glad the good man is gone, Mary; that is a very precious Psalm and so quiet like, but he read it out like thunder and lightning, and almost stunned me!" Recollect, you younger and unmarried men, that soft whispers will suit the invalid better than shoutings.

Observe carefully the rule to vary the force of your voice. The old rule was, to begin very softly, gradually rise higher, and bring out your loudest notes at the end. Let all such regulations be blown to pieces at the cannon's mouth; they are impertinent and misleading.

Speak softly or loudly, as the emotion of the moment may suggest, and observe no artificial and fanciful rules. Artificial rules are an utter abomination. As one satirically puts it, "Be impassioned, thunder, rage, weep, up to the fifth word, of the third sentence, of the tenth paragraph, of the tenth leaf. How easy that would be! Above all, how very natural!"

In imitation of a popular preacher, to whom it was unavoidable, a certain minister was accustomed in the commencement of his sermon to speak in so low a key, that no one could possibly hear him. Everybody leaned forward, fearing that something good was being lost in the air, but their straining was in vain; a holy mutter was all they could discern. If the brother could not have spoken out none would have blamed him, but it was a most absurd thing to do this when in a short time he proved the power of his lungs by filling the whole structure by sonorous sentences. If the first half of his discourse was of no importance, why not omit it? and if of any value at all, why not deliver it distinctly? Effect, gentlemen, that was the point aimed at; he knew that one who spoke in that fashion had produced great effects, and he hoped to rival him.

If any of you dare commit such a folly for such a detestable object, I heartily wish you had never entered this Institution. I tell you most seriously, that the thing called "effect" is hateful, because it is untrue, artificial, tricky, and therefore despicable. Never do

anything for effect, but scorn the stratagems of little minds, hunting after the approval of connoisseurs in preaching, who are a race as obnoxious to a true minister as locusts to the Eastern gardener.

But I digress: be clear and distinct at the very first. Your exordia are too good to be whispered to space. Speak them out boldly, and command attention at the very outset by your manly tones. Do not start at the highest pitch as a rule, for then you will not be able to rise when you warm with the work; but still be outspoken from the first. Lower the voice when suitable even to a whisper; for soft, deliberate, solemn utterances are not only a relief to the ear, but have a great aptitude to reach the heart. Do not be afraid of the low keys, for if you throw force into them they are as well heard as the shouts. You need not speak in a loud voice in order to be heard well. Macaulay says of William Pitt, "His voice, even when it sank to a whisper, was heard to the remotest benches of the House of Commons." It has been well said that the most noisy gun is not the one which carries a ball the furthest: the crack of a rifle is anything but noisy. It is not the loudness of your voice, it is the force which you put into it that is effective.

I am certain that I could whisper so as to be heard throughout every corner of our great Tabernacle, and I am equally certain that I could shout so that nobody could understand me. The thing could be done here, but perhaps the example is needless, as I fear some of you perform the business with remarkable success. Waves of air may dash upon the ear in such rapid succession that they create no translatable impression on the auditory nerve. Ink is necessary to write with, but if you upset the ink bottle over the sheet of paper you convey no meaning thereby; so is it with sound. Sound is the ink, but management is needed, not quantity, to produce an intelligible writing upon the ear. If your sole ambition be to compete with—

"Stentor the strong, endued with brazen lungs,
Whose throat surpassed the force of fifty tongues,"

then bawl yourselves into Elysium as rapidly as possible. But if you wish to be understood, and so to be of service, shun the reproach of being "impotent and loud."

You are aware that shrill sounds travel the farthest: the singular cry which is used by travelers in the wilds of Australia, owes its remarkable power to its shrillness. A bell will be heard much farther off than a drum; and, very singularly, the more musical a sound is the farther it travels. It is not the thumping of the piano which is needed, but the judicious sounding of the best keys. You will therefore feel at liberty to ease the strain very frequently in the direction of loudness, and you will be greatly relieving both the ears of the audience and your own lungs.

Try all methods, from the sledge-hammer to the puff-ball. Be as gentle as a zephyr, and as furious as a tornado. Be, indeed, just what every common-sense person is in his speech when he talks naturally, pleads vehemently, whispers confidentially, appeals plaintively, or publishes distinctly.

Next to the moderation of lung-force, I should place the rule, modulate your tones. Alter the key frequently and vary the strain constantly. Let the bass, the treble, and the tenor, take their turn. I beseech you to do this out of pity to yourself and to those who hear you. God has mercy upon us and arranges all things to meet our cravings for variety; let us have mercy upon our fellow creatures, and not persecute them with the tedium of sameness. It is a most barbarous thing to inflict upon the tympanum of a poor fellow-creature's ear the anguish of being bored and gimbleted with the same sound for half an hour. What swifter mode of rendering the mind idiotic or lunatic could be conceived than the perpetual droning of a beetle, or buzzing of a blue-bottle, in the organ of hearing? What dispensation have you by which you are to be tolerated in such cruelty to the helpless victims who sit under your drum-drum ministrations? Kind nature frequently spares the drone's unhappy victims the full effect of his tortures by steeping them in sweet repose. This, however, you do not desire; then speak with varied voice.

How few ministers remember that monotony causes sleep. I fear the charge brought by a writer in the Imperial Review is true to the letter of numbers of my brethren. "We all know how the noise of running water, or the murmur of the sea, or the sighing of the south wind among the pines, or the moaning of wood-doves, induces a delicious dreamy languor. Far be it from us to say that the voice of a modern divine resembles, in the slightest degree, any of these sweet sounds—yet the effect is the same, and few can resist the drowsy influences of a lengthy dissertation, delivered without the slightest variation of tone or alteration of expression.

Indeed, the very exceptional use of the phrase 'an awakening discourse,' even by those most familiar with such matters, conveys the implication that the great majority of pulpit harangues are of a decidedly soporific tendency. It is an ill case when the preacher

Leaves his hearers perplexed,
Twixt the two to determine:
'Watch and pray,' says the text,
'Go to sleep,' says the sermon!

However musical your voice may be in itself, if you continue to sound the same chord perpetually, your hearers will perceive that its notes are by distance made, more sweet. Do in the name of humanity cease intoning and take to rational speaking. Should this

argument fail to move you, I am so earnest about this point, that if you will not follow my advice out of mercy to your hearers—yet do it out of mercy to yourselves; for as God in His infinite wisdom has been pleased always to append a penalty to every sin against His natural as well as moral laws, so the evil of monotony is frequently avenged by that dangerous disease called dysphonia clericorum, or, "Clergyman's sore throat." When certain of our brethren are so beloved by their hearers that they do not object to pay a handsome sum to get rid of them for a few months, when a journey to Jerusalem is recommended and provided for, bronchitis of a modified order is so remarkably overruled for good, that my present argument will not disturb their equanimity.

But such is not our lot; to us bronchitis means real misery, and therefore, to avoid it, we would follow any sensible suggestion. If you wish to ruin your throats you can speedily do so, but if you wish to preserve them, note what is now laid before you.

I have often in this room compared the voice to a drum. If the drummer should always strike in one place on the head of his drum, the skin would soon wear into a hole; but how much longer it would have lasted him if he had varied his thumping and had used the entire surface of the drum-head! So it is with a man's voice. If he uses always the same tone, he will wear a hole in that part of the throat which is most exercised in producing that monotony, and very soon he will suffer from bronchitis.

I have heard surgeons affirm, that Dissenting bronchitis differs from the Church of England article. There is an ecclesiastical twang which is much admired in the Establishment, a sort of steeple-in-the-throat grandeur, an aristocratic, theologic, parsonic, supernatural, infra-human mouthing of language and rolling over of words. Now, if a man who talks so unnaturally does not get bronchitis, or some other disease, I can only say that throat diseases must be very sovereignly dispensed. At the Nonconformist hobbies of utterance I have already struck a blow, and I believe it is by them that larynx and lungs become delicate, and good men succumb to silence and the grave. Should you desire my authority for the threat which I have held out to you, I shall give you the opinion of Mr. Macready, the eminent tragedian, who, since he looks at the matter from an impartial but experimental standpoint, is worthy of a respectful hearing. "Relaxed throat is usually caused, not so much by exercising the organ, as by the kind of exercise; that is, not so much by long or loud speaking, as by speaking in a feigned voice. I am not sure that I shall be understood in this statement, but there is not one person in ten thousand, who in addressing a body of people, does so in his natural voice; and this habit is more especially observable in the pulpit. I believe that relaxation of the throat results from violent efforts in these affected tones, and that severe irritation, and often ulceration, is the consequence. The labor of a whole day's duty in a church is nothing, in point of labor, compared with the performance of one of Shakespeare's leading characters, nor I should suppose, with any of the very great displays made by our leading statesmen in the Houses of Parliament; and I feel very certain that the disorder, which you designate as 'Clergyman's sore throat,' is attributable generally to the mode of speaking, and not to the length of time or violence of effort that may be employed. I have known several of my former contemporaries on the stage suffer from sore throat, but I do not think, among those eminent in their art, that it could be regarded as a prevalent disease."

Actors and barristers have much occasion to strain their vocal powers, and yet there is no such thing as a counsel's sore throat, or a tragedian's bronchitis; simply because these men dare not serve the public in so slovenly a manner as some preachers serve their God. Samuel Fenwick, M.D., in a popular treatise upon "Diseases of the Throat and Lungs," has most wisely said, "From what was stated respecting the physiology of the vocal chords, it will be evident that continued speaking in one tone is much more fatiguing than frequent alterations in the pitch of the voice; because by the former, one muscle or set of muscles alone is strained, while by the latter, different muscles are brought into action, and thus relieve one another. In the same way, a man raising his arm at right angles to his body, becomes fatigued in five or ten minutes, because only one set of muscles has to bear the weight; but these same muscles can work the whole day if their action is alternated with that of others. Whenever, therefore, we hear a clergyman droning through the church service, and in the same manner and tone of voice reading, praying, and exhorting, we may be perfectly sure that he is giving ten times more labor to his vocal chords than is absolutely necessary."

This may be the place to reiterate an opinion which I have often expressed in this place, of which I am reminded by the author whom I have quoted. If ministers would speak oftener, their throats and lungs would be less liable to disease. Of this I am quite sure; it is a matter of personal experience and wide observation, and I am confident that I am not mistaken. Gentlemen, twice a week preaching is very dangerous, but I have found five or six times healthy, and even twelve or fourteen not excessive.

A street vendor set to cry cauliflowers and potatoes one day in the week would find the effort most laborious, but when he for six successive days fills streets and lanes and alleys with his sonorous din, he finds no dysphonia pomariorum, or "street vendor's sore throat," laying him aside from his humble toils. I was pleased to find my opinion, that infrequent preaching is the root of many diseases, thus plainly declared by Dr. Fenwick: "All the directions which have been here laid down will, I believe, be ineffectual without regular daily practice of the voice. Nothing seems to have such a tendency to produce this disease as the occasional prolonged speaking, alternating with long intervals of rest, to which clergymen are more particularly subject. Anyone giving the subject a moment's consideration will readily understand this.

If a man, or any other animal, be intended for any unusual muscular exertion, he is regularly exercised in it, day by day, and labor is thus rendered easy which otherwise it would be almost impossible to execute. But the generality of the clerical profession undergo a

great amount of muscular exertion in the way of speaking only on one day of the week, while in the remaining six days they scarcely ever raise their voice above the usual pitch. Were a smith or a carpenter thus occasionally to undergo the fatigue connected with the exercise of his trade, he would not only be quite unfitted for it, but he would lose the skill he had acquired. The example of the most celebrated orators the world has seen proves the advantages of regular and constant practice of speaking. I would on this account most strongly recommend all people subject to this complaint to read aloud once or twice a day, using the same pitch of voice as in the pulpit, and paying especial attention to the position of the chest and throat, and to clear and proper articulation of the words."

Mr. Beecher is of the same opinion, for he remarks, "Newsboys show what out-of-door practice will do for a man's lungs. What would the pale and feeble-speaking minister do who can scarcely make his voice reach two hundred auditors if he were set to sell newspapers? Those New York newsboys stand at the head of a street, and send down their voices through it, as an athlete would roll a ball down an alley. We advise men training for speaking professions to peddle wares in the streets for a little time. Young ministers might go into partnership with newsboys awhile, until they got their mouths open and their larynx nerved and toughened."

Gentlemen, a needful rule is—always suit your voice to your matter. Do not be jubilant over a doleful subject; and on the other hand, do not drag heavily where the tones ought to trip along merrily, as though they were dancing to the tune of the angels in Heaven. This rule I shall not enlarge upon, but rest assured it is of the utmost importance, and if obediently followed, will always secure attention, provided your matter is worth it.

Suit your voice to your matter always, and, above all, in everything be natural. Away forever with slavish attention to rules and models. Do not imitate other people's voices, or, if from an unconquerable propensity you must follow them, emulate every orator's excellencies, and the evil will be lessened. I am myself, by a kind of irresistible influence, drawn to be an imitator, so that a journey to Scotland or Wales will for a week or two materially affect my pronunciation and tone. Strive against it I do, but there it is, and the only cure I know of is to let the mischief die a natural death.

Gentlemen, I return to my rule—use your own natural voices. Do not be monkeys, but men; not parrots, but men of originality in all things. It is said that the most becoming way for a man to wear his beard is that in which it grows, for both in color and form it will suit his face.

Your own modes of speech will be most in harmony with your methods of thought and your own personality. The mimic is for the playhouse, the cultured man in his sanctified personality is for the sanctuary. I would repeat this rule until I wearied you if I thought you would forget it; be natural, be natural, be natural evermore. An affectation of voice, or an imitation of the manner of Dr. Silver-tongue, the eminent divine, or even of a well-beloved tutor or president will inevitably ruin you. I charge you throw away the servility of imitation and rise to the manliness of originality.

We are bound to add—endeavor to educate your voice. Grudge no pains or labor in achieving this, for as it has been well observed, "However prodigious may be the gifts of nature to her elect, they can only be developed and brought to their extreme perfection by labor and study." Think of Michael Angelo working for a week without taking off his clothes, and Handel hollowing out every key of his harpsichord, like a spoon, by incessant practice. Gentlemen, after this, never talk of difficulty or weariness. It is almost impossible to see the utility of Demosthenes' method of speaking with stones in his mouth, but any one can perceive the usefulness of his pleading with the boisterous billows, that he might know how to command a hearing amidst the uproarious assemblies of his countrymen; and in his speaking as he ran up hill that his lungs might gather force from laborious use the reason is as obvious as the self-denial is commendable.

We are bound to use every possible means to perfect the voice by which we are to tell forth the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Take great care of the consonants, enunciate every one of them clearly; they are the features and expression of the words. Practice indefatigably until you give every one of the consonants its due; the vowels have a voice of their own, and therefore they can speak for themselves. In all other matters exercise a rigid discipline until you have mastered your voice, and have it in hand like a well-trained steed. Gentlemen with narrow chests are advised to lift weights every morning, or better still, those exercise clubs which the College has provided for you. You need broad chests, and must do your best to get them. Do not speak with your hands in your waistcoat pockets so as to contract your lungs, but throw the shoulders back, as public singers do. Do not lean over a desk while speaking, and never hold the head down on the chest while preaching. Upward rather than downward let the body bend. Off with all tight cravats and button-up waistcoats; leave room for the full play of the bellows and the pipes.

Observe the statues of the Roman or Greek orators, look at Raphael's picture of Paul—and, without affectation, fall naturally into the graceful and appropriate attitudes there depicted, for these are best for the voice. Get a friend to tell you your faults, or better still, welcome an enemy who will watch you keenly and sting you savagely. What a blessing such an irritating critic will be to a wise man, and what an intolerable nuisance to a fool! Correct yourself diligently and frequently, or you will fall into errors unawares, false tones will grow, and slovenly habits will form insensibly; therefore criticize yourself with unceasing care. Think nothing little by which you may be even a little more useful.

But, gentlemen, never degenerate in this business into pulpit fops, who think gesture and voice to be everything. I am sick at heart when I hear of men taking a whole week to get up a sermon, much of the getting up consisting in repeating their precious productions before a looking-glass! Alas! for this age, if graceless hearts are to be forgiven for the sake of graceful manners. Give us all the vulgarities of the wildest back-woods itinerant rather than the perfumed prettinesses of effeminate gentility. I would no more advise you to be fastidious with your voices than I would recommend you to imitate Rowland Hill's Mr. Taplash with his diamond ring, his richly-scented pocket handkerchief, and his eyeglass.

Perhaps here may be the place to observe that it were well if all parents were more attentive to the teeth of their children, since faulty teeth may cause serious damage to a speaker. There are men, whose articulation is faulty, who should at once consult the dentist (I mean, of course, a thoroughly scientific and experienced one); for a few false teeth or some other simple arrangement would be a permanent blessing to them. My own dentist very sensibly remarks in his circular, "When a portion or the whole of the teeth are lost, a contraction of the muscles of the face and throat follows, the other organs of the voice which have been accustomed to the teeth are impaired, and put out of their common play, producing a break, languor, or depression, as in a musical instrument which is deficient in a note. It is vain to expect perfect symphony, and proportional and consistent accent on the key, tone, and pitch of the voice, with deficiencies in its organs, and of course the articulation becomes defective; such defect adds much to the labor of speaking, to say the least, and in most cases lisping, a too hasty or sudden drop, or a faint delivery, is the result; from more serious deficiencies a mumbling and clattering is almost sure to follow."

Where this is the mischief, and the cure is within reach, we are bound for our works' sake to avail ourselves of it. Teeth may seem unimportant, but be it remembered, that nothing is little in so great a calling as ours. I shall in succeeding remarks mention even smaller matters, but it is with the deep impression that hints upon insignificant things may be of unknown value in saving you from serious neglects or gross errors.

Lastly, I would say with regard to your throats—take care of them. Take care always to clear them well when you are about to speak, but do not be constantly clearing them while you are preaching. A very esteemed brother of my acquaintance always talks in this way: "My dear friends—hem—hem—this is a most—hem—important subject which I have now—hem—hem—to bring before you, and—hem—hem—I have to call upon you to give me—hem—hem—your most serious—hem—attention."

Avoid this most zealously. Others, from lack of clearing the throat, talk as if they were choked up, and were just about to expectorate; it were far better to do so at once than to sicken the hearer by repeated unpleasant sounds. Snuffling and sniffing are excusable enough when a man has a cold, but they are extremely unpleasant, and when they become habitual, they ought to be indicted under the "Nuisances Act." Please excuse me, it may appear vulgar to mention such things, but your attention to the plain and free observations made in this lecture room may save many remarks at your expense hereafter.

My belief is that half the difficulties connected with the voice in our early days will vanish as we advance in years, and find in use a second nature. I would encourage the truly earnest to persevere; if they feel the Word of the Lord like fire in their bones, even stammering may be overcome, and fear, with all its paralysing results, may be banished. Take heart, young brother, persevere, and God, and nature, and practice, will help you.

LECTURE 9 Attention!

Our subject is one which I find scarcely ever noticed in any books upon homiletics—a very intricate fact, for it is a most important matter, and worthy of more than one chapter. I suppose the homiletical savans consider that their entire volumes are seasoned with this subject, and that they need not give it to us in lumps, because, like sugar in tea, it flavors the whole. That overlooked topic is, How to obtain and retain the attention of our hearers. Their attention must be gained, or nothing can be done with them; and it must be retained, or we may go on word-spinning, but no good will come of it.

Over the head of military announcements our English officers always place the word "Attention!" in large capitals, and we need some such word over all our sermons. We need the earnest, candid, wakeful, continued attention of all those who are in the congregation. If men's minds are wandering far away they cannot receive the truth, and it is much the same if they are inactive. Sin cannot be taken out of men, as Eve was taken out of the side of Adam, while they are fast asleep. They must be awake, understanding what we are saying, and feeling its force, or else we may as well go to sleep too.

There are preachers who care very little whether they are attended to or not; so long as they can hold on through the allotted time it is of very small importance to them whether their people hear for eternity, or hear in vain; the sooner such ministers sleep in the churchyard and preach by the verse on their gravestones the better. Some brethren speak up the ventilator, as if they sought the attention of the angels; and others look down upon their book as if they were absorbed in thought, or had themselves for an

audience, and felt much honored thereby. Why do not such brethren preach on the prairie and edify the stars? If their preaching has no reference to their hearers they might do so with evident propriety; if a sermon be a soliloquy, the more lonely the performer the better.

To a rational preacher (and all are not rational) it must seem essential to interest all his audience, from the eldest to the youngest. We ought not to make even children inattentive. "Make them inattentive," say you, "who does that?" I say that most preachers do; and when children are not quiet in a meeting it is often as much our fault as theirs. Can you not put in a little story or parable on purpose for the little ones? Can you not catch the eye of the boy in the gallery, and the little girl downstairs, who have begun to fidget, and smile them into order? I often talk with my eyes to the orphan boys at the foot of my pulpit. We want all eyes fixed upon us and all ears open to us. To me it is an annoyance if even a blind man does not look at me with his face. If I see anybody turning round, whispering, nodding, or looking at his watch, I judge that I am not up to the mark, and must by some means win these minds. Very seldom have I to complain, and when I do, my general plan is to complain of myself, and own that I have no right to attention unless I know how to command it.

Now, there are some congregations whose attention you do not readily gain; they do not care to be interested. It is useless to scold them; that will be like throwing a bush at a bird to catch it. The fact is, that in most cases there is another person whom you should scold, and that is yourself. It may be their duty to attend, but it is far more your duty to make them do so. You must attract the fish to your hook, and if they do not come you should blame the fisherman and not the fish. Compel them to stand still a while and hear what God the Lord would speak to their souls.

The minister who recommended the old lady to take snuff in order to keep from dozing was very properly rebuked by her reply—that if he would put more snuff into the sermon she would be awake enough. We must plentifully cast snuff into the sermon, or something yet more awakening. Recollect that to some of our people it is not so easy to be attentive; many of them are not interested in the matter, and they have not felt enough of any gracious operation on their hearts to make them confess that the gospel is of any special value to them. Concerning the Savior whom you preach you may say to them,

"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by,
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

Many of them have through the week been borne down by the press of business cares. They ought to roll their burden on the Lord; but do you always do so? Do you always find it easy to escape from anxieties? Are you able to forget the sick wife and the ailing children at home? There is no doubt whatever that many come into the house of God loaded heavily with the thoughts of their daily avocations. The farmer recollects the fields that are to be ploughed or to be sown; it is a wet Sunday, and he is reflecting upon the yellow look of the young wheats. The merchant sees that dishonored bill fluttering before his eyes, and the tradesman counts over his bad debts. I should not wonder if the colors of the ladies' ribbons and the creak of the gentlemen's boots disturb many.

There are troublesome flies about, you know; Beelzebub, the God of flies, takes care that wherever there is a gospel feast the guests should be worried with petty annoyances. Often mental mosquitoes sting the man while you are preaching to him, and he is thinking more of trifling distractions than of your discourse; is it so very wonderful that he does? You must drive the mosquitoes away, and secure your people's undistracted thoughts, turning them out of the channel in which they have been running six days, into one suitable for the Sabbath. You must have sufficient leverage in your discourse and its subject to lift them right up from the earth to which they cleave, and to elevate them a little nearer Heaven.

Frequently it is very difficult for congregations to attend, because of the place and the atmosphere. For instance, if the place is like this room at present, sealed against the pure air, with every window closed, they have enough to do to breathe, and cannot think of anything else: when people have inhaled over and over again the air which has been in other people's lungs, the whole machinery of life gets out of gear, and they are more likely to feel an aching head than a broken heart. The next best thing to the grace of God for a preacher is oxygen. Pray that the windows of Heaven may be opened, but begin by opening the windows of your meeting-house. Look at many of our country places, and I am afraid our city chapels too, and you will find that the windows are not made to open. The modern barbarous style of building gives us no more ceiling than a barn, and no more openings for ventilation than would be found in an oriental dungeon, where the tyrant expected his prisoner to die by inches. What would we think of a house where the windows could not be opened? Would any of you rent such a dwelling? Yet Gothic architecture and silly pride make many people renounce the wholesome sash window for little holes in the ceiling, or bird traps in the windows, and so places are made far less comfortable than Nebuchadnezzar's furnace was to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Provided all such chapels were properly insured, I could not pray for their preservation from fire. Even where the windows will open they are often kept closed by the month together, and from Sunday to Sunday the impure atmosphere is unchanged. This ought not to be endured. I know some people do not notice such things, and I have heard it remarked that foxes are not killed by the stench of their own holes; but I am not a fox, and bad air makes me dull, and my hearers dull too. A gust of fresh air through the building might be to the people the next best thing to the gospel itself; at least it would put them into a fit frame of mind to receive the truth. Take

trouble on week days to remove the hindrance arising from foul air.

In my former chapel in Park Street I mentioned to my deacons several times my opinion that the upper panes of the iron-framed windows had better be taken out, as the windows were not made to open. I mentioned this several times, and nothing came of it; but it providentially happened one Monday that somebody removed most of those panes in a masterly manner, almost as well as if they had been taken out by a glazier. There was considerable consternation, and much conjecture as to who had committed the crime, and I proposed that a reward of five pounds should be offered for the discovery of the offender, who when found should receive the amount as a present. The reward was not forthcoming, and therefore I have not felt it to be my duty to inform against the individual. I trust none of you will suspect me, for if you do I shall have to confess that I have walked with the stick which let the oxygen into that stifling structure.

Sometimes the manners of our people are inimical to attention; they are not in the habit of attending; they attend the chapel but do not attend to the preacher. They are accustomed to look round at every one who enters the place, and they come in at all times, sometimes with much stamping, squeaking of boots, and banging of doors. I was preaching once to a people who continually looked round, and I adopted the expedient of saying, "Now, friends, as it is so very interesting to you to know who comes in, and it disturbs me so very much for you to look round—I will, if you like, describe each one as he comes in, so that you may sit and look at me, and keep up at least a show of decency."

I described one gentleman who came in, who happened to be a friend whom I could depict without offence, as "a very respectable gentleman who had just taken his hat off," and so on; and after that one attempt I found it was not necessary to describe any more, because they felt shocked at what I was doing, and I assured them that I was much more shocked that they should render it necessary for me to reduce their conduct to such an absurdity. It cured them for the time being, and I hope forever, much to their pastor's joy.

We will now suppose that this is set right. You have let the foul air out of the place, and reformed the manners of the people. What next?

In order to get attention, the first golden rule is, always say something worth hearing. Most people possess an instinct which leads them to desire to hear a good thing. They have a similar instinct, also, which you had better take note of, namely, that which prevents their seeing the good of attentively listening to mere words. It is not a severe criticism to say that there are ministers whose words stand in a very large proportion to their thoughts. In fact, their words hide their thoughts, if they have any. They pour out heaps of chaff, and, perhaps, there may be somewhere or other an oat or two, but it would be hard to say where.

Congregations will not long attend to words, words, words, words, and nothing else. Among the commandments I am not aware of one which runs thus: "You shall not be verbose," but it may be comprehended under the command, "You shall not steal;" for it is a fraud upon your hearers to give them words instead of spiritual food. "In the multitude of words there lacks not sin," even in the best preacher. Give your hearers something which they can treasure up and remember; something likely to be useful to them, the best matter from the best of places, solid doctrine from the divine Word. Give them manna fresh from the skies; not the same thing over and over again, in the same form ad nauseam, like workhouse bread cut into the same shape all the year round. Give them something striking, something that a man might get up in the middle of the night to hear, and which is worth his walking fifty miles to listen to. You are quite capable of doing that. Do it, brethren. Do it continually, and you will have all the attention you can desire.

Let the good matter which you give them be very clearly arranged. There is a great deal in that. It is possible to heap up a vast mass of good things all in a muddle. Ever since the day I was sent to shop with a basket, and purchased a pound of tea, a quarter-of-a-pound of mustard, and three pounds of rice, and on my way home saw a pack of hounds and felt it necessary to follow them over hedge and ditch (as I always did when I was a boy), and found when I reached home that all the goods were amalgamated—tea, mustard, and rice—into one awful mess, I have understood the necessity of packing up my subjects in good stout parcels, bound round with the thread of my discourse; and this makes me keep to firstly, secondly, and thirdly, however unfashionable that method may now be.

People will not drink your mustardy tea, nor will they enjoy muddled-up sermons, in which you cannot tell head from tail, because they have neither, but are like Mr. Bright's Skye terrier, whose head and tail were both alike. Put the truth before men in a logical, orderly manner, so that they can easily remember it, and they will the more readily receive it.

Be sure, moreover, to speak plainly; because, however excellent your matter, if a man does not comprehend it, it can be of no use to him; you might as well have spoken to him in the language of Kam-skatka as in your own tongue, if you use phrases that are quite out of his line, and modes of expression which are not suitable to his mind. Go up to his level if he is a poor man; go down to his understanding if he is an educated person. You smile at my contorting the terms in that manner, but I think there is more going up in being plain to the illiterate, than there is in being refined for the polite. At any rate, it is the more difficult of the two, and most like the Savior's mode of speech. It is wise to walk in a path where your auditors can accompany you, and not to mount the high horse and

ride over their heads.

Our Lord and Master was the King of preachers, and yet He never was above anybody's comprehension, except so far as the grandeur and glory of His matter were concerned; His words and utterances were such that He spoke like "the holy child Jesus." Let your hearts indite a good matter, clearly arranged and plainly put, and you are pretty sure to gain the ear, and so the heart.

Attend also to your manner of address; aim in that at the promotion of attention. And here I should say, as a rule do not read your sermons. There have been a few readers who have exercised great power, as, for instance, Dr. Chalmers, who could not have had a more attentive audience had he been extemporising; but then I do not suppose that we are equal to Dr. Chalmers; men of such eminence may read if they prefer it, but for us there is "a more excellent way."

The best reading I have ever heard has tasted of paper, and has stuck in my throat. I have not relished it, for my digestion is not good enough to dissolve foolscap. It is better to do without the manuscript, even if you are driven to recite. It is best of all if you need neither to recite nor to read. If you must read, mind that you do it to perfection. Be the very best of readers, and you had need to be if you would secure attention.

Here let me say, if you would be listened to, do not extemporise in the emphatic sense, for that is as bad as reading, or perhaps worse, unless the manuscript was written extemporaneously; I mean without previous study. Do not go into the pulpit and say the first thing that comes to hand, for the uppermost thing with most men is mere froth. Your people need discourses which have been prayed over and laboriously prepared. People do not want raw food; it must be cooked and made ready for them. We must give out of our very souls, in the words which naturally suggest themselves, the matter which has been as thoroughly prepared by us as it possibly could have been by a sermon-writer; indeed, it should be even better prepared, if we would speak well. The best method is, in my judgment, that in which the man does not extemporise the matter, but extemporises the words; the language comes to him at the moment, but the theme has been well thought out, and like a master in Israel he speaks of that which he knows, and testifies of what he has seen.

In order to get attention, make your manner as pleasing as it can possibly be. Do not, for instance, indulge in monotones. Vary your voice continually. Vary your speed as well—dash as rapidly as a lightning flash, and anon, travel forward in quiet majesty. Shift your accent, move your emphasis, and avoid sing-song. Vary the tone; use the bass sometimes, and let the thunders roll within; at other times speak as you ought to do generally—from the lips, and let your speech be conversational. Anything for a change. Human nature craves for variety, and God grants it in nature, providence and grace; let us have it in sermons also. I shall not, however, dwell much upon this, because preachers have been known to arouse and sustain attention by their matter alone, when their mode of speech has been very imperfect. If Richard Sibbes, the Puritan, were here this afternoon, I would guarantee him fixed attention to anything that he would say, and yet he stammered dreadfully. One of his contemporaries says he Sibilated, he lisped and hissed so much.

We need not look far for instances in modern pulpits, for there are too many of them; but we may remember that Moses was slow of speech, and yet every ear was intent to his words. Probably Paul also labored under a similar infirmity, for his speech was said to be contemptible; of this, however, we are not sure, for it was only the criticism of his enemies. Paul's power in the churches was very great, and yet he was not always able to maintain attention when his sermon was long, for at least one hearer went to sleep under him with serious result.

Manner is not everything. Still, if you have gathered good matter, it is a pity to convey it poorly. A king should not ride in a dust-cart; the glorious doctrines of grace should not be slovenly delivered. Right royal truths should ride in a chariot of gold. Bring forth the noblest of your milk-white steeds, and let the music sound forth melodiously from the silver trumpets, as truth rides through the streets. If people do not attend, do not let them find excuses in our faulty utterance. If, however, we cannot mend in this respect let us be the more diligent to make up for it by the richness of our matter, and on all occasions let us do our very best.

As a rule, do not make the introduction too long. It is always a pity to build a great porch to a little house. An excellent Christian woman once heard John Howe, and, as he took up an hour in his preface, her observation was, that the dear good man was so long a time in laying the cloth, that she lost her appetite: she did not think there would be any dinner after all. Spread your table quickly, and have done with the clatter of the knives and the plates.

You may have seen a certain edition of Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, with an introductory essay by John Foster. The essay is both bigger and better than the book, and deprives Doddridge of the chance of being read. Is not this preposterous? Avoid this error in your own productions. I prefer to make the introduction of my sermon very like that of the town-crier, who rings his bell and cries, "Oh, yes! Oh, yes! This is to give notice!" merely to let people know that he has news for them, and wants them to listen. To do that, the introduction should have something striking in it. It is well to fire a startling shot as the signal gun to clear the decks for action. Do not start at the full pitch and tension of your mind, but yet in such way that all will be led to expect a good time. Do not make your exordium a pompous introduction into nothing, but a step to something better still. Be alive at the very

commencement.

In preaching, do not repeat yourselves. I used to hear a divine who had a habit, after he had uttered about a dozen sentences, of saying, "As I have already observed," or, "I repeat what I before remarked." Well, good soul, as there was nothing particular in what he had said, the repetition only revealed the more clearly the nakedness of the land. If it was very good, and you said it forcibly, why go over it again? And if it was a feeble affair, why exhibit it a second time? Occasionally, of course, the repetition of a few sentences may be very telling; anything may be good occasionally, and yet be very bad as a habit. Who wonders that people do not listen the first time when they know it is all to come over again?

Yet further, do not repeat the same idea over and over again in other words. Let there be something fresh in each sentence. Be not forever hammering away at the same nail; yours is a large Bible; permit the people to enjoy its length and breadth.

Brethren, do not think it necessary or important every time you preach to give a complete summary of theology, or a formal digest of doctrines, after the manner of Dr. Gill—not that I would discredit or speak a word against Dr. Gill—his method is admirable for a body of divinity, or a commentary, but not suitable for preaching. I know a divine whose sermons whenever they are printed read like theological summaries, more fitted for a classroom than for a pulpit—they fall flat on the public ear. Our hearers do not want the bare bones of technical definition, but meat and flavor. Definitions and differences are all very well; but when they are the staple of a sermon they remind us of the young man whose discourse was made up of various important distinctions. Upon this performance an old deacon observed that there was one distinction which he had omitted, namely, the distinction between meat and bones. If preachers do not make that distinction, all their other distinctions will not bring them much distinction.

In order to maintain attention, avoid being too long. An old preacher used to say to a young man who preached an hour, "My dear friend, I do not care what else you preach about, but I wish you would always preach about forty minutes." We ought seldom to go much beyond that—forty minutes, or, say, three-quarters of an hour. If a fellow cannot say all he has to say in that time, when will he say it? But somebody said he liked "to do justice to his subject." Well, but ought he not to do justice to his people—or, at least, have a little mercy upon them, and not keep them too long? The subject will not complain of you, but the people will.

In some country places, in the afternoon especially, the farmers have to milk their cows, and one farmer bitterly complained to me about a young man—I think from this College, "Sir, he ought to have given over at four o'clock, but he kept on until half-past, and there were all my cows waiting to be milked! How would he have liked it if he had been a cow?" There was a great deal of sense in that question. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ought to have prosecuted that young man. How can farmers hear to profit when they have cows-on-the-brain?

The mother feels morally certain during that extra ten minutes of your sermon that the baby is crying, or the fire is out, and she cannot and will not give her heart to your ministrations. You are keeping her ten minutes longer than she bargained for, and she looks upon it as a piece of injustice on your part.

There is a kind of moral compact between you and your congregation that you will not weary them more than an hour-and-a-half, and if you keep them longer, it amounts to an infraction of a treaty and a piece of practical dishonesty of which you ought not to be guilty. Brevity is a virtue within the reach of all of us; do not let us lose the opportunity of gaining the credit which it brings.

If you ask me how you may shorten your sermons, I should say, study them better. Spend more time in the study that you may need less in the pulpit. We are generally longest when we have least to say. A man with a great deal of well-prepared matter will probably not exceed forty minutes; when he has less to say he will go on for fifty minutes, and when he has absolutely nothing he will need an hour to say it in. Attend to these minor things and they will help to retain attention.

If you want to have the attention of your people—to have it thoroughly and always, it can only be accomplished by their being led by the Spirit of God into an elevated and devout state of mind. If your people are teachable, prayerful, active, earnest, devout, they will come up to the house of God on purpose to get a blessing. They will take their seats prayerfully, asking God to speak to them through you; they will remain on the watch for every word, and will not weary. They will have an appetite for the gospel, for they know the sweetness of the heavenly manna, and they will be eager to gather their appointed portions. No man will ever have a congregation to preach to which surpasses my own in this respect. Indeed, those with whom the preacher is most at home are usually the best hearers for him. It is comparatively easy to me to preach at the Tabernacle; my people come on purpose to hear something, and their expectation helps to fulfill itself. If they would hear another preacher with the same expectancy, I believe they would generally be satisfied; though there are exceptions.

When the preacher first settles, he cannot expect that his congregation will give him that solemn earnest attention which those obtain who stand up like fathers among their own children, endeared to their people by a thousand memories, and esteemed for age and experience. Our whole life must be such as to add weight to our words, so that in after years we shall be able to wield the invincible eloquence of a long-sustained character, and obtain, not merely the attention, but the affectionate veneration of our flock. If by our prayers and tears and labors our people become spiritually healthy, we need not fear that we shall lose their attention. A people

hungering after righteousness, and a minister anxious to feed their souls, will act in sweetest harmony with each other when their common theme is the Word of the Lord.

If you need another direction for winning attention, I should say, be interested yourself, and you will interest others. There is more in those words than there seems to be, and so I will follow a custom which I just now condemned, and repeat the sentence—be interested yourself, and you will interest other people. Your subject must weigh so much upon your own mind that you dedicate all your faculties at their best to the deliverance of your soul concerning it; and then when your hearers see that the topic has engrossed you, it will by degrees engross them.

Do you wonder that people do not attend to a man who does not feel that he has anything important to say? Do you wonder that they do not listen with all their ears when a man does not speak with all his heart? Do you marvel that their thoughts ramble to subjects which are real to them when they find that the preacher is wasting time over matters which he treats as if they were fiction? Romaine used to say it was well to understand the art of preaching, but infinitely better to know the heart of preaching; and in that saying there is no little weight. The heart of preaching, the throwing of the soul into it, the earnestness which pleads as for life itself, is half the battle as to gaining attention.

At the same time, you cannot hold men's minds in enrapt attention by mere earnestness if you have nothing to say. People will not stand at their doors forever to hear a fellow beat a drum; they will come out to see what he is at, but when they find that it is much ado about nothing, they will slam the door and go in again, as much as to say, "You have taken us in and we do not like it." Have something to say, and say it earnestly, and the congregation will be at your feet.

It may be superfluous to remark that for the mass of our people it is well that there should be a goodly number of illustrations in our discourses. We have the example of our Lord for that: and most of the greatest preachers have abounded in similes, metaphors, allegories, and anecdotes. But beware of overdoing this business. I read the other day the diary of a German lady who has been converted from Lutheranism to our faith, and she speaks of a certain village where she lives: "There is a mission-station here, and young men come down to preach to us. I do not wish to find fault with these young gentlemen, but they tell us a great many very pretty little stories, and I do not think there is much else in what they say. Also I have heard some of their little stories before, therefore they do not so much interest me, as they would do if they would tell us some good doctrine out of the Scriptures."

The same thing has no doubt crossed many other minds. "Pretty stories" are all very well, but it will never do to rely upon them as the great attraction of a sermon. Moreover, take warning concerning certain of these "pretty little stories," for their day is over and gone; the poor things are worn threadbare and ought to go into the rag-bag. I have heard some of them so many times, that I could tell them myself, but there is no need. From stock anecdotes may both ourselves and our hearers be mercifully delivered. Ancient jests sicken us when wittings retail them as their own ideas, and anecdotes to which our great-grandfathers listened have much the same effect upon the mind. Beware of those extremely popular compilations of illustrations which are in every Sunday-school teacher's hand, for nobody will thank you for repeating what everybody already knows by heart. If you tell anecdotes let them have some degree of freshness and originality; keep your eyes open, and gather flowers from the garden and the field with your hands; they will be far more acceptable than withered specimens borrowed from other men's bouquets, however beautiful those may once have been.

Illustrate richly and aptly, but not so much with parables imported from foreign sources as with apt similes growing out of the subject itself. Do not, however, think the illustration everything; it is the window, but of what use is the light which it admits if you have nothing for the light to reveal? Garnish your dishes, but remember that the meat is the main point to consider, not the garnishing. Real instruction must be given and solid doctrine taught, or you will find your imagery pall upon your hearers, and they will pine for spiritual meat.

In your sermons cultivate what Mr. Taylor calls "the surprise power." There is a great deal of force in that for winning attention. Do not say what everybody expected you would say. Keep your sentences out of ruts. If you have already said, "Salvation is all of grace" do not always add, "and not by human merit," but vary it and say, "Salvation is all of grace; self-righteousness has not a corner to hide its head in." I fear I cannot recall one of Mr. Taylor's sentences so as to do it justice, but it was something like this: "Some of you make no advance in the divine life, because you go forward a little way and then you float back again: just like a vessel on a tidal river which goes down with the stream just far enough to be carried back again on the return tide. So you make good progress for a while, and then all of a sudden"—what did he say? "you hitch up in some muddy creek." Did he not also repeat us a speech to this effect, "He felt sure that if they were converted they would walk uprightly and keep their bullocks out of their neighbor's corn."

Occasional resorts to this system of surprise will keep an audience in a state of proper expectancy. I sat last year about this time on the beach at Mentone by the Mediterranean Sea. The waves were very gently rising and falling, for there is little or no tide, and the wind was still. The waves crept up languidly one after another, and I took little heed of them, though they were just at my feet. Suddenly, as if seized with a new passion, the sea sent up one far-reaching billow, which drenched me thoroughly. Quiet as I had

been before, you can readily conceive how quickly I was on my feet, and how speedily my day-dreaming ended. I observed to a ministering brother at my side, "This shows us how to preach, to wake people up we must astonish them with something they were not looking for."

Brethren, take them at unawares. Let your thunderbolt drop out of a clear sky. When all is calm and bright let the tempest rush up, and by contrast make its terrors all the greater. Remember, however, that nothing will avail if you go to sleep yourself while you are preaching. Is that possible? Oh, possible! It is done every Sunday. Many ministers are more than half-asleep all through the sermon; indeed, they never were awake at any time, and probably never will be unless a cannon should be fired off near their ear: tame phrases, hackneyed expressions, and dreary monotones make the staple of their discourses, and they wonder that the people are so drowsy. I confess I do not.

A very useful help in securing attention is a pause. Pull up short every now and then, and the passengers on your coach will wake up. The miller goes to sleep while the mill wheels revolve; but if by some means or other the grinding ceases, the good man starts and cries, "What now?" On a sultry summer's day, if nothing will keep off the drowsy feeling, be very short, sing more than usual, or call on a brother or two to pray. A minister who saw that the people would sleep, sat down and observed, "I saw you were all resting, and I thought I would rest too."

Andrew Fuller had barely commenced a sermon when he saw the people going to sleep. He said, "Friends, friends, friends, this won't do. I have thought sometimes when you were asleep that it was my fault, but now you are asleep before I begin, and it must be your fault. Pray wake up and give me an opportunity of doing you some good."

Know how to pause. Make a point of interjecting arousing parentheses of quietude. Speech is silver, but silence is golden when hearers are inattentive. Keep on, on, on, on, on, with commonplace matter and monotonous tone, and you are rocking the cradle, and deeper slumbers will result; give the cradle a jerk, and sleep will flee.

I suggest again that in order to secure attention all through a discourse we must make the people feel that they have an interest in what we are saying to them. This is, in fact, a most essential point, because nobody sleeps while he expects to hear something to his advantage. I have heard of some very strange things, but I never did hear of a person going to sleep while a will was being read in which he expected a legacy, neither have I heard of a prisoner going to sleep while the judge was summing up, and his life was hanging in jeopardy.

Self-interest quickens attention. Preach upon practical themes, pressing, present, personal matters, and you will secure an earnest hearing.

It will be well to prevent attendants traversing the aisles to meddle with gas or candles, or to distribute plates for collections, or to open windows. Deacons and sextons trotting over the place are a torture never to be patiently endured, and should be kindly, but decidedly, requested to suspend their perambulations.

Late attendance, also, needs remedying, and our gentlest reasonings and expostulations must be brought to bear upon it. I feel sure that the devil has a hand in many disturbances in the congregation, which jar upon our nerves, and distract our thoughts. The banging of a pew door, the sharp fall of a stick on the floor, or the cry of a child, are all convenient means in the hands of the evil one for hindering us in our work; we may, therefore, very justifiably beg our people to preserve our usefulness from this class of assaults.

I gave you a golden rule for securing attention at the commencement, namely, always say something worth hearing. I will now give you a diamond rule, and conclude. Be yourself clothed with the Spirit of God, and then no question about attention or non-attention will arise. Come fresh from the closet and from communion with God, to speak to men for God with all your heart and soul, and you must have power over them. You have golden chains in your mouth which will hold them fast. When God speaks men must listen; and though He may speak through a poor feeble man like themselves, the majesty of the truth will compel them to regard His voice.

Supernatural power must be your reliance. We say to you, perfect yourselves in oratory, cultivate all the fields of knowledge, make your sermon mentally and rhetorically all it ought to be (you ought to do no less in such a service), but at the same time remember, "it is not by might, nor by power," that men are regenerated or sanctified, but "by my Spirit, says the Lord."

Are you not conscious sometimes of being clad with zeal as with a cloak, and filled to the full with the Spirit of God? At such times you have had a hearing people, and, before long, a believing people; but if you are not thus endowed with power from on high, you are to them no more than a musician who plays upon a goodly instrument, or sings a sweet song with a clear voice, reaching the ear but not the heart. If you do not touch the heart you will soon weary the ear. Clothe yourself, then, with the power of the Spirit of God, and preach to men as those who must soon give an account, and who desire that their account may not be painful to their people and grievous to themselves, but that it may be to the glory of God.

Brethren, may the Lord be with you, while you go forth in His name and cry, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

LECTURE 10 The Faculty of Impromptu Speech

We are not about to discuss the question as to whether sermons should be written and read, or written, committed to memory and repeated, or whether copious notes should be employed, or no notes at all. Neither of these is the subject now under consideration, although we may incidentally allude to each of them, but we are now to speak of extemporaneous speech in its truest and most thorough form—speech impromptu, without special preparation, without notes or immediate forethought.

Our first observation shall be that we would not recommend any man to attempt preaching in this style as a general rule. If he did so, he would succeed, we think, most certainly, in producing a vacuum in his meeting-house; his gifts of dispersion would be clearly manifested. Unstudied thoughts coming from the mind without previous research, without the subjects in hand having been investigated at all—must be of a very inferior quality, even from the most superior men; and as none of us would have the effrontery to glorify ourselves as men of genius or wonders of erudition, I fear that our unpremeditated thoughts upon most subjects would not be remarkably worthy of attention.

Churches are not to be held together except by an instructive ministry; a mere filling up of time with oratory will not suffice. Everywhere men ask to be fed, really fed. Those new-fangled religionists, whose public worship consists of the perfections of any brother who chooses to jump up and talk, notwithstanding their flattering inducements to the ignorant and garrulous, usually dwindle away, and die out; because even men with the most violently crotchety views, who conceive it to be the mind of the Spirit that every member of the body should be a mouth, soon grow impatient of hearing other people's nonsense, though delighted to dispense their own; while the mass of the good people grow weary of prosy ignorance, and return to the churches from which they were led aside, or would return if their pulpits were well supplied with solid teaching.

Even Quakerism, with all its excellencies, has scarcely been able to survive the poverty of thought and doctrine displayed in many of its assemblies by impromptu orators. The method of unprepared ministrations is practically a failure, and theoretically unsound. The Holy Spirit has made no promise to supply spiritual food to the saints by an impromptu ministry. He will never do for us, what we can do for ourselves. If we can study and do not, if we can have a studious ministry and will not, we have no right to call in a divine agent to make up the deficits of our idleness or eccentricity. The God of providence has promised to feed his people with temporal food; but if we came together to a banquet, and no one had prepared a single dish, because all had faith in the Lord that food would be given at the proper time, the festival would not be eminently satisfactory, but folly would be rebuked by hunger; as, indeed, it is in the case of spiritual banquets of the impromptu kind, only men's spiritual receptacles are hardly such powerful orators as their stomachs. Gentlemen, do not attempt, as a rule, to follow a system of things which is so generally unprofitable that the few exceptions only prove the rule.

All sermons ought to be well considered and prepared by the preacher; and, as much as possible, every minister should, with much prayer for heavenly guidance, enter fully into his subject, exert all his mental faculties in original thinking, and gather together all the information within his reach. Viewing the whole matter from all quarters, the preacher should think it out, get it well masticated and digested; and having first fed upon the word himself should then prepare the like nutriment for others. Our sermons should be our mental life-blood—the out-flow of our intellectual and spiritual vigor; or, to change the figure, they should be diamonds well cut and well set—precious, intrinsically, and bearing the marks of labor. God forbid that we should offer to the Lord that which costs us nothing.

Very strongly do I warn all of you against reading your sermons, but I recommend, as a most healthful exercise, and as a great aid towards attaining extemporising power, the frequent writing of them. Those of us who write a great deal in other forms, for the press, etc., may not so much require that exercise; but if you do not use the pen in other ways, you will be wise to write at least some of your sermons, and revise them with great care. Leave them at home afterwards, but still write them out, that you may be preserved from a slipshod style.

Mr. Bautain in his admirable work on extempore speaking, remarks, "You will never be capable of speaking properly in public unless you acquire such mastery of your own thought as to be able to decompose it into its parts, to analyze it into its elements, and then, at need, to re-compose, re-gather, and concentrate it again by a synthetic process. Now this analysis of the idea, which displays it, as it were, before the eyes of the mind, is well executed only by writing. The pen is the scalpel which dissects the thoughts, and never, except when you write down what you behold internally, can you succeed in clearly discerning all that is contained in a conception, or in obtaining its well-marked scope. You then understand yourself, and make others understand you."

We do not recommend the plan of learning sermons by heart, and repeating them from memory; that is both a wearisome exercise of an inferior power of the mind and an indolent neglect of other and superior faculties. The most arduous and commendable plan is to store your mind with matter upon the subject of discourse, and then to deliver yourself with appropriate words which suggest themselves at the time.

This is not extemporaneous preaching; the words are extemporal, as I think they always should be, but the thoughts are the result of research and study. Only thoughtless people think this to be easy; it is at once the most laborious and the most efficient mode of preaching, and it has virtues of its own of which I cannot now speak particularly, since it would lead us away from the point in hand.

Our subject is the faculty of pure, unmixed, genuinely extemporaneous speaking, and to this let us return. This power is extremely useful, and in most cases is, with a little diligence, to be acquired. It is possessed by many—yet not by so many that I shall be incorrect if I say that the gift is rare. The improvisatori of Italy possessed the power of impromptu speech to such an extent, that their extemporaneous verses upon subjects suggested on the spot by the spectators, frequently amounted to hundreds and even thousands of lines. They would produce whole tragedies as spontaneously as springs bubble up with water, and rhyme away by the half-hour and the hour together, on the spur of the moment, and perhaps also on the spur of a little Italian wine. Their printed works seldom rise above mediocrity, and yet one of them, Perfetti, gained the laurel crown which had been awarded only to Petrarch and Tasso. Many of them at this hour produce off-hand verses which are equal to the capacities of their hearers, and secure their breathless attention.

Why cannot we acquire just such a power in prose? We shall not be able, I suppose, to produce verses, nor need we desire the faculty. Many of you have no doubt versified a little (and which of us in some weak moment has not?) but we have put away childish things, now that the sober prose of life and death, and Heaven and Hell, and perishing sinners, demands all our thought.

Many lawyers possess the gift of extemporaneous speech in a high degree. They should have some virtues! Some weeks ago a wretched being was indicted for the horrible crime of libeling a lawyer; it is well for him that I was not his judge, for had such a difficult and atrocious crime been fairly brought home to him, I would have delivered him over to be cross-examined during the term of his natural life, hoping for mercy's sake that it might be a brief one.

But the gentlemen of the bar are many of them most ready speakers, and as you will clearly see, they must to a considerable degree be extemporaneous speakers too, because it would be impossible for them always to foresee the line of argument which the evidence, or the temper of the judge, or the pleadings on the other side would require. However well a case may be prepared, points must and will arise requiring an active mind and a fluent tongue to deal with them. Indeed, I have been astonished to observe the witty, sharp, and in every way appropriate replies which counsel will throw off without forethought in our courts of law.

What a barrister can do in advocating the cause of his client, you and I should surely be able to do in the cause of God. The bar must not be allowed to excel the pulpit. We will be as expert in intellectual arms as any men, be they who they may, God helping us.

Certain Members of the House of Commons have exercised the faculty of extemporaneous speaking with great results. Usually, of all tasks of hearing, the most miserable is that of listening to one of the common ruck of speakers from the House of Lords and Commons. Let it be proposed that when capital punishment is abolished, those who are found guilty of murder shall be compelled to listen to a selection of the dreariest parliamentary orators. The members of the Royal Humane Society forbid. Yet in the House some of the Members are able to speak extemporaneously, and to speak well. I should imagine that some of the finest things which have been said by John Bright, and Gladstone, and Disraeli, were altogether what Southey would call jets from the great Geyser when the spring is in full play. Of course, their long orations upon the Budget, the Reform Bill, and so on, were elaborated to the highest degree by previous manipulation; but many of their briefer speeches have, no doubt, been the offspring of the hour, and yet have an amazing amount of power about them. Shall the representatives of the nation attain an expertness of speech beyond the representatives of the court of Heaven? Brethren, covet earnestly this good gift, and go about to win it.

You are all convinced that the ability which we are considering must be a priceless possession for a minister. Did we hear a single heart whisper, "I wish I had it, for then I would have no need to study so arduously"? Ah! then you must not have it, you are unworthy of the blessing, and unfit to be trusted with it. If you seek this gift as a pillow for an idle head, you will be much mistaken; for the possession of this noble power will involve you in a vast amount of labor in order to increase and even to retain it. It is like the magic lamp in the fable, which would not shine except it was well rubbed, and became a mere dim globe as soon as the rubbing ceased. What the sluggard desires for the sake of ease—we may, however, covet for the best of reasons.

Occasionally one has heard or read of men agreeing, by way of bravado, to preach upon texts given them at the time in the pulpit, or in the vestry; such vainglorious displays are disgusting, and border on profanity. As well might we have exhibitions of juggling on the Sabbath as such mountebankism of oratory. Our talents are given us for far other ends. Such a prostitution of gift I trust you will never be allowed to perpetrate. Feats of speech are well enough in a debating club, but in the ministry they are abominable even when a Bossuet lends himself to them.

The power of impromptu speech is invaluable, because it enables a man on the spur of the moment, in an emergency, to deliver himself with propriety. These emergencies will arise. Accidents will occur in the best regulated assemblies. Singular events may turn the premeditated current of your thoughts quite aside. You will see clearly that the subject selected would be inopportune, and you will as a wise man drift into something else without demur. When the old road is closed, and there is no help for it but to make a new

way for the chariot, unless you are qualified to drive the horses over a ploughed field as well as along the macadamised road on which you hoped to travel, you will find yourself off the coach-box, and mischief will befall the company.

It is a great acquisition to be able at a public meeting, when you have heard the speeches of your brethren, and believe that they have been too frivolous, or it may be, on the other hand, too dull, without any allusions to them, quietly to counteract the mischief, and lead the assembly into a more profitable line of thought. This gift may be of the utmost importance in the church-meeting, where business may arise which it would be difficult to foresee. All the troublers of Israel are not yet dead. Achan was stoned, and his wife, and his children, but others of his family must have escaped, for the race has certainly been perpetuated, and needs to be dealt with discreetly and vigorously.

In some churches certain noisy men will rise and speak, and when they have done so, it is of great importance that the pastor should readily and convincingly reply, lest bad impressions should remain. A pastor who goes to the church-meeting in the spirit of his Master, feeling sure that in reliance upon the Holy Spirit he is quite able to answer any untoward spirit, sits at ease, keeps his temper, rises in esteem on each occasion, and secures a quiet church. But the unready brother is flurried, probably gets into a passion, commits himself, and inherits a world of sorrow.

Besides this, a man may be called upon to preach at a moment's notice, through the non-arrival of the expected minister, or his sudden sickness; at a public meeting one may feel stirred to speak where silence had been resolved upon; and at any form of religious exercise emergencies may arise which will render impromptu speech as precious as the gold of Ophir.

The gift is valuable—how is it to be obtained? The question leads us to remark that some men will never obtain it. There must be a natural adaptedness for extemporaneous speech; even as for the poetic art: a poet is born, not made. "Are may develop and perfect the talent of a speaker, but cannot produce it." All the rules of rhetoric, and all the artifices of oratory cannot make a man eloquent; it is a gift from Heaven, and where it is withheld it cannot be obtained. This "gift of utterance," as we call it, is born with some people, inherited probably from the mother's side. To others the gift is denied; their confirmation of jaw, and yet more their confirmation of brain, never will allow of their becoming fluent and ready speakers. They may, perhaps, make moderate stutterers and slow deliverers of sober truth, but they can never be impromptu orators; unless they should rival Methuselah in age, and then perhaps on the Darwinian theory, which educes an Archbishop of Canterbury from an oyster, they might develop into speakers. If there be not a natural gift of oratory a brother may attain to a respectable post in other departments, but he is not likely to shine as a bright particular star in extemporary speech.

If a man would speak without any present study, he must usually study much. This is a paradox perhaps, but its explanation lies upon the surface. If I am a miller, and I have a sack brought to my door, and am asked to fill that sack with good fine flour within the next five minutes, the only way in which I can do it, is by keeping the flour-bin of my mill always full, so that I can at once open the mouth of the sack, fill it, and deliver it. I do not happen to be grinding at that time, and so far the delivery is extemporary; but I have been grinding before, and so have the flour to serve out to the customer.

So, brethren, you must have been grinding, or you will not have the flour. You will not be able to extemporise good thinking unless you have been in the habit of thinking and feeding your mind with abundant and nourishing food. Work hard at every available moment. Store your minds very richly, and then, like merchants with crowded warehouses, you will have goods ready for your customers, and having arranged your good things upon the shelves of your mind, you will be able to hand them down at any time without the laborious process of going to market, sorting, folding, and preparing.

I do not believe that any man can be successful in continuously maintaining the gift of extemporaneous speech, except by ordinarily using far more labor than is usual with those who write and commit their discourses to memory. Take it as a rule without exception, that to be able to overflow spontaneously, you must be full.

The collection of a fund of ideas and expressions is exceedingly helpful. There is a wealth and a poverty in each of these respects. He who has much information, well arranged, and thoroughly understood, with which he is intimately familiar, will be able like some prince of fabulous wealth to scatter gold right and left among the crowd. To you, gentlemen, an intimate acquaintance with the Word of God, with the inward spiritual life, with the great problems of time and eternity will be indispensable. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Accustom yourselves to heavenly meditations, search the Scriptures, delight yourselves in the law of the Lord, and you need not fear to speak of things which you have tasted and handled of the good word of God. Men may well be slow of speech in discussing themes beyond the range of their experience; but you, warmed with love towards the King, and enjoying fellowship with him, will find your hearts inditing a good matter, and your tongues will be as the pens of ready writers.

Get at the roots of spiritual truths by an experimental acquaintance with them, so shall you with readiness expound them to others. Ignorance of theology is no rare thing in our pulpits, and the wonder is not that so few men are extempore speakers, but that so many are, when theologians are so scarce. We shall never have great preachers until we have great divines. You cannot build a man-of-war out of a currant bush, nor can great soul-moving preachers be formed out of superficial students. If you would be fluent,

that is to say flowing, be filled with all knowledge, and especially with the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord.

But we remarked that a fund of expressions would be also of much help to the extempore speaker; and, truly, second only to a store of ideas, is a rich vocabulary. Beauties of language, elegancies of speech, and above all forcible sentences are to be selected, remembered, and imitated. You are not to carry that gold pencil-case with you, and jot down every polysyllabic word which you meet with in your reading, so as to put it in your next sermon, but you are to know what words mean, to be able to estimate the power of a synonym, to judge the rhythm of a sentence, and to weigh the force of an expletive. You must be masters of words; they must be your thunderbolts, or your drops of honey. Mere word-gatherers are hoarders of oyster shells, bean husks, and apple-parings; but to a man who has wide information and deep thought, words are baskets of silver in which to serve up his apples of gold. See to it that you have a good team of words to draw the wagon of your thoughts.

I think, too, that a man who would speak well, extemporaneously, must be careful to select a topic which he understands. This is the main point. Ever since I have been in London, in order to get into the habit of speaking extemporaneously, I have never studied or prepared anything for the Monday evening prayer-meeting. I have all along selected that occasion as the opportunity for off-hand exhortation; but you will observe that I do not on such occasions select difficult expository topics or abstruse themes, but restrict myself to simple homely talk about the elements of our faith. When standing up on such occasions, one's mind makes a review, and inquires, "What subject has already taken up my thought during the day? What have I met with in my reading during the past week? What is most laid upon my heart at this hour? What is suggested by the hymns or the prayers?"

It is of no use to rise before an assembly, and hope to be inspired upon subjects of which you know nothing; if you are so unwise, the result will be that as you know nothing you will probably say it, and the people will not be edified. But I do not see why a man cannot speak extemporaneously upon a subject which he fully understands. Any tradesman, well versed in his line of business, could explain it to you without needing to retire for meditation; and surely we ought to be equally as familiar with the first principles of our holy faith; we ought not to feel at a loss when called upon to speak upon topics which constitute the daily bread of our souls. I do not see what benefit is gained in such a case, by the mere manual labor of writing before speaking; because in so doing, a man would write extemporaneously, and extemporaneous writing is likely to be even feebler than extemporaneous speech.

The gain of the writing lies in the opportunity of careful revision; but as able writers are able to express their thoughts correctly at the first, so also may able speakers. The thought of a man who finds himself upon his legs, dilating upon a theme with which he is familiar, may be very far from being his first thought; it may be the cream of his meditations warmed by the glow of his heart. He, having studied the subject well before, though not at that moment, may deliver himself most powerfully; whereas another man, sitting down to write, may only be penning his first ideas, which may be vague and vapid. Do not attempt to be impromptu then, unless you have well studied the theme—this paradox is a counsel of prudence.

I remember to have been tried rather sharply upon one occasion, and had I not been versed in impromptu address, I know not how it would have sped with me. I was expected to preach in a certain chapel, and there was a crowded congregation, but I was not in time, being delayed by some blockade upon the railroad; so another minister went on with the service, and when I reached the place, all breathless with running, he was already preaching a sermon. Seeing me appear at the front door and pass up the aisle, he stopped and said, "There he is," and looking at me, he added, "I'll make way for you; come up and finish the sermon." I asked him what was the text and how far he had gone with it. He told me what the text was, and said he had just passed through the first head; without hesitation I took up the discourse at that point and finished the sermon, and I would be ashamed of any man here who could not have done the same, the circumstances being such as to make the task a remarkably easy one. In the first place the minister was my grandfather, and, in the second place, the text was, "By grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." He must have been a more foolish animal than that which Balaam rode, if, at such a juncture, he had not found a tongue. "By grace are you saved," had been spoken of as indicating the source of salvation; who could not follow by describing the next clause, "through faith," as the channel? One did not need to study much to show that salvation is received by us through faith. Yet, on that occasion, I had a further trial; for when I had proceeded a little, and was warming to my work, a hand patted my back approvingly, and a voice said, "That's right—that's right; tell them that again, for fear they should forget it." Thereupon I repeated the truth, and a little further on, when I was becoming rather deeply experimental I was gently pulled by my coat-tail, and the old gentleman stood up in front and said, "Now, my grandson can tell you this as a theory, but I am here to bear witness to it as a matter of practical experience. I am older than he is, and I must give you my testimony as an old man." Then after having given us his personal experience, he said, "There, now, my grandson can preach the gospel a great deal better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel, can he?"

Well, gentlemen, I can easily imagine that if I had not possessed some little power of extemporaneous speech upon that occasion, I might have been somewhat ruffled; but as it was, it came as naturally as if it had been prearranged.

The acquisition of another language affords a fine drilling for the practice of extempore speech. Brought into connection with the roots of words, and the rules of speech, and being compelled to note the differentia of the two languages, a man grows by degrees

to be much at home with parts of speech, moods, tenses, and inflections; like a workman he becomes familiar with his tools, and handles them as everyday companions. I know of no better exercise than to translate with as much rapidity as possible a portion of Virgil or Tacitus, and then with deliberation to amend one's mistakes. People who know no better think all time thrown away which is spent upon the classics, but if it were only for the usefulness of such studies to the sacred orator, they ought to be retained in all our collegiate institutions. Who does not see that the perpetual comparison of the terms and idioms of two languages must aid facility of expression? Who does not see, moreover, that by this exercise the mind becomes able to appreciate refinements and subtleties of meaning, and so acquires the power of distinguishing between things that differ—a power essential to an expositor of the Word of God, and an extempore declarer of His truth.

Learn, gentlemen, to put together, and unscrew all the machinery of language, mark every cog, and wheel, and bolt, and rod—and you will feel the more free to drive the engine, even at an express speed should emergencies demand it.

Every man who wishes to acquire this art must practice it. It was by slow degrees, as Burke says, that Charles Fox became the most brilliant and powerful debater that ever lived. He attributed his success to the resolution which he formed when very young, of speaking well or ill, at least once every night. "During five whole sessions," he used to say, "I spoke every night but one, and I regret only that I did not speak on that night too."

At first he may do so with no other auditory than the chairs and books of his study, imitating the example of a gentleman who, upon applying for admission to this college, assured me that he had for two years practiced himself in extempore preaching in his own room.

Students living together might be of great mutual assistance by alternately acting the part of audience and speaker, with a little friendly criticism at the close of each attempt. Conversation, too, may be of essential service, if it be a matter of principle to make it solid and edifying.

Thought is to be linked with speech; that is the problem; and it may assist a man in its solution, if he endeavors in his private musings to think aloud. So has this become habitual to me that I find it very helpful to be able, in private devotion, to pray with my voice; reading aloud is more beneficial to me than the silent process; and when I am mentally working out a sermon, it is a relief to me to speak to myself as the thoughts flow forth.

Of course this only masters half the difficulty, and you must practice in public, in order to overcome the trepidation occasioned by the sight of an audience; but half way is a great part of a journey. Good impromptu speech is just the utterance of a practiced thinker—a man of information, meditating while on his legs, and allowing his thoughts to march through his mouth into the open air. Think aloud as much as you can when you are alone, and you will soon be on the high road to success in this matter.

The discussion and debates in the classroom are of vital importance as a further step, and I would urge the more retiring brethren to take a part in them. The practice of calling upon you to speak upon a topic drawn at random from a bowl out of a wide selection has been introduced among you, and we must more frequently resort to it. What I condemned as a part of religious worship, we may freely use as a scholastic exercise among ourselves. It is calculated to try a man's readiness and self-command, and those who fail in it are probably as much benefitted as those who succeed, for self-knowledge may be as useful to one as practice to another. If the discovery that you are as yet a bungler in oratory should drive you to severer study and more resolute endeavors, it may be the true path to ultimate eminence.

In addition to the practice commended, I must urge upon you the necessity of being cool and confident. As Sydney Smith says, "A great deal of talent is lost to the world for lack of a little courage." This is not to be easily acquired by the young speaker. Cannot you young speakers sympathize with Blondin, the rope walker? Do you not sometimes feel when you are preaching as though you were walking on a rope high in the air, and do you not tremble and wonder whether you will reach the other end in safety? Sometimes when you have been flourishing that beautiful balancing pole, and watching the metaphorical spangles which flash poetry upon your audience, have you not been half regretful that you ever exposed yourself to such risks of sudden descent; or, to drop the figure, have you not wondered whether you would be able to conclude the sentence, or find a verb for the nominative, or an accusative for the verb? Everything depends upon your being cool and unflurried. Forebodings of failure, and fear of man, will ruin you. Go on, trusting in God, and all will be well.

If you have made a blunder in grammar, and you are half inclined to go back to correct it, you will soon make another, and your hesitation will involve you as in a net. Let me whisper—for it is meant for your ear alone—it is always a bad thing to go back. If you make a verbal blunder, go on, and do not notice it.

My father gave me a very good rule when I was learning to write, which I think of equal utility in learning to speak. He used to say: "When you are writing, if you make a mistake by misspelling a word, or by writing a wrong word, do not cross it out and make a mess of it, but see how you can in the readiest way alter what you were going to say so as to bring in what you have written, and leave no trace of mistake." So in speaking, if the sentence will not finish in the best way, conclude it in another. It is of very little use

to go back to amend, for you thus call attention to the flaw which perhaps few had noticed, and you draw off the mind from your subject to your language, which is the last thing which the preacher should do. If, however, your lapsus linguae should be noticed, all people of sense will forgive a young beginner, and they will rather admire you than otherwise for attaching small importance to such slips, and pressing on with your whole heart towards your main design.

A novice at public speaking is like a rider unused to horseback; if his horse stumbles he fears he will be down and throw him over his head; or if it be a little fresh, he feels assured that it will run away; and the eye of a friend, or the remark of a little boy, will make him as wretched as if he were lashed to the back of the great red dragon. But when a man is well used to mount he knows no dangers, and he meets with none, because his courage prevents them.

When a speaker feels, "I am master of the situation," he usually is so. His confidence averts the disasters which trembling would be certain to create. My brethren, if the Lord has indeed ordained you to the ministry, you have the best reasons for being bold and calm, for whom have you to fear? You have to deliver your Lord's errand as he enables you, and if this be done, you are responsible to no one but your heavenly Master, who is no harsh judge.

You do not enter the pulpit to shine as an orator, or to gratify the predilections of your audience; you are the messenger of Heaven and not the servant of men. Remember the words of the Lord to Jeremiah, and be afraid to be afraid. "You therefore gird up your loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command you: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound you before them." Jeremiah 1:17.

Trust in the Holy Spirit's present help, and the fear of man which brings a snare will depart from you. When you are able to feel at home in the pulpit, and can look round and speak to the people as a brother talking to brethren, then you will be able to extemporise, but not until then. Bashfulness and timidity which are so beautiful in our younger brethren, will be succeeded by that true modesty which forgets self, and is not careful as to its own reputation so long as Christ is preached in the most forcible manner at command.

To attain the holy and useful exercise of extemporal speech the Christian minister must cultivate a childlike reliance upon the immediate assistance of the Holy Spirit. "I believe in the Holy Spirit," says the Creed. It is to be feared that many do not make this a real article of belief. To go up and down all the week wasting time, and then to cast ourselves upon the Spirit's aid, is wicked presumption, an attempt to make the Lord minister to our sloth and self-indulgence; but in an emergency the case is widely different. When a man finds himself unavoidably called upon to speak without any preparation, then he may with fullest confidence cast himself upon the Spirit of God. The Divine mind beyond a doubt comes into contact with the human intellect, lifts it out of its weakness and distraction, makes it soaring and strong, and enables it both to understand and to express divine truth in a manner far beyond its unaided powers.

Such interpositions, like miracles, are not meant to supersede our efforts or slacken our diligence, but are the Lord's assistance which we may count upon at an emergency. His Spirit will be ever with us, but especially under severe stress of service. Earnestly as I advise you not to try purely impromptu speaking more than you are obliged to do, until you have become somewhat matured in your ministry, I yet exhort you to speak in that manner whenever compelled to do so, believing that in the selfsame hour it shall be given you what you shall speak.

If you are happy enough to acquire the power of extemporary speech, recollect that you may very readily lose it. I have been struck with this in my own experience, and I refer to that because it is the best evidence that I can give you. If for two successive Sundays I make my notes a little longer and fuller than usual, I find on the third occasion that I require them longer still; and I also observe that if on occasions I lean a little more to my recollection of my thoughts, and am not so extemporaneous as I have been accustomed to be, there is a direct craving and even an increased necessity for pre-composition.

If a man begins to walk with a stick merely for a whim, he will soon come to require a stick; if you indulge your eyes with spectacles they will speedily demand them as a permanent appendage; and if you were to walk with crutches for a month, at the end of the time they would be almost necessary to your movements, although naturally your limbs might be as sound and healthy as any man's. Ill uses create an ill nature. You must continually practice extemporising, and if to gain suitable opportunities you should frequently speak the word in cottages, in the school-rooms of our hamlets, or to two or three by the wayside, your profiting shall be known unto all men.

It may save you much surprise and grief if you are forewarned that there will be great variations in your power of utterance. Today your tongue may be the pen of a ready writer, tomorrow your thoughts and words may be alike frost-bound. Living things are sensitive, and are affected by a variety of forces; only the merely mechanical can be reckoned upon with absolute certainty. Think it not strange if you should frequently feel yourself to have failed, nor wonder if it should turn out that at such times you have best succeeded. You must not expect to become sufficient as of yourself; no habit or exercise can render you independent of divine assistance; and if you have preached well forty-nine times when called upon without notice, this is no excuse for self-confidence on the fiftieth occasion, for if the Lord should leave you, you will be at a dead stand. Your variable moods of fluency and difficulty will by

God's grace tend to keep you humbly looking up to the strong for strength.

Above all things beware of letting your tongue outrun your brains. Guard against a feeble fluency, a garrulous prosiness, a facility of saying nothing. What a pleasure it is to hear of a brother breaking down who presumed upon his powers to keep on when he really had nothing to say! May such a consummation come to all who err in that direction. My brethren, it is a hideous gift to possess, to be able to say nothing at extreme length. Elongated nonsense, paraphrastic platitude, wire-drawn common-place, or sacred rhodomontade, are common enough, and are the scandal and shame of extemporising. Even when sentiments of no value are beautifully expressed, and neatly worded, what is the use of them? Out of nothing comes nothing.

Extemporary speech without study is a cloud without rain, a well without water, a fatal gift, injurious equally to its possessor and his flock. Men have applied to me whom I have denied admission to this College, because being utterly destitute both of education and of a sense of their own ignorance, their boundless conceit and enormous volubility made them dangerous subjects for training. Some have even reminded me of the serpent in the Apocalypse, which cast out of his mouth water as a flood so plenteously that the woman was likely to have been carried away with it. Wound up like clocks, they keep on, and on, and on, until they run down, and blessed is he who has least acquaintance with them. Better to lose, or rather never to possess, the gift of ready utterance, than to degrade ourselves into mere noise makers, the living representations of Paul's sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

I might have said much more if I had extended the subject to what is usually called extempore preaching, that is to say, the preparation of the sermon so far as thoughts go, and leaving the words to be found during delivery; but this is quite another matter, and although looked upon as a great attainment by some, it is, as I believe, an indispensable requisite for the pulpit, and by no means a mere luxury of talent; but of this we will speak on another occasion.

LECTURE 11 The Minister's Fainting Fits

As it is recorded that David, in the heat of battle, waxed faint, so may it be written of all the servants of the Lord. Fits of depression come over the most of us. Usually cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy. There may be here and there men of iron, to whom wear and tear work no perceptible detriment, but surely the rust frets even these; and as for ordinary men, the Lord knows, and makes them to know, that they are but dust. Knowing by most painful experience what deep depression of spirit means, being visited therewith at seasons by no means few or far between, I thought it might be consolatory to some of my brethren if I gave my thoughts thereon, that younger men might not imagine that some strange thing had happened to them when they became for a season possessed by melancholy; and that sadder men might know that one upon whom the sun has shone right joyously did not always walk in the light.

It is not necessary by quotations from the biographies of eminent ministers to prove that seasons of fearful prostration have fallen to the lot of most, if not all of them. The life of Luther might suffice to give a thousand instances, and he was by no means of the weaker sort. His great spirit was often in the seventh Heaven of exultation, and as frequently on the borders of despair. His very death-bed was not free from tempests, and he sobbed himself into his last sleep like a great wearied child.

Instead of multiplying cases, let us dwell upon the reasons why these things are permitted; why it is that the children of light sometimes walk in the thick darkness; why the heralds of the daybreak find themselves at times in tenfold night.

Is it not first that they are but men? Being men, they are compassed with infirmity, and heirs of sorrow. Grace guards us from much of this, but because we have not more of grace we still suffer even from ills preventable. Even under the economy of redemption it is most clear that we are to endure infirmities, otherwise there were no need of the promised Spirit to help us in them. It is of need be that we are sometimes in heaviness. Good men are promised tribulation in this world, and ministers may expect a larger share than others, that they may learn sympathy with the Lord's suffering people, and so may be fitting shepherds of an ailing flock.

Disembodied spirits might have been sent to proclaim the word, but they could not have entered into the feelings of those who, being in this body, do groan, being burdened. Angels might have been ordained as evangelists, but their celestial attributes would have disqualified them from having compassion on the ignorant. Men of marble might have been fashioned, but their impassive natures would have been a sarcasm upon our feebleness, and a mockery of our wants. Men, and men subject to human passions, the all-wise God has chosen to be his vessels of grace—hence these tears, hence these perplexities and castings down.

Moreover, most of us are in some way or other unsound physically. Here and there we meet with an old man who could not remember that ever he was laid aside for a day; but the great mass of us labor under some form or other of infirmity, either in body or mind. Certain bodily maladies, especially those connected with the digestive organs, the liver, and the spleen, are the fruitful fountains of despondency; and, let a man strive as he may against their influence, there will be hours and circumstances in which

they will for awhile overcome him.

As to mental maladies, is any man altogether sane? Are we not all a little off the balance? Some minds appear to have a gloomy tinge essential to their very individuality; of them it may be said, "Melancholy marked them for her own;" fine minds withal, and ruled by noblest principles, but yet most prone to forget the silver lining, and to remember only the cloud. Such men may sing with the old poet:

"Our hearts are broke, our harps unstrung be,
Our only music's sighs and groans,
Our songs are to the tune of lachrymae,
We're fretted all to skin and bones."

Thomas Washbourne.

These infirmities may be no detriment to a man's career of special usefulness; they may even have been imposed upon him by divine wisdom as necessary qualifications for his peculiar course of service.

Some plants owe their medicinal qualities to the marsh in which they grow; others to the shades in which alone they flourish. There are precious fruits put forth by the moon as well as by the sun. Boats need ballast as well as sail; a drag on the carriage-wheel is no hindrance when the road runs downhill. Pain has probably in some cases developed genius—hunting out the soul which otherwise might have slept like a lion in its den. Had it not been for the broken wing, some might have lost themselves in the clouds, some even of those choice doves who now bear the olive-branch in their mouths and show the way to the ark.

But where in body and mind there are predisposing causes to lowness of spirit, it is no marvel if in dark moments the heart succumbs to them; the wonder in many cases is—and if inner lives could be written, men would see it so—how some ministers keep at their work at all, and still wear a smile upon their countenances. Grace has its triumphs still, and patience has its martyrs; martyrs none the less to be honored because the flames kindle about their spirits rather than their bodies, and their burning is unseen of human eyes.

The ministries of Jeremiahs are as acceptable as those of Isaiahs, and even the sullen Jonah is a true prophet of the Lord, as Nineveh felt full well. Despise not the lame, for it is written that they take the prey; but honor those who, being faint, are yet pursuing. The tender-eyed Leah was more fruitful than the beautiful Rachel, and the griefs of Hannah were more divine than the boastings of Peninnah. "Blessed are those who mourn," said the Man of Sorrows, and let none account them otherwise when their tears are salted with grace. We have the treasure of the gospel in earthen vessels, and if there be a flaw in the vessel here and there, let none wonder.

Our work, when earnestly undertaken, lays us open to attacks in the direction of depression. Who can bear the weight of souls without sometimes sinking to the dust? Passionate longings after men's conversion, if not fully satisfied (and when are they?), consume the soul with anxiety and disappointment. To see the hopeful turn aside, the godly grow cold, professors abusing their privileges, and sinners waxing more bold in sin—are not these sights enough to crush us to the earth? The kingdom comes not as we would, the reverend name is not hallowed as we desire, and for this we must weep. How can we be otherwise than sorrowful, while men believe not our report, and the divine arm is not revealed?

All mental work tends to weary and to depress, for much study is a weariness of the flesh; but ours is more than mental work—it is heart work, the labor of our inmost soul. How often, on Lord's-day evenings, do we feel as if life were completely washed out of us! After pouring out our souls over our congregations, we feel like empty earthen pitchers which a child might break. Probably, if we were more like Paul, and watched for souls at a nobler rate, we would know more of what it is to be eaten up by the zeal of the Lord's house. It is our duty and our privilege to exhaust our lives for Jesus. We are not to be living specimens of men in fine preservation, but living sacrifices, whose lot is to be consumed; we are to spend and to be spent, not to lay ourselves up in lavender, and nurse our flesh. Such soul-travail as that of a faithful minister will bring on occasional seasons of exhaustion, when heart and flesh will fail. Moses' hands grew heavy in intercession, and Paul cried out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Even John the Baptist is thought to have had his fainting fits, and the apostles were once amazed, and were sore afraid.

Our position in the church will also conduce to this. A minister fully equipped for his work will usually be a spirit by himself, above, beyond, and apart from others. The most loving of his people cannot enter into his peculiar thoughts, cares, and temptations. In the ranks, men walk shoulder to shoulder, with many comrades, but as the officer rises in rank, men of his standing are fewer in number. There are many soldiers, few captains, fewer colonels, but only one commander-in-chief.

So, in our churches, the man whom the Lord raises as a leader becomes, in the same degree in which he is a superior man, a solitary man. The mountain-tops stand solemnly apart, and talk only with God as He visits their solemn solitudes. Men of God who rise above their fellows into nearer communion with heavenly things, in their weaker moments feel the lack of human sympathy. Like their Lord in Gethsemane, they look in vain for comfort to the disciples sleeping around them; they are shocked at the apathy of their

little band of brethren, and return to their secret agony with all the heavier burden pressing upon them, because they have found their dearest companions slumbering.

No one knows, but he who has endured it, the solitude of a soul which has outstripped its fellows in zeal for the Lord Almighty. It dares not reveal itself, lest men count it mad; it cannot conceal itself, for a fire burns within its bones: only before the Lord does it find rest. Our Lord's sending out his disciples by two and two manifested that he knew what was in men; but for such a man as Paul, it seems to me that no helpmeet was found; Barnabas, or Silas, or Luke, were hills too low to hold high converse with such a Himalayan summit as the apostle of the Gentiles. This loneliness, which if I mistake not is felt by many of my brethren, is a fertile source of depression; and our ministers' fraternal meetings, and the cultivation of holy fellowship with kindred minds will, with God's blessing, help us greatly to escape the snare.

There can be little doubt that sedentary habits have a tendency to create despondency in some constitutions. Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, has a chapter upon this cause of sadness; and, quoting from one of the myriad authors whom he lays under contribution, he says, "Students are negligent of their bodies. Other men look to their tools; a painter will wash his pencils; a smith will look to his hammer, anvil, forge; a gardener will mend his plough-irons, and grind his hatchet if it is be dull; a falconer or huntsman will have an especial care of his hawks, hounds, horses, dogs, etc.; a musician will string and unstring his lute; only scholars neglect that instrument (their brain and spirits I mean) which they daily use. Well says Lucan, 'See you twist not the rope so hard that it breaks.'"

To sit long in one posture, poring over a book, or driving a quill, is in itself a taxing of nature; but add to this a badly ventilated chamber, a body which has long been without muscular exercise, and a heart burdened with many cares, and we have all the elements for preparing a seething cauldron of despair, especially in the dim months of fog,

"When a blanket wraps the day,
When the rotten woodland drips,
And the leaf is stamped in clay."

Let a man be naturally as blithe as a bird, he will hardly be able to bear up year after year against such a suicidal process; he will make his study a prison and his books the warders of a jail, while nature lies outside his window calling him to health and beckoning him to joy. He who forgets the humming of the bees among the heather, the cooing of the wood-pigeons in the forest, the song of birds in the woods, the rippling of rills among the rushes, and the sighing of the wind among the pines, needs not wonder if his heart forgets to sing and his soul grows heavy. A day's breathing of fresh air upon the hills, or a few hours' ramble in the woods' umbrageous calm, would sweep the cobwebs out of the brain of scores of our toiling ministers who are now but half alive. A mouthful of sea air, or a stiff walk in the wind's face, would not give grace to the soul, but it would yield oxygen to the body, which is next best.

"Heaviest the heart is in a heavy air,

Every wind that rises, blows away despair."

The ferns and the rabbits, the streams and the trouts, the fir trees and the squirrels, the primroses and the violets, the farm-yard, the new-mown hay, and the fragrant hops—these are the best medicine for hypochondriacs, the surest tonics for the declining, the best refreshments for the weary. For lack of opportunity, or inclination, these great remedies are neglected, and the student becomes a self-immolated victim.

The times most favorable to fits of depression, so far as I have experienced, may be summed up in a brief catalogue. First among them I must mention the hour of great success. When at last a long-cherished desire is fulfilled, when God has been glorified greatly by our means, and a great triumph achieved, then we are apt to faint.

It might be imagined that amid special favors our soul would soar to heights of ecstasy, and rejoice with joy unspeakable, but it is generally the reverse. The Lord seldom exposes His warriors to the perils of exultation over victory; he knows that few of them can endure such a test, and therefore dashes their cup with bitterness. See Elijah after the fire has fallen from Heaven, after Baal's priests have been slaughtered and the rain has deluged the barren land! For him no notes of self-complacent music, no strutting like a conqueror in robes of triumph; he flees from Jezebel, and feeling the revulsion of his intense excitement, he prays that he may die. He who must never see death, yearns after the rest of the grave, even as Caesar, the world's monarch, in his moments of pain cried like a sick girl.

Poor human nature cannot bear such strains as heavenly triumphs bring to it; there must come a reaction. Excess of joy or excitement must be paid for by subsequent depressions. While the trial lasts, the strength is equal to the emergency; but when it is over, natural weakness claims the right to show itself. Secretly sustained, Jacob can wrestle all night, but he must limp in the morning when the contest is over, lest he boast himself beyond measure. Paul may be caught up to the third Heaven, and hear unspeakable things, but a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, must be the inevitable sequel. Men cannot bear

unalloyed happiness; even good men are not yet fit to have "their brows with laurel and with myrtle bound," without enduring secret humiliation to keep them in their proper place. Whirled from off our feet by a revival, carried aloft by popularity, exalted by success in soul-winning—we would be as the chaff which the wind drives away, were it not that the gracious discipline of mercy breaks the ships of our vain glory with a strong east wind, and casts us shipwrecked, naked and forlorn, upon the Rock of Ages!

Before any great achievement, some measure of the same depression is very usual. Surveying the difficulties before us, our hearts sink within us. The sons of Anak stalk before us, and we are as grasshoppers in our own sight in their presence. The cities of Canaan are walled up to Heaven, and who are we that we should hope to capture them? We are ready to cast down our weapons, and take to our heels. Nineveh is a great city, and we would flee unto Tarshish sooner than encounter its noisy crowds. Already we look for a ship which may bear us quietly away from the terrible scene, and only a dread of tempest restrains our recreant footsteps.

Such was my experience when I first became a pastor in London. My success appalled me; and the thought of the career which it seemed to open up, so far from elating me, cast me into the lowest depth, out of which I uttered my miserere and found no room for a gloria in excelsis. Who was I that I should continue to lead so great a multitude? I would betake me to my village obscurity, or emigrate to America, and find a solitary nest in the backwoods, where I might be sufficient for the things which would be demanded of me. It was just then that the curtain was rising upon my life-work, and I dreaded what it might reveal. I hope I was not faithless, but I was timorous and filled with a sense of my own unfitness. I dreaded the work which a gracious providence had prepared for me. I felt myself a mere child, and trembled as I heard the voice which said, "Arise, and thresh the mountains, and make them as chaff!"

This depression comes over me whenever the Lord is preparing a larger blessing for my ministry; the cloud is black before it breaks, and overshadows before it yields its deluge of mercy. Depression has now become to me as a prophet in rough clothing, a John the Baptist, heralding the nearer coming of my Lord's richer blessing. So have far better men found it. The scouring of the vessel has fitted it for the Master's use. Immersion in suffering has preceded the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Fasting gives an appetite for the banquet. The Lord is revealed in the backside of the desert, while His servant keeps the sheep and waits in solitary awe. The wilderness is the way to Canaan. The low valley leads to the towering mountain. Defeat prepares for victory. The raven is sent forth before the dove. The darkest hour of the night precedes the day-dawn. The mariners go down to the depths, but the next wave makes them mount to the Heaven; their soul is melted because of trouble, before he brings them to their desired haven.

In the midst of a long stretch of unbroken labor, the same affliction may be looked for. The bow cannot be always bent without fear of breaking. Repose is as needful to the mind as sleep to the body. Our Sabbaths are our days of toil, and if we do not rest upon some other day we shall break down. Even the earth must lie fallow and have her Sabbaths, and so must we. Hence the wisdom and compassion of our Lord, when He said to His disciples, "Let us go into the desert and rest awhile." What! when the people are fainting? When the multitudes are like sheep upon the mountains without a shepherd? Does Jesus talk of rest? When Scribes and Pharisees, like grievous wolves, are rending the flock, does He take His followers on an excursion into a quiet resting place? Does some red-hot zealot denounce such atrocious forgetfulness of present and pressing demands? Let him rave in his folly. The Master knows better than to exhaust His servants and quench the light of Israel.

Rest time is not waste time. It is economy to gather fresh strength. Look at the mower in the summer's day, with so much to cut down before the sun sets. He pauses in his labor—is he a sluggard? He looks for his stone, and begins to draw it up and down his scythe, with "rink-a-tink—rink-a-tink—rink-a-tink." Is that idle music—is he wasting precious moments? How much he might have mown while he has been ringing out those notes on his scythe! But he is sharpening his tool, and he will do far more when once again he gives his strength to those long sweeps which lay the grass prostrate in rows before him.

Even thus a little pause prepares the mind for greater service in the good cause. Fishermen must mend their nets, and we must every now and then repair our mental waste and set our machinery in order for future service. To tug the oar from day to day, like a galley-slave who knows no holidays, suits not mortal men. Mill-streams go on and on forever, but we must have our pauses and our intervals. Who can help being out of breath when the race is continued without intermission? Even beasts of burden must be turned out to grass occasionally; the very sea pauses at ebb and flood; earth keeps the Sabbath of the wintry months; and man, even when exalted to be God's ambassador, must rest or faint; must trim his lamp or let it burn low; must recruit his vigor or grow prematurely old.

It is wisdom to take occasional furlough. In the long run, we shall do more by sometimes doing less. On, on, on forever, without recreation, may suit spirits emancipated from this "heavy clay," but while we are in this tabernacle, we must every now and then cry halt, and serve the Lord by holy inaction and consecrated leisure. Let no tender conscience doubt the lawfulness of going out of harness for a while, but learn from the experience of others the necessity and duty of taking timely rest.

One crushing stroke has sometimes laid the minister very low. The brother most relied upon becomes a traitor. Judas lifts up his heel against the man who trusted him, and the preacher's heart for the moment fails him. We are all too apt to look to an arm of flesh, and from that propensity many of our sorrows arise. Equally overwhelming is the blow when an honored and beloved member yields to temptation, and disgraces the holy name with which he was named. Anything is better than this. This makes the preacher

long for a lodge in some vast wilderness, where he may hide his head forever, and hear no more the blasphemous jeers of the ungodly. Ten years of toil do not take so much life out of us as we lose in a few hours by Ahithophel the traitor, or Demas the apostate.

Strife, also, and division, and slander, and foolish censures, have often laid holy men prostrate, and made them go "as with a sword in their bones." Hard words wound some delicate minds very keenly. Many of the best of ministers, from the very spirituality of their character, are exceedingly sensitive—too sensitive for such a world as this. "A kick that scarce would move a horse would kill a sound divine." By experience the soul is hardened to the rough blows which are inevitable in our warfare; but at first these things utterly stagger us, and send us to our homes wrapped in a horror of great darkness.

The trials of a true minister are not few, and such as are caused by ungrateful professors are harder to bear than the coarsest attacks of avowed enemies. Let no man who looks for ease of mind and seeks the quietude of life enter the ministry; if he does so he will flee from it in disgust.

To the lot of the few does it fall to pass through such a horror of great darkness as that which fell upon me after the deplorable accident at the Surrey Music Hall. I was pressed beyond measure and out of bounds with an enormous weight of misery. The tumult, the panic, the deaths, were day and night before me, and made life a burden. Then I sang in my sorrow:

"The tumult of my thoughts
Does but increase my woe,
My spirit languishes, my heart
Is desolate and low."

From that dream of horror I was awakened in a moment by the gracious application to my soul of the text, "Him has God the Father exalted." The fact that Jesus is still great, let His servants suffer as they may, piloted me back to calm reason and peace. Should so terrible a calamity overtake any of my brethren, let them both patiently hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.

When troubles multiply, and discouragements follow each other in long succession, like Job's messengers, then, too, amid the perturbation of soul occasioned by evil tidings, despondency despoils the heart of all its peace. Constant dropping wears away stones, and the bravest minds feel the fret of repeated afflictions. If a scanty cupboard is rendered a severer trial by the sickness of a wife or the loss of a child, and if ungenerous remarks of hearers are followed by the opposition of deacons and the coolness of members—then, like Jacob, we are apt to cry, "All these things are against me!"

When David returned to Ziklag and found the city burned, goods stolen, wives carried off, and his troops ready to stone him, we read, "he encouraged himself in his God"; and well was it for him that he could do so, for he would then have fainted if he had not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Accumulated distresses increase each other's weight; they play into each other's hands, and, like bands of robbers, ruthlessly destroy our comfort. Wave upon wave is severe work for the strongest swimmer. The place where two seas meet strains the most seaworthy keel. If there were a regulated pause between the buffetings of adversity, the spirit would stand prepared; but when they come suddenly and heavily, like the battering of great hailstones, the pilgrim may well be amazed. The last ounce breaks the camel's back, and when that last ounce is laid upon us, what wonder if we for awhile are ready to give up the ghost!

This evil will also come upon us, we know not why, and then it is all the more difficult to drive it away. Causeless depression is not to be reasoned with, nor can David's harp charm it away by sweet discourses. As well fight with the mist as with this shapeless, undefinable—yet all-beclouding hopelessness. One affords himself no pity when in this case, because it seems so unreasonable, and even sinful, to be troubled without manifest cause; and yet troubled the man is, even in the very depths of his spirit. If those who laugh at such melancholy did but feel the grief of it for one hour, their laughter would be sobered into compassion. Resolution might, perhaps, shake it off, but where are we to find the resolution when the whole man is unstrung? The physician and the divine may unite their skill in such cases, and both find their hands full, and more than full. The iron bolt which so mysteriously fastens the door of hope and holds our spirits in gloomy prison, needs a heavenly hand to push it back; and when that hand is seen we cry with the apostle, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God" 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4. It is the God of all consolation who can:

"With sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse our poor bosoms of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart."

Simon sinks—until Jesus takes him by the hand. The devil within rends and tears the poor child—until the word of authority commands him to come out of him. When we are ridden with horrible fears, and weighed down with an intolerable incubus, we need

but the Sun of Righteousness to rise, and the evils generated of our darkness are driven away; but nothing short of this will chase away the nightmare of the soul. Timothy Rogers, the author of a treatise on Melancholy, and Simon Browne, the writer of some remarkably sweet hymns, proved in their own cases how unavailing is the help of man if the Lord withdraw the light from the soul.

If it be inquired why the Valley of the Shadow of Death must so often be traversed by the servants of King Jesus, the answer is not far to find. All this is promotive of the Lord's mode of working, which is summed up in these words: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord." Instruments shall be used, but their intrinsic weakness shall be clearly manifested; there shall be no division of the glory, no diminishing the honor due to the Great Worker. The man shall be emptied of self, and then filled with the Holy Spirit. In his own apprehension he shall be like a sere leaf driven of the tempest, and then shall be strengthened into a brazen wall against the enemies of truth. To hide pride from the worker, is the great difficulty. Uninterrupted success and unfading joy in it would be more than our weak heads could bear. Our wine must needs be mixed with water, lest it turn our brains.

My witness is, that those who are honored of their Lord in public have usually to endure a secret chastening, or to carry a peculiar cross, lest by any means they exalt themselves, and fall into the snare of the devil. How constantly the Lord calls Ezekiel "Son of man"! Amid his soarings into the superlative splendors, just when with eye undimmed he is strengthened to gaze into the excellent glory, the word "Son of man" falls on his ears, sobering the heart which else might have been intoxicated with the honor conferred upon it. Such humbling but beneficial messages, our depressions whisper in our ears; they tell us in a manner not to be mistaken that we are but men, frail, feeble, apt to faint.

By all the castings down of His servants God is glorified, for they are led to magnify Him when He sets them on their feet, and even while prostrate in the dust their faith yields Him praise. They speak all the more sweetly of His faithfulness, and are the more firmly established in His love. Such mature men as some elderly preachers are, could scarcely have been produced if they had not been emptied from vessel to vessel, and made to see their own emptiness and the vanity of all things round about them. Glory be to God for the furnace, the hammer, and the file. Heaven shall be all the fuller of bliss because we have been filled with anguish here below, and earth shall be better tilled because of our training in the school of adversity.

The lesson of wisdom is, be not dismayed by soul-trouble. Count it no strange thing, but a part of ordinary ministerial experience. Should the power of depression be more than ordinary, think not that all is over with your usefulness. Cast not away your confidence, for it has great recompense of reward. Even if the enemy's foot be on your neck, expect to rise and overthrow him. Cast the burden of the present, along with the sin of the past and the fear of the future, upon the Lord, who forsakes not His saints. Live by the day—ay, by the hour. Put no trust in frames and feelings. Care more for a grain of faith, than a ton of excitement. Trust in God alone, and lean not on the needs of human help. Be not surprised when friends fail you—it is a failing world. Never count upon immutability in man—inconstancy you may reckon upon without fear of disappointment. The disciples of Jesus forsook Him; be not amazed if your adherents wander away to other teachers: as they were not your all when with you, all is not gone from you with their departure. Serve God with all your might while the candle is burning, and then when it goes out for a season, you will have the less to regret.

Be content to be nothing, for that is what you are. When your own emptiness is painfully forced upon your consciousness, chide yourself that you ever dreamed of being full, except in the Lord. Set small store by present rewards; be grateful for pledges along the way, but look for the recompensing joy hereafter. Continue with double earnestness to serve your Lord when no visible result is before you. Any simpleton can follow the narrow path in the light: faith's rare wisdom enables us to march on in the dark with infallible accuracy, since she places her hand in that of her Great Guide.

Between this and Heaven there may be rougher weather yet, but it is all provided for by our covenant Head. In nothing let us be turned aside from the path which the divine call has urged us to pursue. Come fair or come foul, the pulpit is our watch-tower, and the ministry our warfare; be it ours, when we cannot see the face of our God, to trust under the shadow of his wings.

LECTURE 12 The Minister's Ordinary Conversation

Our subject is to be the minister's common conversation when he mingles with men in general, and is supposed to be quite at his ease. How shall he order his speech among his fellow-men?

First and foremost, let me say, let him give himself no ministerial airs, but avoid everything which is stilted, official, fussy, and pretentious. "The Son of Man" is a noble title; it was given to Ezekiel, and to a greater than he: let not the ambassador of Heaven be other than a son of man. In fact, let him remember that the more simple and unaffected he is, the more closely will he resemble that child-man, the holy child Jesus.

There is such a thing as trying to be too much a minister, and becoming too little a man; though the more of a true man you are, the more truly will you be what a servant of the Lord should be. Schoolmasters and ministers have generally an appearance peculiarly

their own; in the wrong sense, they "are not as other men are." They are too often speckled birds, looking as if they were not at home among the other inhabitants of the country, but awkward and peculiar. When I have seen a flamingo gravely stalking along, an owl blinking in the shade, or a stork demurely lost in thought, I have been irresistibly led to remember some of my dignified brethren of the teaching and preaching fraternity, who are so marvelously proper at all times that they are just a shade amusing. Their very respectable, stilted, dignified, important, self-restrained manner is easily acquired; but is it worth acquiring?

Theodore Hook once stepped up to a gentleman who was parading the street with great pomposity, and said to him, "Sir, are you not a person of great importance?" and one has felt half inclined to do the same with certain brethren of the cloth. I know brethren who, from head to foot, in garb, tone, manner, necktie, and boots, are so utterly parsonic that no particle of manhood is visible. One young sprig of divinity must needs go through the streets in a gown, and another of the High Church order has recorded it in the newspapers with much complacency that he traversed Switzerland and Italy, wearing in all places his biretta; few boys would have been so proud of a fool's cap.

None of us are likely to go as far as that in our apparel; but we may do the like by our mannerism. Some men appear to have a white cravat twisted round their souls, their manhood is throttled with that starched rag. Certain brethren maintain an air of superiority which they think impressive, but which is simply offensive, and eminently opposed to their pretensions as followers of the lowly Jesus. The proud Duke of Somerset intimated his commands to his servants by signs, not condescending to speak to such base beings; his children never sat down in his presence, and when he slept in the afternoon one of his daughters stood on each side of him during his august slumbers. When proud Somersaults get into the ministry, they affect dignity in other ways almost equally absurd. "Stand by, I am holier than you," is written across their foreheads.

A well-known minister was once rebuked by a sublime brother for his indulgence in a certain luxury, and the expense was made a great argument. "Well, well," he replied, "there may be something in that; but remember, I do not spend half so much upon my weakness as you do in starch." That is the article I am deprecating, that dreadful ministerial starch. If you have indulged in it, I would earnestly advise you to "go and wash in Jordan seven times," and get it out of you, every particle of it.

I am persuaded that one reason why our working-men so universally keep clear of ministers is because they abhor their artificial and unmanly ways. If they saw us, in the pulpit and out of it, acting like real men, and speaking naturally, like honest men, they would come around us. Baxter's remark still holds good: "The lack of a familiar tone and expression is a great fault in most of our deliveries, and that which we should be very careful to amend." The vice of the ministry is that ministers will parsonificate the gospel. We must have humanity along with our divinity if we would win the masses. Everybody can see through affectations, and people are not likely to be taken in by them. Fling away your stilts, brethren, and walk on your feet; doff your Ecclesiasticism, and array yourselves in truth.

Still, a minister, wherever he is, is a minister, and should recollect that he is on duty. A policeman or a soldier may be off duty, but a minister never is. Even in our recreations we should still pursue the great object of our lives; for we are called to be diligent "in season and out of season." There is no position in which we may be placed but the Lord may come with the question, "What do you here, Elijah?" and we ought to be able at once to answer, "I have something to do for you even here, and I am trying to do it." The bow, of course, must be at times unstrung, or else it will lose its elasticity; but there is no need to cut the string.

I am speaking at this time of the minister in times of relaxation; and I say that even then he should conduct himself as the ambassador of God, and seize opportunities of doing good: this will not mar his rest, but sanctify it. A minister should be like a certain chamber which I saw at Beaulieu, in the New Forest, in which a cobweb is never seen. It is a large lumber-room, and is never swept; yet no spider ever defiles it with the emblems of neglect. It is roofed with chestnut, and for some reason, I know not what, spiders will not come near that wood by the year together. The same thing was mentioned to me in the corridors of Winchester School: I was told, "No spiders ever come here." Our minds should be equally clear of idle habits.

On our public rests for porters in the City of London you may read the words, "Rest, but do not loiter"; and they contain advice worthy of our attention. There is a sweet doing of nothing which is just the finest medicine in the world for a jaded mind. When the mind gets fatigued and out of order, to rest it is no more idleness than sleep is idleness; and no man is called lazy for sleeping the proper time. It is far better to be industriously asleep than lazily awake. Be ready to do good even in your resting times and in your leisure hours; and so be really a minister, and there will be no need for you to proclaim that you are so.

The Christian minister out of the pulpit should be a sociable man. He is not sent into the world to be a hermit or a monk. It is not his vocation to stand on a pillar all day, above his fellow-men, like that hare-brained Simon Stylites of olden time. You are not to warble from the top of a tree, like an invisible nightingale; but to be a man among men, saying to them, "I also am as you are in all that relates to man." Salt is of no use in the box; it must be rubbed into the meat; and our personal influence must penetrate and season society.

Keep aloof from others, and how can you benefit them? Our Master went to a wedding, and ate bread with publicans and sinners,

and yet was far more pure than those sanctimonious Pharisees, whose glory was that they were separate from their fellow-men. Some ministers need to be told that they are of the same species as their hearers. It is a remarkable fact, but we may as well state it, that bishops, canons, archdeacons, prebendaries, rural deans, rectors, vicars and even archbishops, are only men after all; and God has not railed off a holy corner of the earth to serve as a chancel for them, to abide therein by themselves.

It would not be amiss if there could be a revival of holy talk in the churchyard and the meeting-yard. I like to see the big yew-trees outside our ancient churches with seats all round them. They seem to say: "Sit down here, neighbor, and talk upon the sermon; here comes the pastor; he will join us, and we shall have a pleasant, holy chat." It is not every preacher we would care to talk with; but there are some whom one would give a fortune to converse with for an hour. I love a minister whose face invites me to make him my friend—a man upon whose doorstep you read, "Welcome"; and feel that there is no need of that Pompeian warning, "Beware of the dog."

Give me the man around whom the children come, like flies around a honey-pot: children are first-class judges of a good man. When Solomon was tried by the Queen of Sheba, as to his wisdom, the rabbis tell us that she brought some artificial flowers with her, beautifully made and delicately scented, so as to be facsimiles of real flowers. She asked Solomon to discover which were artificial and which were real. The wise man bade his servants open the window, and when the bees came in they flew at once to the natural flowers, and cared nothing for the artificial. So you will find that children have their instincts, and discover very speedily who is their friend, and depend upon it the children's friend is one who will be worth knowing. Have a good word to say to each and every member of the family—the big boys, and the young ladies, and the little girls, and everybody. No one knows what a smile and a hearty sentence may do.

A man who is to do much with men must love them, and feel at home with them. An individual who has no congeniality about him had better be an undertaker, and bury the dead, for he will never succeed in influencing the living.

I have met somewhere with the observation that to be a popular preacher one must have affections. There is truth in it. A man must have a great heart if he would have a great congregation. His heart should be as capacious as those noble harbors along our coast, which contain sea-room for a fleet. When a man has a large, loving heart, men go to him as ships to a haven, and feel at peace when they have anchored under the lee of his friendship. Such a man is hearty in private as well as in public; his blood is not cold and fishy, but he is warm as your own fireside. No pride and selfishness chill you when you approach him; he has his doors all open to receive you, and you are at home with him at once. Such men I would persuade you to be, every one of you.

The Christian minister should also be very cheerful. I don't believe in going about like certain monks whom I saw in Rome, who salute each other in sepulchral tones, and convey the pleasant information, "Brother, we must die!" to which lively salutation each lively brother of the order replies, "Yes, brother, we must die!" I was glad to be assured upon such good authority that all these lazy fellows are about to die; upon the whole, it is about the best thing they can do; but until that event occurs, they might use some more comfortable form of salutation.

No doubt there are some people who will be impressed by the very solemn appearance of ministers. I have heard of one who felt convinced that there must be something in the Roman Catholic religion, from the extremely starved and pinched appearance of a certain Ecclesiastic. "Look," said he, "how the man is worn to a skeleton by his daily fastings and nightly vigils! How he must mortify his flesh!" Now, the probabilities are that the emaciated priest was laboring under some internal disease, which he would have been heartily glad to be rid of, and it was not conquest of appetite, but failure in digestion, which had so reduced him; or possibly a troubled conscience, which made him fret himself down to the light weights. Certainly, I have never met with a text which mentions prominence of bone as an evidence of grace. If so, "The Living Skeleton" should have been exhibited, not merely as a natural curiosity, but as the standard of virtue. Some of the biggest rogues in the world have been as mortified in appearance as if they had lived on locusts and wild honey. It is a very vulgar error to suppose that a melancholy countenance is the index of a gracious heart.

I commend cheerfulness to all who would win souls; not levity and frothiness, but a congenial happy spirit. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there will be more souls led to Heaven by a man who wears Heaven in his face than by one who bears Tartarus in his looks.

Young ministers, and, indeed, all others, when they are in company, should take care not to engross all the conversation. They are quite qualified to do so, no doubt; I mean from their capacity to instruct, and readiness of utterance; but they must remember that people do not care to be perpetually instructed; they like to take a turn in the conversation themselves. Nothing pleases some people so much as to let them talk, and it may be for their good to let them be pleased. I spent an hour one evening with a person who did me the honor to say that he found me a very charming companion, and most instructive in conversation—yet I do not hesitate to confess that I said scarcely anything at all, but allowed him to have the talk to himself. By exercising patience I gained his good opinion, and an opportunity to address him on other occasions. A man has no more right at table to talk all, than to eat all. We are not to think ourselves Sir Oracle, before whom no dog must open his mouth. No; let all the company contribute of their stores, and they will think all the better of the godly words with which you try to season the discourse.

There are some companies into which you will go, especially when you are first settled, where everybody will be awed by the majesty of your presence, and people will be invited because the new minister is to be there. Such a position reminds me of the choicest statuary in the Vatican. A little room is screened off, a curtain is drawn, and lo! before you stands the great Apollo! If it be your trying lot to be the Apollo of the little party, put an end to the nonsense. If I were the Apollo, I should like to step right off the pedestal and shake hands all round, and you had better do the same; for sooner or later the fuss they make about you will come to an end, and the wisest course is to end it yourself.

Hero-worship is a kind of idolatry, and must not be encouraged. Heroes do well when they, like the apostles at Lystra, are horrified at the honors done to them, and run in among the people crying, "Sirs, why do you do these things? We also are men of like passions with you." Ministers will not have to do it long; for their foolish admirers are very apt to turn round upon them, and if they do not stone them nearly to death, they will go as far as they dare in unkindness and contempt.

While I say, "Do not talk all, and assume an importance which is mere imposture;" still, do not be a dummy. People will form their estimate of you and your ministry by what they see of you in private as well as by your public deliverances. Many young men have ruined themselves in the pulpit by being indiscreet in the parlor, and have lost all hope of doing good by their stupidity or frivolity in company. Don't be an inanimate log. At Antwerp Fair, among many curiosities advertised by huge paintings and big drums, I observed a booth containing "a great wonder," to be seen for a penny a head; it was a petrified man. I did not expend the amount required for admission, for I had seen so many petrified men for nothing, both in and out of the pulpit—lifeless, careless, destitute of common sense, and altogether inert, though occupied with the weightiest business which man could undertake.

Try to turn the conversation to profitable use. Be sociable and cheerful and all that, but labor to accomplish something. Why should you sow the wind, or plough a rock? Consider yourself, after all, as being very much responsible for the conversation which goes on where you are; for such is the esteem in which you will usually be held, that you will be the helmsman of the conversation. Therefore, steer it into a good channel. Do this without roughness or force. Keep the points of the line in good order, and the train will run on to your rails without a jerk. Be ready to seize opportunities adroitly, and lead on imperceptibly in the desired track. If your heart is in it and your wits are awake, this will be easy enough, especially if you breathe a prayer for guidance.

I shall never forget the manner in which a thirsty individual once begged of me upon Clapham Common. I saw him with a very large truck, in which he was carrying an extremely small parcel, and I wondered why he had not put the parcel into his pocket, and left the machine at home. I said, "It looks odd to see so large a truck for such a small load." He stopped, and looking me seriously in the face, he said, "Yes, sir, it is a very odd thing; but, do you know, I have met with an odder thing than that this very day. I've been about, working and sweating all this blessed day, and until now I haven't met a single gentleman that looked as if he'd give me a pint of beer, until I saw you." I considered that turn of the conversation very neatly managed, and we, with a far better subject upon our minds, ought to be equally able to introduce the topic upon which our heart is set. There was an ease in the man's manner which I envied, for I did not find it quite so simple a matter to introduce my own topic to his notice; yet if I had been thinking as much about how I could do him good as he had upon how to obtain a drink, I feel sure I would have succeeded in reaching my point.

If by any means we may save some, we must, like our Lord, talk at table to good purpose—yes, and on the margin of the well, and by the road, and on the sea-shore, and in the house, and in the field. To be a holy talker for Jesus might be almost as fruitful an office as to be a faithful preacher. Aim at excellence in both exercises, and if the Holy Spirit's aid be called in, you will attain your desire.

Here, perhaps, I may insert a rule, which nevertheless I believe to be quite needless, in reference to each one of the honorable brethren whom I am now addressing. Do not frequent rich men's tables to gain their favor, and never make yourself a sort of general hanger-on at tea-parties and entertainments. Who are you that you should be dancing attendance upon this wealthy man and the other, when the Lord's poor, his sick people, and his wandering sheep require you? To sacrifice the study to the parlor is criminal. To be a tout for your church, and waylay people at their homes to draw them to fill your pews, is a degradation to which no man should submit. To see ministers of different sects fluttering round a wealthy man, like vultures round a dead camel, is sickening.

Deliciously sarcastic was that famous letter "from an old and beloved minister to his dear son" upon his entrance into the ministry, the following extract from which hits our present point. It is said to have been copied from the Smellfungus Gazette, but I suspect our friend Paxton Hood knows all about its authorship: "Keep also a watchful eye on all likely people, especially wealthy or influential, who may come to your town; call upon them, and attempt to win them over by the devotions of the drawing-room to your cause. Thus you may most efficiently serve the Master's interests. People need looking after, and the result of a long experience goes to confirm my conviction, long cherished, that the power of the pulpit is trifling compared with the power of the parlor. We must imitate and sanctify, by the word of God and prayer, the exercises of the Jesuits. They succeeded not by the pulpit so much as by the parlor. In the parlor you can whisper—you can meet people on all their little personal private ideas. The pulpit is a very unpleasant place; of course it is the great power of God, and so on, but it is the parlor that counts, and a minister has not the same chance of success if he be a good preacher as if he is a perfect gentleman; nor in cultivated society has any man a legitimate

prospect of success if he is not, whatever he may be, a gentleman. I have always admired Lord Shaftesbury's character of St. Paul in his 'Characteristics'—that he was a fine gentleman. And I would say to you, be a gentleman. Not that I need to say so, but am persuaded that only in this way can we hope for the conversion of our growing wealthy middle classes. We must show that our religion is the religion of good sense and good taste; that we disapprove of strong excitements and strong stimulants; and oh, my dear boy, if you would be useful, often in your closet make it a matter of earnest prayer that you may be proper. If I were asked what is your first duty, be proper; and your second, be proper; and your third, be proper."

Those who remember a class of preachers who flourished fifty years ago will see the keenness of the satire in this extract. The evil is greatly mitigated now; in fact, I fear we may be drifting into another extreme.

In all probability, sensible conversation will sometimes drift into controversy, and here many a good man runs upon a snag. The sensible minister will be particularly gentle in argument. He, above all men, should not make the mistake of imagining that there is force in temper, and power in speaking angrily. A heathen who stood in a crowd in Calcutta, listening to a missionary disputing with a Brahmin, said he knew which was right though he did not understand the language—he knew that he was in the wrong who lost his temper first. For the most part, that is a very accurate way of judging. Try to avoid debating with people. State your opinion and let them state theirs. If you see that a stick is crooked, and you want people to see how crooked it is, lay a straight rod down beside it; that will be quite enough. But if you are drawn into controversy, use very hard arguments and very soft words.

Frequently you cannot convince a man by tugging at his reason, but you can persuade him by winning his affections. The other day I had the misery to need a pair of new boots, and though I bade the fellow make them as large as canoes, I had to labor fearfully to get them on. With a pair of boot-hooks I toiled like the men on board the vessel with Jonah, but all in vain. Just then my friend put in my way a little French chalk, and the work was done in a moment. Wonderfully coaxing was that French chalk. Gentlemen, always carry a little French chalk with you into society, a neat packet of Christian persuasiveness, and you will soon discover the virtues of it.

And lastly, with all his amiability, the minister should be firm for his principles, and bold to avow and defend them in all companies. When a fair opportunity occurs, or he has managed to create one, let him not be slow to make use of it. Strong in his principles, earnest in his tone, and affectionate in heart, let him speak out like a man and thank God for the privilege. There need be no reticence—there should be none. The maddest romances of Spiritualists, the wildest dreams of Utopian reformers, the silliest chit-chat of the town, and the vainest nonsense of the frivolous world, demand a hearing and get it. And shall not Christ be heard? Shall His message of love remain untold, for fear we should be charged with intrusion or accused of cant? Is religion to be tabooed—the best and noblest of all themes forbidden? If this be the rule of any society, we will not comply with it. If we cannot break it down, we will leave the society to itself, as men desert a house smitten with leprosy. We cannot consent to be gagged. There is no reason why we should be. We will go to no place where we cannot take our Master with us. While others take liberty to sin, we shall not renounce our liberty to rebuke and warn them.

Wisely used, our common conversation may be a potent means for good. Trains of thought may be started by a single sentence which may lead to the conversion of people whom our sermons have never reached. The method of button-holing people, or bringing the truth before them individually, has been greatly successful: this is another subject, and can hardly come under the head of Common Conversation; but we will close by saying that it is to be hoped that we shall never, in our ordinary talk, any more than in the pulpit, be looked upon as nice sort of people, whose business it is to make things agreeable all round, and who never by any possibility cause uneasiness to any one, however ungodly their lives may be. Such people go in and out among the families of their hearers, and make merry with them, when they ought to be mourning over them. They sit down at their tables and feast at their ease, when they ought to be warning them to flee from the wrath to come. They are like that American alarum I have heard of, which was warranted not to wake you if you did not wish it to do so.

Be it ours to sow, not only on the honest and good soil, but on the rock and on the highway, and at the last great day to reap a glad harvest. May the bread which we cast upon the waters in odd times and strange occasions be found again after many days.

LECTURE 13 To Workers with Slender Apparatus

What are those ministers to do who have a slender apparatus? By a slender apparatus I mean that they have few books, and little or no means with which to purchase more. This is a state of things which ought not to exist in any case; the churches ought to take care that it should be rendered impossible. Up to the highest measure of their ability they should furnish their minister, not only with the food which is needful to sustain the life of his body, but with mental nutriment, so that his soul may not be starved.

A good library should be looked upon as an indispensable part of church furniture; and the deacons, whose business it is "to serve tables," will be wise if, without neglecting the table of the Lord, or of the poor, and without diminishing the supplies of the minister's dinner-table, they give an eye to his study-table, and keep it supplied with new works and standard books in fair abundance. It would

be money well laid out, and would be productive far beyond expectation. Instead of waxing eloquent upon the declining power of the pulpit, leading men in the church should use the legitimate means for improving its power, by supplying the preacher with food for thought. Put the whip into the manger is my advice to all grumblers.

Some years ago I tried to induce our churches to have ministers' libraries as a matter of course, and some few thoughtful people saw the value of the suggestion, and commenced carrying it out. With much pleasure I have seen here and there the shelves provided and a few volumes placed upon them. I earnestly wish that such a beginning had been made everywhere; but, alas! I fear that a long succession of starveling ministers will alone arouse the miserly to the conviction that parsimony with a minister is false economy. Those churches which cannot afford a liberal stipend should make some amends by founding a library as a permanent part of their establishment; and, by making additions to it from year to year, it would soon become very valuable.

My venerable grandfather's manse had in it a collection of very valuable ancient Puritan volumes, which had descended from minister to minister: well do I remember certain ponderous tomes, whose chief interest to me lay in their intricate initial letters, adorned with pelicans, griffins, little boys at play, or patriarchs at work. It may be objected that the books would be lost through change of users, but I would run the risk of that; and trustees, with a little care over the catalogue, could keep the libraries as securely as they keep the pews and pulpit.

If this scheme be not adopted, let another and simpler one be tried; let all the subscribers towards the preacher's support add ten percent or more to their subscriptions, expressly to provide food for the minister's brain. They would get back what they gave in the improved sermons they would hear. If some little annual income could be secured to poor ministers, to be sacredly spent in books, it would be a God-send to them, and an incalculable blessing to the community. Sensible people do not expect a garden to yield them herbs from year to year unless they enrich the soil; they do not expect a locomotive to work without fuel, or even an ox or an donkey to labor without food; let them, therefore, give over expecting to receive instructive sermons from men who are shut out of the storehouse of knowledge by their inability to purchase books.

But the subject is, what are men to do who have no stores, who have no church library, and no allowance made them to provide books? Let us remark at once that, if these men succeed, greater honor is due to them than to those who have large appliances.

Quintin Matsys is said to have had all his tools except his hammer and file taken from him by his fellow workmen, and to have produced his famous well-cover without them; so much the more honor to him! Great credit is due to those workers for God who have done great things without helpful tools. Their labor would have been greatly lightened if they had possessed them; but what they have done is the more wonderful.

At the present International Exhibition at Kensington, Mr. Buckmaster's School of Cookery is mainly admired because he produces such savory dishes from unpromising material; from a handful of bones and a little macaroni he serves up royal dainties. If he had all the materials employed in French cookery, and used them all, every person would say, "Well, anybody could do that;" but when he shows you scraps of meat and bones, and tells you that he bought them at the butcher's for a few pence, and that he can make out of them a dinner for a family of five or six, all the good wives open their eyes, and wonder how on earth it can be done; and when he passes round his dish, and they taste how delicious it is, they are full of admiration. Work away, then, poor brother, for you may yet succeed in doing great things in your ministry, and your welcome of "Well done, good and faithful servant," will be all the more emphatic because you labored under serious difficulties.

If a man can purchase but very few books, my first advice to him would be, let him purchase the very best. If he cannot spend much, let him spend well. The best will always be the cheapest. Leave mere dilutions and attenuations to those who can afford such luxuries. Do not buy milk and water, but get condensed milk, and put what water you like to it yourself. This age is full of word-spinners—professional book-makers, who hammer a grain of matter so thin that it will cover a five-acre sheet of paper; these men have their uses, as gold-beaters have, but they are of no use to you. Farmers on our coast used to cart wagon-loads of seaweed and put them upon their land; the heaviest part was the water: now they dry the weeds, and save a world of labor and expense. Don't buy thin soup; purchase the essence of meat. Get much in little.

Prefer books which abound in what James Hamilton used to call "Bibline," or the essence of books. You require accurate, condensed, reliable, standard books, and should make sure that you get them. In preparing his *Horae Biblicae Quotidianae*, which is an admirable comment upon the Bible, Dr. Chalmers used only the Concordance, the Pictorial Bible, Pooles Synopsis, Matthew Henry's Commentary, and Robinson's Researches in Palestine. "These are the books I use," said he to a friend; "all that is Biblical is there; I have to do with nothing besides in my Biblical study." This shows that those who have unlimited stores at their command—yet find a few standard books sufficient. If Dr. Chalmers were now alive, he would probably take Thomson's Land and the Book instead of Robinson's Researches, and give up the Pictorial Bible for Kitto's Daily Bible Illustrations', at least I should recommend the alteration to most men. This is clear evidence that some most eminent preachers have found that they could do better with few books than with many when studying the Scriptures, and this, I take it, is our main business.

Forgo, then, without regret, the many books which, like poor Hodge's razors, of famous memory, "are made to sell," and do sell those who buy them, as well as themselves. Matthew Henry's Commentary having been mentioned, I venture to say that no better investment can be made, by any minister, than that peerless exposition. Get it, if you sell your coat to buy it.

The next rule I shall lay down is, master those books you have. Read them thoroughly. Bathe in them until they saturate you. Read and re-read them, masticate them, and digest them. Let them go into your very self. Peruse a good book several times, and make notes and analyses of it. A student will find that his mental constitution is more affected by one book thoroughly mastered than by twenty books which he has merely skimmed, lapping at them, as the classic proverb puts it "As the dogs drink of Nilus." Little learning and much pride come of hasty reading. Books may be piled on the brain until it cannot work. Some men are disabled from thinking by their putting meditation away for the sake of much reading. They gorge themselves with book-matter, and become mentally dyspeptic.

Books on the brain cause disease. Get the book into the brain, and you will grow. In D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature* there is an invective of Lucian upon those men who boast of possessing large libraries, which they either never read or never profit by. He begins by comparing such a person to a pilot who never learned the art of navigation, or a cripple who wears embroidered slippers but cannot stand upright in them. Then he exclaims, "Why do you buy so many books? You have no hair, and you purchase a comb; you are blind, and you must need buy a fine mirror; you are deaf, and you will have the best musical instrument!" This is a very well-deserved rebuke to those who think that the possession of books will secure them learning. A measure of that temptation happens to us all; for do we not feel wiser after we have spent an hour or two in a bookseller's shop? A man might as well think himself richer for having inspected the vaults of the Bank of England.

In reading books let your motto be, "Much, not many." Think as well as read, and keep the thinking always proportionate to the reading, and your small library will not be a great misfortune.

There is very much sound sense in the remark of a writer in the *Quarterly Review* many years back. "Give us the one dear book, cheaply picked from the stall by the price of the dinner, thumb-ed and dog-eared, cracked in the back and broken in the corner, noted on the fly-leaf and scrawled on the margin, sullied and scorched, torn and worn, smoothed in the pocket and grimed on the hearth, damped by the grass and dusted among the cinders, over which you have dreamed in the grove and dozed before the embers, but read again, again, and again, from cover to cover. It is by this one book, and its three or four single successors, that more real cultivation has been imparted than by all the myriads which bear down the mile-long, bulging, bending shelves of the Bodleian."

But if you feel you must have more books, I recommend to you a little judicious borrowing. You will most likely have some friends who have books, and who will be kind enough to let you use them for a time; and I specially advise you, in order to borrow again, to return whatever is lent, promptly, and in good condition. I hope there is not so much need that I should say much about returning books, as there would have been a few months ago, for I have lately met with a statement by a clergyman, which has very much raised my opinion of human nature; for he declares that he has a personal acquaintance with three gentlemen who have actually returned borrowed umbrellas! I am sorry to say that he moves in a more favored circle than I do, for I have personal acquaintance with several young men who have borrowed books and never returned them.

The other day, a certain minister, who had lent me five books, which I have used for two years or more, wrote to me a note to request the return of three of them. To his surprise, he had them back by the next "Parcels' Delivery," and two others which he had forgotten. I had carefully kept a list of books borrowed, and, therefore, could make a complete return to the owner. I am sure he did not expect their prompt arrival, for he wrote me a letter of mingled astonishment and gratitude, and when I visit his study again, I feel sure I shall be welcome to another loan. You know the rhyme which has been written in many a man's book—

"If you are borrowed by a friend,
Right welcome shall he be
To read, to study, not to lend,
But to return to me.

Not that imparted knowledge does
Diminish learning's store,
But books I find when once they're lent,
Return to me no more."

Sir Walter Scott used to say that his friends might be very indifferent accountants, but he was sure they were good "book-keepers." Some have even had to go the length of the scholar who, when asked to lend a book, sent word by the servant that he would not let the book go out of his chamber, but that the gentleman who sought the loan might come and sit there and read as long as he liked. The rejoinder was unexpected but complete, when, his fire being slow to burn, he sent to the same person to borrow a pair of bellows, and received for answer that the owner would not lend the bellows out of his own chamber, but the gentleman might come

and blow there as long as he liked. Judicious borrowing may furnish you with much reading, but remember the man's axe-head in the Scriptures, and be careful of what you borrow. "The wicked borrows and pays not again."

In case the famine of books should be sore in the land, there is one book which you all have, and that is your Bible, and a minister with his Bible is like David with his sling and stone, fully equipped for the fray. No man may say that he has no well to draw from, while the Scriptures are within reach. In the Bible we have a perfect library, and he who studies it thoroughly will be a better scholar than if he had devoured the Alexandrian Library entire. To understand the Bible should be our ambition; we should be familiar with it, as familiar as the housewife with her needle, the merchant with his ledger, the mariner with his ship. We ought to know its general run, the contents of each book, the details of its histories, its doctrines, its precepts, and everything about it.

Erasmus, speaking of Jerome, asks, "Who but he ever learned by heart the whole Scripture? or imbibed, or meditated on it as he did?" It is said of Witsius, a learned Dutchman, author of the famous work on "The Covenants," that he also was able, not merely to repeat every word of Scripture in the original tongues, but to give the context, and the criticisms of the best authors; and I have heard of an old minister in Lancashire, that he was "a walking Concordance," and could either give you chapter and verse for any passage quoted, or, vice versa, could correctly give the words when the place was mentioned. That may have been a feat of memory, but the study needful to it must have been highly profitable. I do not say that you must aspire to that; but if you could, it would be well worth the gaining.

It was one of the fortes of that singular genius, William Huntington (whom I will not now either condemn or commend), that in preaching he incessantly quoted Holy Scripture, and was accustomed, whenever he did so, to give the chapter and the verse; and in order to show his independence of the printed book, it was his uncomely habit to remove the Bible from the front of the pulpit.

A man who has learned not merely the letter of the Bible, but its inner spirit, will be no mean man, whatever deficiencies he may labor under. You know the old proverb, "Beware of the man of one book." He is a terrible antagonist. A man who has his Bible at his fingers' ends and in his heart's core is a champion in our Israel; you cannot compete with him: you may have an armory of weapons, but his Scriptural knowledge will overcome you; for it is a sword like that of Goliath, of which David said, "There is none like it."

The gracious William Romaine, I believe, in the latter part of his life, put away all his books and read nothing at all but his Bible. He was a scholarly man—yet he was monopolized by the one Book, and was made mighty by it. If we are driven to do the same by necessity, let us recollect that some have done it by choice, and let us not bemoan our lot, for the Scriptures will be sweeter than honey to our taste, and will make us "wiser than the ancients."

We shall never be short of holy matter if we are continually studying the inspired volume; nay, it is not only matter that we shall find there, but illustration too; for the Bible is its own best illustrator. If you want anecdote, simile, allegory, or parable, turn to the sacred page. Scriptural truth never looks more lovely than when she is adorned with jewels from her own treasury.

I have lately been reading the Books of the Kings and the Chronicles, and I have become enamored with them; they are as full of divine instruction as the Psalms or Prophets, if read with opened eyes. I think it was Ambrose who used to say, "I adore the infinity of Scripture!" I hear that same voice which sounded in the ears of Augustine, concerning the Book of God, "Tolle, lege"—Take, read.

It may be you will dwell in retirement in some village, where you will find no one to converse with who is above your own level, and where you will meet with very few books worth your reading; then read and meditate in the law of the Lord both day and night, and you shall be "as a tree planted by the rivers of water." Make the Bible the man of your right hand, the companion of every hour, and you will have little reason to lament your slender equipment in inferior things.

I would earnestly impress upon you the truth, that a man who is short of apparatus can make up for it by much thought. Thinking is better than possessing books. Thinking is an exercise of the soul which both develops its powers and educates them. A little girl was once asked whether she knew what her soul was, and, to the surprise of all, she said, "Sir, my soul is my think." If this be correct, some people have very little soul. Without thinking, reading cannot benefit the mind, but it may delude the man into the idea that he is growing wise.

Books are a sort of idol to some men. As the image with the Roman Catholic is intended to make him think of Christ, and in effect keeps him from Christ, so books are intended to make men think, but are often a hindrance to thought.

When George Fox took a sharp knife and cut out for himself a pair of leather breeches, and, having done with the fashions of society, hid himself in a hollow tree, to think by the month together, he was growing into a man of thought before whom men of books speedily beat a retreat. What a flutter he made, not only among the Poperies, and Prelacies, and Presbyteries of his day, but also among the well-read properties of Dissent. He swept no end of cobwebs out of the sky, and gave the bookworms a hard time of it.

Thought is the backbone of study, and if more ministers would think, what a blessing it would be! Only, we want men who will think

about the revealed truth of God, and not dreamers who evolve religions out of their own imaginations. Nowadays we are pestered with a set of fellows who must needs stand on their heads and think with their feet. Romancing is their notion of meditation. Instead of considering revealed truth, they excogitate a mess of their own, in which error, and nonsense, and conceit appear in about equal parts; and they call this broth "modern thought." We want men who will try to think straight, and yet think deep, because they think God's thoughts. Far be it from me to urge you to imitate the boastful thinkers of this age, who empty their meeting-houses, and then glory that they preach to the cultivated and intellectual. It is miserable cant. Earnest thought upon the things which are assuredly believed among us is quite another matter, and to that I urge you.

Personally I owe much to many hours, and even days, spent alone, under an old oak-tree, by the river Medway. Happening to be somewhat indisposed at the time when I was leaving school, I was allowed considerable leisure, and, armed with an excellent fishing-rod, I caught a few small fishes, and enjoyed many day-dreams, intermingled with searchings of heart, and much ruminating of knowledge acquired. If boys would think, it would be well to give them less class work and more opportunity for thought. All cram and no digestion makes flesh destitute of muscle, and this is even more deplorable mentally than physically. If your people are not numerous enough to supply you with a library, they will make fewer demands on your time, and, in having time for meditation, you will be even better off than your brethren with many books and little space for quiet contemplation.

Without books a man may learn much by keeping his eyes open. Current history, incidents which transpire under his own nose, events recorded in the newspaper, matters of common talk—he may learn from them all. The difference between eyes and no eyes is wonderful. If you have no books to try your eyes, keep them open wherever you go, and you will find something worth looking at. Can you not learn from nature? Every flower is waiting to teach you. "Consider the lilies," and learn from the roses. Not only may you go to the ant, but every living thing offers itself for your instruction. There is a voice in every gale, and a lesson in every grain of dust it bears. Sermons glisten in the morning on every blade of grass, and homilies fly by you as the sere leaves fall from the trees. A forest is a library, a cornfield is a volume of philosophy, the rock is a history, and the river at its base a poem. Go, you who have your eyes opened, and find lessons of wisdom everywhere, in Heaven above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth. Books are poor things compared with these.

Moreover, however scant your libraries, you can study yourself. This is a mysterious volume, the major part of which you have not read. If any man think that he knows himself thoroughly, he deceives himself; for the most difficult book you will ever read is your own heart. I said to a doubter the other day, who seemed to be wandering in a maze, "Well, really I cannot understand you; but I am not vexed, for I never could understand myself;" and I certainly meant what I said.

Watch the twists and turns and singularities of your own mind, and the strangeness of your own experience; the depravity of your heart, and the work of divine grace; your tendency to sin, and your capacity for holiness; how akin you are to a devil, and yet how allied to God Himself! Note how wisely you can act when taught of God, and how foolishly you behave when left to yourself. You will find the study of your heart to be of immense importance to you as a watcher over the souls of others. A man's own experience should be to him the laboratory in which he tests the medicines which he prescribes for others. Even your own faults and failures will instruct you if you bring them to the Lord. Absolutely sinless men would be unable to sympathize with imperfect men and women. Study the Lord's dealings with your own souls, and you will know more of His ways with others.

Read other men; they are as instructive as books. Suppose there should come up to one of our great hospitals a young student so poor that he could not purchase surgical books; it would certainly be a great detriment to him; but if he had the run of the hospital, if he saw operations performed, and watched cases from day to day, I would not wonder but what he might turn out as skillful a surgeon as his more favored companions. His observation would show him what books alone could not; and as he stood by to see the removal of a limb, the binding up of a wound, or the tying up of an artery, he might, at any rate, pick up enough practical surgery to be of immense service to him.

Now, much that a minister needs to know he must learn by actual observation. All wise pastors have walked the hospitals spiritually, and dealt with inquirers, hypocrites, backsliders, the despairing, and the presumptuous. A man who has had a sound practical experience in the things of God Himself, and watched the hearts of his fellows, other things being equal, will be a far more useful man than he who knows only what he has read. It is a great pity for a man to be a college Jack-a-dandy, who comes out of the classroom as out of a band-box, into a world he has never seen before, to deal with men he has never observed, and handle facts with which he has never come into personal contact. "Not a novice," says the apostle; and it is possible to be a novice and yet a very accomplished scholar, a classic, a mathematician, and a theoretical theologian. We should have practical familiarity with men's souls; and if we have much of it, the fewness of our books will be a light affliction.

"But," says an inquiring brother, "how can you read a man?" I have heard of a gentleman of whom it was said that you could never stop five minutes under an archway with him but what he would teach you something. That was a wise man; but he would be a wiser man still who would never stop five minutes under an archway without learning somewhat from other people. Wise men can learn as much from a fool as from a philosopher. A fool is a splendid book to read from, because every leaf is open before you; there is a

dash of the comic in the style, which entices you to read on, and if you gather nothing else, you are warned not to publish your own folly.

Learn from experienced saints. What deep things some of them can teach to us younger men! What instances God's poor people can narrate of the Lord's providential appearances for them; how they glory in His upholding grace and His faithfulness to His covenant! What fresh light they often shed upon the promises, revealing meanings hidden from the carnally wise, but made clear to simple hearts! Many of the promises are written with invisible ink, and must be held to the fire of affliction before the letters will show themselves? Tried spirits are grand instructors for ministers.

As for the inquirer, how much is to be gathered from him! I have seen very much of my own stupidity while in conversation with seeking souls. I have been baffled by a poor lad while trying to bring him to the Savior; I thought I had him fast, but he has eluded me again and again with perverse ingenuity of unbelief. Sometimes inquirers who are really anxious surprise me with their singular skill in battling against hope; their arguments are endless and their difficulties countless. They put us to a non plus again and again. The grace of God at last enables us to bring them to the light, but not until we have seen our own inefficiency. In the strange perversities of unbelief, the singular constructions and misconstructions which the desponding put upon their feelings and upon scriptural statements—you will often find a world of instruction. I would sooner give a young man an hour with inquirers and the mentally depressed than a week in the best of our classes, so far as practical training for the pastorate is concerned.

Once more, be much at death-beds; they are illuminated books. There shall you read the very poetry of our religion, and learn the secrets thereof. What splendid gems are washed up by the waves of Jordan! What fair flowers grow on its banks! The everlasting fountains in the glory-land throw their spray aloft, and the dew-drops fall on this side the narrow stream! I have heard humble men and women, in their departing hours, talk as though they were inspired, uttering strange words, aglow with supernal glory. These they learned from no lips beneath the moon; they must have heard them while sitting in the suburbs of the New Jerusalem. God whispers them in their ears amid their pain and weakness; and then they tell us a little of what the Spirit has revealed. I will part with all my books, if I may see the Lord's Elijahs mount their chariots of fire.

Lecture 14. The Holy Spirit in Connection with our Ministry

I have selected a topic upon which it would be difficult to say anything which has not been often said before; but as the theme is of the highest importance it is good to dwell upon it frequently, and even if we bring forth only old things and nothing more, it may be wise to put you in remembrance of them. Our subject is "The Holy Spirit in connection with our ministry," or, the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to ourselves as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit." Having pronounced that sentence as a matter of creed, I hope we can also repeat it as a devout soliloquy forced to our lips by personal experience. To us the presence and work of the Holy Spirit are the ground of our confidence as to the wisdom and hopefulness of our life work. If we had not believed in the Holy Spirit we should have laid down our ministry long before this, for "who is sufficient for these things?" Our hope of success, and our strength for continuing the service, lie in our belief that the Spirit of the Lord rests upon us.

I will for the time being take it for granted that we are all of us conscious of the existence of the Holy Spirit. We have said we believe in Him; but in very deed we have advanced beyond faith in this matter, and have come into the region of consciousness. Time was when most of us believed in the existence of our present friends, for we had heard of them by the hearing of the ear, but we have now seen each other, and returned the fraternal grip, and felt the influence of happy companionship, and therefore we do not now so much believe as know.

Even so we have felt the Spirit of God operating upon our hearts, we have known and perceived the power which He wields over human souls, and we know Him by frequent, conscious, personal contact. By the sensitiveness of our spirit we are as much made conscious of the presence of the Spirit of God as we are made cognizant of the existence of the souls of our fellow-men by their action upon our souls, or as we are certified of the existence of matter by its action upon our senses.

We have been raised from the dull sphere of mere mind and matter into the heavenly radiance of the spirit-world; and now, as spiritual men, we discern spiritual things, we feel the forces which are paramount in the spirit-realm, and we know that there is a Holy Spirit, for we feel Him operating upon our spirits. If it were not so, we would certainly have no right to be in the ministry of Christ's church. Should we even dare to remain in her membership?

But, my brethren, we have been spiritually quickened. We are distinctly conscious of a new life, with all that comes out of it: we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and dwell in a new world.

We have been illuminated, and made to behold the things which eye has not seen; we have been guided into truth such as flesh and blood could never have revealed.

We have been comforted of the Spirit: often have we been lifted up from the deeps of sorrow to the heights of joy by the sacred Paraclete.

We have also, in a measure, been sanctified by Him; and we are conscious that the operation of sanctification is going on in us in different forms and ways.

Therefore, because of all these personal experiences, we know that there is a Holy Spirit, as surely as we know that we ourselves exist.

I am tempted to linger here, for the point is worthy of longer notice. Unbelievers ask for phenomena. The skeptic cries, "What I want is facts." These are our facts—let us not forget to use them. A skeptic challenges me with the remark, "I cannot pin my faith to a book or a history; I want to see present facts." My reply is, "You cannot see them, because your eyes are blind; but the facts are there none the less. Those of us who have eyes see marvelous things, though you do not." If he ridicules my assertion, I am not at all astonished. I expected him to do so, and would have been very much surprised if he had not done so; but I demand respect to my own position as a witness to facts, and I turn upon the objector with the inquiry, "What right have you to deny my evidence? If I were a blind man, and were told by you that you possessed a faculty called sight, I would be unreasonable if I railed at you as a conceited enthusiast. All you have a right to say is—that you know nothing about it, but you are not authorized to call us all liars or dupes. You may join with revilers of old and declare that the spiritual man is mad, but that does not disprove his statements."

Brethren, to me the phenomena which are produced by the Spirit of God demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion as clearly as ever the destruction of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, or the fall of manna in the wilderness, or the water leaping from the smitten rock, could have proved to Israel the presence of God in the midst of her tribes.

We will now come to the core of our subject. To us, as ministers, the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. Without Him our office is a mere name. We claim no priesthood over and above that which belongs to every child of God; but we are the successors of those who, in olden times, were moved by God to declare His word, to testify against transgression, and to lead His cause. Unless we have the spirit of the prophets resting upon us, the mantle which we wear is nothing but a rough garment to deceive. We ought to be driven forth with abhorrence from the society of honest men for daring to speak in the name of the Lord if the Spirit of God rests not upon us. We believe ourselves to be spokesmen for Jesus Christ, appointed to continue His witness upon earth; but upon Him and His testimony the Spirit of God always rested, and if it does not rest upon us, we are evidently not sent forth into the world as He was. At Pentecost the commencement of the great work of converting the world was with flaming tongues and a rushing mighty wind, symbols of the presence of the Spirit; if, therefore, we think to succeed without the Spirit, we are not after the Pentecostal order. If we have not the Spirit which Jesus promised, we cannot perform the commission which Jesus gave.

I need scarcely warn any brother here against falling into the delusion that we may have the Spirit so as to become inspired. Yet the members of a certain litigious modern sect need to be warned against this folly. They hold that their meetings are under "the presidency of the Holy Spirit", concerning which notion I can only say that I have been unable to discover in holy Scripture either the term or the idea.

I do find in the New Testament a body of Corinthians eminently gifted, fond of speaking, and given to party strifes—true representatives of those to whom I allude, but as Paul said of them, "I thank God I baptized none of you," so also do I thank the Lord that few of that school have ever been found in our midst.

It would seem that their assemblies possess a peculiar gift of inspiration, not quite perhaps amounting to infallibility, but nearly approximating thereto. If you have mingled in their gatherings, I greatly question whether you have been more edified by the bombast produced under celestial presidency, than you have been by those of ordinary preachers of the Word, who only consider themselves to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as one spirit is under the influence of another spirit, or one mind under the influence of another mind.

We are not the passive communicators of infallibility, but the honest teachers of such things as we have learned, so far as we have been able to grasp them. As our minds are active, and have a personal existence while the mind of the Spirit is acting upon them, our infirmities are apparent as well as His wisdom; and while we reveal what He has made us to know, we are greatly abased by the fear that our own ignorance and error are in a measure manifested at the same time, because we have not been more perfectly subject to the divine power. I do not suspect that you will go astray in the direction I have hinted at—certainly the results of previous experiments are not likely to tempt wise men to that folly.

This is our first question. Wherein may we look for the aid of the Holy Spirit? When we have spoken on this point, we will, very solemnly, consider a second—How may we lose that assistance? Let us pray that, by God's blessing, this consideration may help us

to retain it.

Wherein may we look for the aid of the Holy Spirit? I should reply—in seven or eight ways.

1. First, He is the Spirit of KNOWLEDGE, "He shall guide you into all truth." In this character we need His teaching.

We have urgent need to study, for the teacher of others must himself be instructed. Habitually to come into the pulpit unprepared is unpardonable presumption—nothing can more effectually lower ourselves and our office. After a visitation discourse by the Bishop of Lichfield upon the necessity of earnestly studying the Word, a certain vicar told his lordship that he could not believe his doctrine, "for," said he, "often when I am in the vestry I do not know what I am going to talk about; but I go into the pulpit and preach, and think nothing of it." His lordship replied, "And you are quite right in thinking nothing of it, for your church-wardens have told me that they share your opinion."

If we are not instructed, how can we instruct? If we have not thought, how shall we lead others to think? It is in our study-work, in that blessed labor when we are alone with the Book before us, that we need the help of the Holy Spirit. He holds the key of the heavenly treasury, and can enrich us beyond conception. He has the clue of the most labyrinthine doctrine, and can lead us in the way of truth. He can break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, and give to us the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places.

If you study the original, consult the commentaries, and meditate deeply—yet if you neglect to cry mightily unto the Spirit of God your study will not profit you; but even if you are debarred the use of helps (which I trust you will not be), if you wait upon the Holy Spirit in simple dependence upon His teaching, you will lay hold of very much of the divine meaning.

The Spirit of God is peculiarly precious to us, because He especially instructs us as to the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that is the main point of our preaching. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. If He had taken of the things of doctrine or precept, we should have been glad of such gracious assistance; but since He especially delights in the things of Christ, and focusses His sacred light upon the cross, we rejoice to see the center of our testimony so divinely illuminated, and we are sure that the light will be diffused over all the rest of our ministry. Let us wait upon the Spirit of God with this cry, "O Holy Spirit, reveal to us the Son of God, and thus show us the Father."

As the Spirit of knowledge, He not only instructs us as to the gospel, but He leads us to see the Lord in all other matters. We are not to shut our eyes to God in nature, or to God in general history, or to God in the daily occurrences of providence, or to God in our own experience; and the blessed Spirit is the interpreter to us of the mind of God in all these. If we cry, "Teach me what you would have me to do; or, show me wherefore you contend with me; or, tell me what is your mind in this precious providence of mercy, or in that other dispensation of mingled judgment and grace"—we shall in each case be well instructed; for the Spirit is the seven-branched candlestick of the sanctuary, and by His light all things are rightly seen.

As Goodwin well observes, "There must be light to accompany the truth if we are to know it. The experience of all gracious men proves this. What is the reason that you shall see some things in a chapter at one time, and not at another; some grace in your hearts at one time, and not at another; have a sight of spiritual things at one time, and not at another? The eye is the same, but it is the Holy Spirit that opens and shuts this dark lantern, as I may so call it; as He opens it wider, or contracts it, or shuts it narrower, so do we see more or less; and sometimes He shuts it wholly, and then the soul is in darkness, though it have never so good an eye."

Beloved brethren, wait upon Him for this light, or you will abide in darkness and become blind leaders of the blind.

2. In the second place, the Spirit is called the Spirit of WISDOM, and we greatly need Him in that capacity; for knowledge may be dangerous if unaccompanied with wisdom, which is the art of rightly using what we know. Rightly to divide the Word of God is as important as fully to understand it, for some who have evidently understood a part of the gospel have given undue prominence to that one portion of it, and have therefore exhibited a distorted Christianity, to the injury of those who have received it, since they in their turn have exhibited a distorted character in consequence thereof.

A man's nose is a prominent feature in his face, but it is possible to make it so large that eyes and mouth and everything else are thrown into insignificance, and the drawing is a caricature and not a portrait. Just so, certain important doctrines of the gospel can be so proclaimed in excess as to throw the rest of truth into the shade, and the preaching is no longer the gospel in its natural beauty, but a caricature of the truth; of which caricature, however, let me say, some people seem to be mightily fond.

The Spirit of God will teach you the use of the sacrificial knife to divide the offerings; and He will show you how to use the balances of the sanctuary so as to weigh out and mix the precious spices in their proper quantities. Every experienced preacher feels this to be of the utmost consequence, and it is well if he is able to resist all temptation to neglect it.

Alas, some of our hearers do not desire to hear the whole counsel of God. They have their favorite doctrines, and would have us silent on all besides. Many are like the Scotchwoman, who, after hearing a sermon, said, "It was very well if it hadna been for the

trash of duties at the end." There are brethren of that kind; they enjoy the comforting part—the promises and the doctrines, but practical holiness must scarcely be touched upon. Faithfulness requires us to give them a four-square gospel, from which nothing is omitted, and in which nothing is exaggerated, and for this much wisdom is requisite. I gravely question whether any of us have so much of this wisdom as we need. We are probably afflicted by some inexcusable partialities and unjustifiable leanings; let us search them out and be done with them.

We may be conscious of having passed by certain texts, not because we do not understand them (which might be justifiable), but because we do understand them, and hardly like to say what they have taught us, or because there may be some imperfection in ourselves, or some prejudice among our hearers which those texts would reveal too clearly for our comfort. Such sinful silence must be ended forthwith. To be wise stewards and bring forth the right portions of food for our Master's household we need Your teaching, O Spirit of the Lord!

Nor is this all, for even if we know how rightly to divide the Word of God, we need wisdom in the selection of the particular part of truth which is most applicable to the season and to the people assembled; and equal discretion in the tone and manner in which the doctrine shall be presented. I believe that many brethren who preach human responsibility deliver themselves in so legal a manner as to disgust all those who love the doctrines of grace. On the other hand, I fear that many have preached the sovereignty of God in such a way as to drive all people who believe in man's free agency entirely away from the Calvinistic side. We should not hide truth for a moment, but we should have wisdom so to preach it that there shall be no needless jarring or offending, but a gradual enlightenment of those who cannot see it at all, and a leading of weaker brethren into the full circle of gospel doctrine.

Brethren, we also need wisdom in the way of putting things to different people. You can cast a man down with the very truth which was intended to build him up. You can sicken a man with the honey with which you meant to sweeten his mouth. The great mercy of God has been preached unguardedly, and has led hundreds into licentiousness; and, on the other hand, the terrors of the Lord have been occasionally fulminated with such violence that they have driven men into despair, and so into a settled defiance of the Most High.

Wisdom is profitable to direct, and he who has it brings forth each truth in its season, dressed in its most appropriate garments. Who can give us this wisdom but the blessed Spirit? O, my brethren, see to it, that in lowliest reverence you wait for His direction.

3. Thirdly, we need the Spirit in another manner, namely, as the live coal from off the altar, touching our lips, so that when we have knowledge and wisdom to select the fitting portion of truth, we may enjoy freedom of utterance when we come to deliver it. "Lo, this has touched your lips." Oh, how gloriously a man speaks when his lips are blistered with the live coal from the altar—feeling the burning power of the truth, not only in his inmost soul, but on the very lip with which he is speaking! Mark at such times how his very utterance quivers.

Did you not notice in the prayer-meeting just now, in two of the suppliant brethren, how their tones were tremulous, and their bodily frames were quivering, because not only were their hearts touched, as I hope all our hearts were, but their lips were touched, and their speech was thereby affected. Brethren, we need the Spirit of God to open our mouths that we may show forth the praises of the Lord, or else we shall not speak with power.

We need the divine influence to keep us back from saying many things which, if they actually left our tongue, would mar our message. Those of us who are endowed with the dangerous gift of humor have need, sometimes, to stop and take the word out of our mouth and look at it, and see whether it is quite to edification. Those whose previous lives have borne them among the coarse and the rough had need watch with lynx eyes against indelicacy. Brethren, far be it from us to utter a syllable which would suggest an impure thought, or raise a questionable memory. We need the Spirit of God to put bit and bridle upon us to keep us from saying that which would take the minds of our hearers away from Christ and eternal realities, and set them thinking upon the groveling things of earth.

Brethren, we require the Holy Spirit also to incite us in our utterance. I doubt not you are all conscious of different states of mind in preaching. Some of those states arise from your body being in different conditions. A bad cold will not only spoil the clearness of the voice, but freeze the flow of the thoughts. For my own part if I cannot speak clearly I am unable to think clearly, and the matter becomes hoarse as well as the voice. The stomach, also, and all the other organs of the body, affect the mind; but it is not to these things that I allude.

Are you not conscious of changes altogether independent of the body? When you are in robust health do you not find yourselves one day as heavy as Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels taken off, and at another time as much at liberty as "a hind let loose"? Today your branch glitters with the dew, yesterday it was parched with drought. Who knows not that the Spirit of God is in all this? The divine Spirit will sometimes work upon us so as to bear us completely out of ourselves. From the beginning of the sermon to the end we might at such times say, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows." Everything has been forgotten but the one all-engrossing subject in hand.

If I were forbidden to enter Heaven, but were permitted to select my state for all eternity, I should choose to be as I sometimes feel in preaching the gospel. Heaven is foreshadowed in such a state: the mind is shut out from all disturbing influences, adoring the majestic and consciously present God, every faculty aroused and joyously excited to its utmost capability, all the thoughts and powers of the soul joyously occupied in contemplating the glory of the Lord, and extolling to listening crowds the Beloved of our soul; and all the while the purest conceivable benevolence towards one's fellow creatures urging the heart to plead with them on God's behalf—what state of mind can rival this?

Alas, we have reached this ideal, but we cannot always maintain it, for we know also what it is to preach in chains, or beat the air. We may not attribute holy and happy changes in our ministry to anything less than the action of the Holy Spirit upon our souls. I am sure the Spirit does so work. Often when I have had doubts suggested by the infidel, I have been able to fling them to the winds with utter scorn, because I am distinctly conscious of a power working upon me when I am speaking in the name of the Lord, infinitely transcending any personal power of fluency, and far surpassing any energy derived from excitement such as I have felt when delivering a secular lecture or making a speech—so utterly distinct from such power that I am quite certain it is not of the same order or class as the enthusiasm of the politician or the glow of the orator. May we full often feel the divine energy, and speak with power.

4. But then, fourthly, the Spirit of God acts also as an anointing oil, and this relates to the entire delivery—not to the utterance merely from the mouth, but to the whole delivery of the discourse. He can make you feel your subject until it thrills you, and you become depressed by it so as to be crushed into the earth, or elevated by it so as to be borne upon its eagle wings; making you feel, besides your subject, your object, until you yearn for the conversion of men, and for the uplifting of Christians to something nobler than they have known as yet.

At the same time, another feeling is with you, namely, an intense desire that God may be glorified through the truth which you are delivering. You are conscious of a deep sympathy with the people to whom you are speaking, making you mourn over some of them because they know so little, and over others because they have known much, but have not practiced it. You look into some faces, and your heart silently says, "The dew is dropping there;" and, turning to others, you sorrowfully perceive that they are as Gilboa's dewless mountain. All this will be going on during the discourse.

We cannot tell how many thoughts can traverse the mind at once. I once counted eight sets of thoughts which were going on in my brain simultaneously, or at least within the space of the same second. I was preaching the gospel with all my might, but could not help feeling for a lady who was evidently about to faint, and also looking out for our brother who opens the windows that he might give us more air. I was thinking of that illustration which I had omitted under the first head, casting the form of the second division, wondering if A felt my rebuke, and praying that B might get comfort from the consoling observation, and at the same time praising God for my own personal enjoyment of the truth I was proclaiming.

Some interpreters consider the cherubim with their four faces to be emblems of ministers, and assuredly I see no difficulty, in the quadruple form, for the sacred Spirit can multiply our mental states, and make us many times the men we are by nature. How much He can make of us, and how grandly He can elevate us, I will not dare to surmise: certainly, He can do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.

Especially is it the Holy Spirit's work to maintain in us a devotional frame of mind while we are discoursing. This is a condition to be greatly coveted—to continue praying while you are occupied with preaching; to do the Lord's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word; to keep the eye on the throne, and the wing in perpetual motion. I hope we know what this means; I am sure we know, or may soon experience, its opposite, namely, the evil of preaching in an undevotional spirit. What can be worse than to speak under the influence of a proud or angry spirit? What more weakening than to preach in an unbelieving spirit? But, oh, to burn in our secret heart while we blaze before the eyes of others! This is the work of the Spirit of God. Work it in us, O adorable Comforter!

In our pulpits we need the spirit of dependence to be mixed with that of devotion, so that all along, from the first word to the last syllable, we may be looking up to the strong for strength. It is well to feel that though you have continued up to the present point—yet if the Holy Spirit were to leave you, you would play the fool before the sermon closed. Looking to the hills whence comes your help all the sermon through, with absolute dependence upon God, you will preach in a brave confident spirit all the while. Perhaps I was wrong to say "brave," for it is not a brave thing to trust God: to true believers it is a simple matter of sweet necessity—how can they help trusting Him? Wherefore should they doubt their ever faithful Friend?

I told my people the other morning, when preaching from the text, "My grace is sufficient for you," that for the first time in my life I experienced what Abraham felt when he fell upon his face and laughed. I was riding home, very weary with a long week's work, when there came to my mind this text: "My grace is sufficient for you"; but it came with the emphasis laid upon two words. "My grace is sufficient for you" My soul said, "Doubtless it is. Surely the grace of the infinite God is more than sufficient for such a mere insect as I am," and I laughed, and laughed again, to think how far the supply exceeded all my needs. It seemed to me as though I were a

little fish in the sea, and in my thirst I said, "Alas, I shall drink up the ocean." Then the Father of the waters lifted up His head sublime, and smilingly replied, "Little fish, the boundless ocean is sufficient for you" The thought made unbelief appear supremely ridiculous, as indeed it is.

Oh, brethren, we ought to preach feeling that God means to bless the word, for we have His promise for it; and when we have done preaching we should look out for the people who have received a blessing. Do you ever say, "I am overwhelmed with astonishment to find that the Lord has converted souls through my poor ministry"? Mock humility! Your ministry is poor enough. Everybody knows that, and you ought to know it most of all. But, at the same time, is it any wonder that God, who said "My word shall not return Unto me void," has kept His promise? Is the food to lose its nourishment because the dish is a poor platter? Is divine grace to be overcome by our infirmity? No, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

We need the Spirit of God, then, all through the sermon to keep our hearts and minds in a proper condition, for if we have not the right spirit we shall lose the tone which persuades and prevails, and our people will discover that Samson's strength has departed from him. Some speak scoldingly, and so betray their bad temper. Others preach themselves, and so reveal their pride. Some discourse as though it were a condescension on their part to occupy the pulpit. While others preach as though they apologized for their existence. To avoid errors of manners and tone, we must be led of the Holy Spirit, who alone teaches us to profit.

5. Fifthly, we depend entirely upon the Spirit of God to produce actual EFFECT from the gospel, and at this effect we must always aim. We do not stand up in our pulpits to display our skill in spiritual sword play, but we come to actual fighting. Our object is to drive the sword of the Spirit through men's hearts! If preaching can ever in any sense be viewed as a public exhibition, it should be like the exhibition of a ploughing match, which consists in actual ploughing. The competition does not lie in the appearance of the ploughs, but in the work done; so let ministers be judged by the way in which they drive the gospel plough, and cut the furrow from end to end of the field.

Always aim at effect. "Oh," says one, "I thought you would have said, 'Never do that.'" I do also say, never aim at effect, in the unhappy sense of that expression. Never aim at effect after the manner of the climax makers, poetry quoters, handkerchief manipulators, and bombast blowers. Far better for a man that he had never been born, than that he should degrade a pulpit into a show box to exhibit himself in. Aim at the right sort of effect; the inspiring of saints to nobler things, the leading of Christians closer to their Master, the comforting of doubters until they rise out of their terrors, the repentance of sinners, and their exercise of immediate faith in Christ. Without these signs following, what is the use of our sermons? It would be a miserable thing to have to say with a certain archbishop, "I have passed through many places of honor and trust, both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England, for seventy years before; but were I assured that by my preaching I had but converted one soul to God, I would herein take more comfort than in all the honored offices that have been bestowed upon me."

Miracles of grace must be the seals of our ministry; who can bestow them but the Spirit of God? Convert a soul without the Spirit of God! Why, you cannot even make a fly, much less create a new heart and a right spirit. Lead the children of God to a higher life without the Holy Spirit! You are inexpressibly more likely to conduct them into carnal security, if you attempt their elevation by any method of your own. Our ends can never be gained if we miss the cooperation of the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, with strong crying and tears, wait upon Him from day to day.

The lack of distinctly recognizing the power of the Holy Spirit lies at the root of many useless ministries. The forcible words of Robert Hall are as true now as when he poured them forth like molten lava upon a semi-socinian generation. "On the one hand it deserves attention, that the most eminent and successful preachers of the gospel in different communities, a Brainerd, a Baxter, and a Schwartz, have been the most conspicuous for simple dependence on spiritual aid; and on the other that no success whatever has attended the ministrations of those by whom this doctrine has been either neglected or denied. They have met with such a rebuke of their presumption, in the total failure of their efforts, that none will contend for the reality of Divine interposition, as far as they are concerned; for when has the arm of the Lord been revealed to those pretended teachers of Christianity, who believe there is no such arm? We must leave them to labor in a field respecting which God has commanded the clouds not to rain upon it. As if conscious of this, of late they have turned their efforts into a new channel, and despairing of the conversion of sinners, have confined themselves to the seduction of the faithful; in which, it must be confessed, they have acted in a manner perfectly consistent with their principles; the propagation of heresy requiring, at least, no divine assistance."

6. Next we need the Spirit of God as the Spirit of supplication, who makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. A very important part of our lives consists in praying in the Holy Spirit, and that minister who does not think so had better escape from his ministry. Abundant prayer must go with earnest preaching. We cannot be always on the knees of the body, but the soul should never leave the posture of devotion. The habit of prayer is good, but the spirit of prayer is better. Regular retirement is to be maintained, but continued communion with God is to be our aim. As a rule, we ministers ought never to be many minutes without actually lifting up our hearts in prayer. Some of us could honestly say that we are seldom a quarter of an hour without speaking to

God, and that not as a duty but as an instinct—a habit of the new nature for which we claim no more credit than a babe does for crying after its mother. How could we do otherwise?

Now, if we are to be much in the spirit of prayer, we need secret oil to be poured upon the sacred fire of our heart's devotion; we want to be again and again visited by the Spirit of grace and of supplication.

As to our prayers in public, let it never be truthfully said that they are official, formal, and cold; yet they will be so if the supply of the Spirit is scant. Those who use a liturgy I judge not; but to those who are accustomed to free prayer I say—you cannot pray acceptably in public year after year without the Spirit of God; dead praying will become offensive to the people long before that time. What then? Whence shall our help come?

Certain weaklings have said, "Let us have a liturgy!" Rather than seek divine aid they will go down to Egypt for help. Rather than be dependent upon the Spirit of God, they will pray by a book! For my part, if I cannot pray, I would rather know it, and groan over my soul's barrenness until the Lord shall again visit me with fruitfulness of devotion. If you are filled with the Spirit, you will be glad to throw off all formal fetters, that you may commit yourself to the sacred current, to be borne along until you find waters to swim in.

Sometimes you will enjoy closer fellowship with God in prayer in the pulpit than you have known anywhere else. To me my greatest secrecy in prayer has often been in public; my truest loneliness with God has occurred to me while pleading in the midst of thousands. I have opened my eyes at the close of a prayer and come back to the assembly with a sort of a shock at finding myself upon earth and among men. Such seasons are not at our command, neither can we raise ourselves into such conditions by any preparations or efforts. How blessed they are both to the minister and his people no tongue can tell! How full of power and blessing habitual prayerfulness must also be I cannot here pause to declare, but for it all we must look to the Holy Spirit, and blessed be God we shall not look in vain, for it is especially said of Him, that He helps our infirmities in prayer.

7. Furthermore, it is important that we be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as He is the Spirit of Holiness; for a very considerable and essential part of Christian ministry lies in example. Our people take much note of what we say out of the pulpit, and what we do in the social circle and elsewhere. Do you find it easy, my brethren, to be saints?—such saints that others may regard you as examples? We ought to be such husbands that every husband in the parish may safely be such as we are. Is it so? We ought to be the best of fathers. Alas! some ministers, to my knowledge, are far from this, for as to their families, they have kept the vineyards of others, but their own vineyards they have not kept. Their children are neglected, and do not grow up as a godly seed. Is it so with yours?

In our converse with our fellow men are we blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke? Such we ought to be. I admire Mr. Whitfield's reasons for always having his linen scrupulously clean. "No, no," he would say, "these are not trifles; a minister must be without spot, even in his garments, if he can."

Purity cannot be carried too far in a minister. You have known an unhappy brother bespatter himself, and you have affectionately aided in removing the spots, but you have felt that it would have been better had the garments been always white. O to keep ourselves unspotted from the world! How can this be in such a scene of temptation, and with such besetting sins—unless we are preserved by superior power? If you are to walk in all holiness and purity, as befits ministers of the gospel, you must be daily baptized into the Spirit of God.

8. Once again, we need the Spirit as a Spirit of discernment, for He knows the minds of men as He knows the mind of God, and we need this very much in dealing with difficult characters. There are in this world some people who might possibly be allowed to preach, but they should never be allowed to become pastors. They have a mental or spiritual disqualification.

In the church of San Zeno, at Verona, I saw the statue of that saint in a sitting posture, and the artist has given him knees so short that he has no lap whatever, so that he could not have been a nursing father. I fear there are many others who labor under a similar disability—they cannot bring their minds to enter heartily into the pastoral care. They can dogmatize upon a doctrine, and controvert upon an ordinance, but as to sympathizing with an experience, it is far from them. Cold comfort can such render to afflicted consciences; their advice will be equally valuable with that of the highlander who is reported to have seen an Englishman sinking in a bog on Ben Nevis. "I am sinking!" cried the traveler. "Can you tell me how to get out?" The highlander calmly replied, "I think it is likely you never will," and walked away.

We have known ministers of that kind, puzzled, and almost annoyed with sinners struggling in the slough of despond. If you and I, untrained in the shepherd's are, were placed among the ewes and young lambs in the early spring, what would we do with them? In some such perplexity are those found who have never been taught of the Holy Spirit how to care for the souls of men. May His instructions save us from such wretched incompetence.

Moreover, brethren, whatever our tenderness of heart, or loving concern, we shall not know how to deal with the vast variety of cases unless the Spirit of God shall direct us, for no two individuals are alike; and even the same case will require different treatment

at different times. At one period it may be best to console, at another to rebuke; and the person with whom you sympathized even to tears today may need that you confront him with a frown tomorrow, for trifling with the consolation which you presented. Those who bind up the broken-hearted, and set free the captives, must have the Spirit of the Lord upon them.

In the oversight and guidance of a church the Spirit's aid is needed. At bottom the chief reason for secession from our denomination has been the difficulty arising out of our church government. It is said to "tend to the unrest of the ministry." Doubtless, it is very trying to those who crave for the dignity of officialism, and must need be Sir Oracles before whom not a dog must bark. Those who are no more capable of ruling than mere babes, are the very people who have the greatest thirst for authority, and, finding little of it awarded to them in these parts, they seek other regions.

If you cannot rule yourself, if you are not manly and independent, if you are not superior in moral weight, if you have not more gift and more grace than your ordinary hearers, you may put on a gown and claim to be the ruling person in the church; but it will not be in a church of the New Testament order. For my part I should loathe to be the pastor of a people who have nothing to say, or who, if they do say anything, might as well be quiet, for the pastor is Lord Paramount, and they are mere laymen and nobodies. I would sooner be the leader of six free men, whose enthusiastic love is my only power over them, than play the dictator to a score of enslaved nations.

What position is nobler than that of a spiritual father who claims no authority and yet is universally esteemed, whose word is given only as tender advice, but is allowed to operate with the force of law? Consulting the wishes of others he finds that they first desire to know what he would recommend, and deferring always to the desires of others, he finds that they are glad to defer to him. Lovingly firm and graciously gentle, he is the chief of all because he is the servant of all. Does not this need wisdom from above? What can require it more?

David when established on the throne said, "It is He who subdues my people under me," and so may every happy pastor say when he sees so many brethren of differing temperaments all happily willing to be under discipline, and to accept his leadership in the work of the Lord.

If the Lord were not among us how soon there would be confusion. Ministers, deacons, and elders may all be wise, but if the sacred Dove departs, and the spirit of strife enters, it is all over with us!

Brethren, our system will not work without the Spirit of God, and I am glad it will not, for its stoppages and breakages call our attention to the fact of His absence. Our system was never intended to promote the glory of priests and pastors, but it is calculated to educate manly Christians, who will not take their faith at second-hand. What am I, and what are you, that we should be lords over God's heritage? Dare any of us say with the French king, "the state is myself,"—I am the most important person in the church? If so, the Holy Spirit is not likely to use such unsuitable instruments; but if we know our places and desire to keep them with all humility, He will help us, and the churches will flourish beneath our care.

I have given you a lengthened catalogue of matters wherein the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us, and yet the list is very far from complete. I have intentionally left it imperfect, because if I attempted its completion all our time would have expired before we were able to answer the question, How may we lose this needful assistance?

Let none of us ever try the experiment, but it is certain that ministers may lose the aid of the Holy Spirit. Each man here may lose it. You shall not perish as believers, for everlasting life is in you; but you may perish as ministers, and be no more heard of as witnesses for the Lord. Should this happen it will not be without a cause.

The Spirit claims a sovereignty like that of the wind which blows where it wills; but let us never dream that sovereignty and capriciousness are the same thing. The blessed Spirit acts as He wills, but He always acts justly, wisely, and with motive and reason. At times He gives or withholds His blessing, for reasons connected with ourselves.

Mark the course of a river like the Thames; how it winds and twists according to its own sweet will: yet there is a reason for every bend and curve: the geologist studying the soil and marking the conformation of the rock, sees a reason why the river's bed diverges to the right or to the left.

Just so, though the Spirit of God blesses one preacher more than another, and the reason cannot be such that any man could congratulate himself upon his own goodness—yet there are certain things about Christian ministers which God blesses, and certain other things which hinder success. The Spirit of God falls like the dew, in mystery and power, but it is in the spiritual world as in the natural: certain substances are wet with the celestial moisture while others are always dry. Is there not a cause? The wind blows where it lists; but if we desire to feel a stiff breeze we must go out to sea, or climb the hills. The Spirit of God has His favored places for displaying His might. He is typified by a dove, and the dove has its chosen haunts. To the rivers of waters, to the peaceful and quiet places, the dove resorts; we meet it not upon the battlefield, neither does it alight on carrion.

There are things congruous to the Spirit and things contrary to His mind. The Spirit of God is compared to light, and light can shine where it wills, but some bodies are opaque, while others are transparent; and so there are men through whom God the Holy Spirit can shine, and there are others through whom His brightness never appears. Thus, then, it can be shown that the Holy Spirit, though He be the "free Spirit" of God, is by no means capricious in His operations.

But, dear brethren, the Spirit of God may be grieved and vexed, and even resisted—to deny this is to oppose the constant testimony of Scripture. Worst of all, we may do despite to Him, and so insult Him that He will speak no more by us, but leave us as He left King Saul of old. Alas, that there should be men in the Christian ministry to whom this has happened; but I am afraid there are.

Brethren, what are those evils which will grieve the Spirit? I answer, anything that would have disqualified you as an ordinary Christian for communion with God, also disqualifies you for feeling the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit as a minister. But, apart from that, there are special hindrances.

Among the first we must mention a LACK OF SENSITIVENESS, or that unfeeling condition which arises from disobeying the Spirit's influences. We should be delicately sensitive to His faintest movement, and then we may expect His abiding presence, but if we are as the horse and as the mule, which have no understanding, we shall feel the whip, but we shall not enjoy the tender influences of the Comforter.

Another grieving fault is a LACK OF TRUTHFULNESS. When a great musician takes a guitar, or touches a harp, and finds that the notes are false, he stays his hand. Some men's souls are not honest; they are sophistical and double-minded. Christ's Spirit will not be an accomplice with men in the wretched business of shuffling and deceiving. Does it really come to this—that you preach certain doctrines, not because you believe them, but because your congregation expects you to do so? Are you biding your time until you can, without risk, renounce your present creed and tell out what your dastardly mind really holds to be true? Then are you fallen indeed, and are baser than the meanest slaves. God deliver us from treacherous men, and if they enter our ranks may they speedily be drummed out to the tune of the Rogue's March. If we feel an abhorrence of them, how much more must the Spirit of truth detest them!

You can greatly grieve the Holy Spirit by a general SCANTINESS OF GRACE. The phrase is awkward, but it describes certain people better than any other which occurs to me. The Scanty-grace family usually have one of the brothers in the ministry. I know the man. He is not dishonest, nor immoral, he is not bad tempered, nor self-indulgent, but there is a something lacking: it would not be easy to prove its absence by any overt offence, but it is lacking in the whole man, and its absence spoils everything. He lacks the one thing needful. He is not spiritual, he has no savor of Christ, his heart never burns within him, his soul is not alive, he lacks grace. We cannot expect the Spirit of God to bless a ministry which never ought to have been exercised, and certainly a graceless ministry is of that character.

Another evil which drives away the divine Spirit is PRIDE. The way to be very great is to be very little. To be very noteworthy in your own esteem is to be unnoticed of God. If you must needs dwell upon the high places of the earth, you shall find the mountain summits cold and barren—the Lord dwells with the lowly, but He knows the proud afar off.

The Holy Spirit is also vexed by LAZINESS. I cannot imagine the Spirit waiting at the door of a sluggard, and supplying the deficiencies created by indolence. Sloth in the cause of the Redeemer is a vice for which no excuse can be invented. We ourselves feel our flesh creep when we see the dilatory movements of sluggards, and we may be sure that the active Spirit is equally vexed with those who trifle in the work of the Lord.

NEGLECT OF PRIVATE PRAYER and many other evils will produce the same unhappy result, but there is no need to enlarge, for your own consciences will tell you, brethren, what it is that grieves the Holy One of Israel.

And now, let me entreat you, listen to this word: Do you know what may happen if the Spirit of God is greatly grieved and depart from us? There are two suppositions.

The first is that we never were God's true servants at all, but were only temporarily used by him, as Balaam was, and even the donkey on which he rode. Suppose, brethren, that you and I go on comfortably preaching a while, and are neither suspected by ourselves nor others to be destitute of the Spirit of God. Our ministry may all come to an end on a sudden, and we may come to an end with it; we may be smitten down in our prime, as were Nadab and Abihu, no more to be seen ministering before the Lord; or removed in riper years, like Hophni and Phineas, no longer to serve in the tabernacle of the congregation.

We have no inspired annalist to record for us the sudden cutting off of promising men, but if we had, it may be we should read with terror—of zeal sustained by strong drink, of public Phariseeism associated with secret defilement, of avowed orthodoxy concealing absolute infidelity, or of some other form of strange fire presented upon the altar until the Lord would endure it no more, and cut off the offenders with a sudden stroke. Shall this terrible doom happen to any one of us?

Alas, I have seen some deserted by the Holy Spirit, as Saul was. It is written that the Spirit of God came upon Saul, but he was faithless to the divine influence, and it departed, and an evil spirit occupied its place. See how the deserted preacher moodily plays the cynic, criticizes all others, and hurls the javelin of detraction at a better man than himself. Saul was once among the prophets, but he was more at home among the persecutors. The disappointed preacher worries the true evangelist, resorts to the witchcraft of philosophy, and seeks help from dead heresies; but his power is gone, and the Philistines will soon find him among the slain! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon! you daughters of Israel weep over Saul! How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!"

Some, too, deserted by the Spirit of God, have become like the sons of one Sceva, a Jew. These pretenders tried to cast out devils in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached—but the devils leaped upon them and overcame them. Just so, while certain preachers have declaimed against sin, the very vices which they denounced have overthrown them. The sons of Sceva have been among us in England—the devils of drunkenness have prevailed over the very man who denounced the bewitching cup, and the demon of unchastity has leaped upon the preacher who applauded purity. If the Holy Spirit is absent, ours is of all positions the most perilous; therefore let us beware.

Alas, some ministers become like Balaam. He was a prophet, was he not? Did he not speak in the name of the Lord? Is he not called "the man whose eyes are opened, who saw the vision of the Almighty?" Yet Balaam fought against Israel, and cunningly devised a scheme by which the chosen people might be overthrown. Ministers of the gospel have become Papists, infidels, and freethinkers, and plotted the destruction of what they once professed to prize! We may be apostles, and yet, like Judas, turn out to be sons of perdition. Woe unto us if this be the case!

Brethren, I will assume that we really are the children of God, and what then? Why, even then, if the Spirit of God departs from us, we may be taken away on a sudden as the deceived prophet was who failed to obey the command of the Lord in the days of Jeroboam. He was no doubt a man of God, and the death of his body was no evidence of the loss of his soul—but he broke away from what he knew to be the command of God given specially to himself, and his ministry ended there and then, for a lion met him on the way and slew him. May the Holy Spirit preserve us from deceivers, and keep us true to the voice of God.

Worse still, we may reproduce the life of Samson, upon whom the Spirit of God came in the camps of Dan; but in Delilah's lap he lost his strength, and in the dungeon he lost his eyes. He bravely finished his life-work, blind as he was, but who among us wishes to tempt such a fate?

Or—and this last has saddened me beyond all expression, because it is much more likely than any of the rest—we may be left by the Spirit of God, in a painful degree, to mar the close of our life-work as Moses did. Not to lose our souls, nay, not even to lose our crowns in Heaven, or even our reputations on earth; but, still, to be under a cloud in our last days through once speaking unadvisedly with our lips.

I have lately studied the later days of the great prophet of Horeb, and I have not yet recovered from the deep gloom of spirit which it cast over me. What was the sin of Moses? You need not inquire. It was not gross like the transgression of David, nor startling like the failure of Peter, nor weak and foolish like the grave fault of his brother Aaron. Indeed, it seems an infinitesimal offence as weighed in the balances of ordinary judgment. But then, you see, it was the sin of Moses, of a man favored of God beyond all others, of a leader of the people, of a representative of the divine King. The Lord could have overlooked it in anyone else, but not in Moses. Moses must be chastened by being forbidden to lead the people into the promised land. Truly, he had a glorious view from the top of Pisgah, and everything else which could mitigate the rigor of the sentence, but it was a great disappointment never to enter the land of Israel's inheritance, and that for once speaking unadvisedly. I would not shun my Master's service, but I tremble in His presence. Who can be faultless when even Moses erred?

Brethren, I beseech you, crave Moses's place, but tremble as you take it. Fear and tremble for all the good that God shall make to pass before you. When you are fullest of the fruits of the Spirit bow lowest before the throne, and serve the Lord with fear. "The Lord our God is a jealous God."

Remember that God has come unto us, not to exalt us, but to exalt Himself, and we must see to it that His glory is the one sole object of all that we do. "He must increase, and I must decrease." Oh, may God bring us to this, and make us walk very carefully and humbly before Him. God will search us and try us, for judgment begins at His house, and in that house it begins with His ministers. Will any of us be found lacking? Shall the pit of Hell draw a portion of its wretched inhabitants from among our band of pastors? Terrible will be the doom of a fallen preacher: his condemnation will astonish common transgressors. "Hell from beneath is moved for you to meet you at your coming." All they shall speak and say unto you, "Are you also become weak as we? Are you become like unto us?"

O for the Spirit of God to make and keep us alive unto God, faithful to our office, and useful to our generation, and clear of the blood of men's souls! Amen.

Lecture 15. The Necessity of Ministerial Progress

Dear Fellow Soldiers! We are few, and we have a desperate fight before us, therefore it is needful that every man should be made the most of, and nerved to his highest point of strength. It is desirable that the Lord's ministers should be the choice men of the church, yes, of the entire universe, for such the age demands; therefore, in reference to yourselves and your personal qualifications, I give you the motto, "Go forward." Go forward in personal attainments, forward in gifts and in grace, forward in fitness for the work, and forward in conformity to the image of Jesus. The points I shall speak upon begin at the base, and ascend.

1. First, dear brethren, I think it necessary to say to myself and to you that we must go forward in our MENTAL acquirements. It will never do for us continually to present ourselves to God at our worst. We are not worth His having at our best; but at any rate let not the offering be maimed and blemished by our idleness. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart" is, perhaps, more easy to comply with, than to love Him with all our mind; yet we must give Him our mind as well as our affections, and that mind should be well furnished, that we may not offer Him an empty casket.

Our ministry demands mind. I shall not insist upon "the enlightenment of the age"; still it is quite certain that there is a great educational advance among all classes, and that there will yet be much more of it. The time is passed when ungrammatical speech will suffice for a preacher. Even in a country village, where, according to tradition, "nobody knows nothing," the schoolmaster is now abroad, and lack of education will hinder usefulness more than it once did; for, when the speaker wishes his audience to remember the gospel, they on the other hand will remember his ungrammatical expressions, and will repeat them as themes for jest, when we could have wished they had rehearsed the divine doctrines to one another in solemn earnest.

Dear brethren, we must cultivate ourselves to the highest possible point, and we should do this, first, by gathering in knowledge that we may fill the barn, then by acquiring discrimination that we may winnow the heap, and lastly by a firm retentiveness of mind, by which we may lay up the winnowed grain in the storehouse. These three points may not be equally important, but they are all necessary to a complete man.

We must, I say, make great efforts to acquire information, especially of a Biblical kind. We must not confine ourselves to one topic of study, or we shall not exercise our whole mental manhood. God made the world for man, and He made man with a mind intended to occupy and use all the world; he is the tenant, and nature is for a while his house; why should he shut himself out of any of its rooms? Why refuse to taste any of the choice meats the great Father has put upon the table? Still, our main business is to study the Scriptures.

The smith's main business is to shoe horses; let him see that he knows how to do it, for should he be able to belt an angel with a belt of gold he will fail as a smith if he cannot make and fix a horse-shoe.

It is a small matter that you should be able to write the most brilliant poetry, as possibly you could, unless you can preach a good and telling sermon, which will have the effect of comforting saints and convincing sinners. Study the Bible, dear brethren, through and through, with all helps that you can possibly obtain. Remember that the helps now within the reach of ordinary Christians are much more extensive than they were in our fathers' days, and therefore you must be greater Biblical scholars if you would keep in front of your hearers. Intermeddle with all knowledge, but above all things meditate day and night in the law of the Lord.

Be well instructed in theology, and do not regard the sneers of those who rail at it because they are ignorant of it. Many preachers are not theologians, and hence the mistakes which they make. It cannot do any hurt to the most lively evangelist to be also a sound theologian, and it may often be the means of saving him from gross blunders. Nowadays we hear men tear a single sentence of Scripture from its connection, and cry "Eureka! Eureka!" as if they had found a new truth; and yet they have not discovered a diamond, but a piece of broken glass. Had they been able to compare spiritual things with spiritual, had they understood the analogy of the faith, and had they been acquainted with the holy learning of the great Bible students of ages past—they would not have been quite so fast in vaunting their marvelous knowledge. Let us be thoroughly well acquainted with the great doctrines of the Word of God, and let us be mighty in expounding Scripture.

I am sure that no preaching will last so long, or build up a church so well, as the expository method. To renounce altogether the hortatory discourse for the expository would be running to a preposterous extreme; but I cannot too earnestly assure you that if your ministries are to be lastingly useful you must be expositors. For this you must understand the Word yourselves, and be able so to comment upon it that the people may be built up by the Word. Be masters of your Bibles, brethren—whatever other works you have not searched, be at home with the writings of the prophets and apostles. "Let the word of God dwell in you richly."

Having given precedence to the inspired writings, neglect no field of knowledge. The presence of Jesus on the earth has sanctified

the realms of nature, and what He has cleansed call not you common. All that your Father has made is yours, and you should learn from it. You may read a naturalist's journal, or a traveler's voyage, and find profit in it. Yes, and even an old herbal, or a manual of alchemy may, like Samson's dead lion, yield you honey. There are pearls in oyster shells, and fruits on thorny boughs. The paths of true science, especially natural history and botany, drop fatness. Geology, so far as it is fact, and not fiction, is full of treasures. History—wonderful are the visions which it makes to pass before you—is eminently instructive. Indeed, every portion of God's dominion in nature teems with precious teachings. Follow the trails of knowledge, according as you have the time, the opportunity, and the peculiar faculty; and do not hesitate to do so because of any apprehension that you will educate yourselves up to too high a point. When grace abounds, learning will not puff you up, or injure your simplicity in the gospel. Serve God with such education as you have, and thank Him for blowing through you if you are a ram's horn, but if there be a possibility of your becoming a silver trumpet, choose it rather.

I have said that we must also learn to discriminate, and at this particular time that point needs insisting on. Many run after novelties, charmed with every invention: learn to judge between truth and its counterfeits, and you will not be led astray. Others adhere like limpets to old teachings, and yet these may only be ancient errors. Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. The use of the sieve, and the winnowing fan, is much to be commended.

Dear brethren, a man who has asked of the Lord to give him clear eyes by which he shall see the truth and discern its bearings, and who, by reason of the constant exercise of his faculties, has obtained an accurate judgment, is one fit to be a leader of the Lord's host; but all are not such.

It is painful to observe how many embrace anything if it be but earnestly brought before them. They swallow the medicine of every spiritual quack who has enough of brazen assurance to appear to be sincere. Be not such children in understanding, but test carefully before you accept. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the faculty of discerning, so shall you conduct your flocks far from poisonous meadows, and lead them into safe pasturage.

When in due time you have gained the power of acquiring knowledge, and the faculty of discrimination, seek next for ability to retain and hold firmly what you have learned. In these times certain men glory in being weathercocks; they hold fast nothing, they have, in fact, nothing worth the holding. They believed yesterday, but not that which they believe today, nor that which they will believe tomorrow; and he would be a greater prophet than Isaiah who would be able to tell what they will believe when next the moon does fill her horns, for they are constantly altering, and seem to be born under that said moon, and to partake of her changing moods.

These men may be as honest as they claim to be, but of what use are they? Like good trees oftentimes transplanted, they may be of a noble nature, but they bring forth nothing; their strength goes out in rooting and re-rooting, they have no sap to spare for fruit.

Be sure you have the truth, and then be sure you hold it. Be ready for fresh truth, if it be truth, but be very wary how you subscribe to the belief that a better light has been found than that of the sun. Those who hawk new truth about the street, as the boys do a second edition of the evening paper, are usually no better than they should be.

The fair maid of truth does not paint her cheeks and tire her head like Jezebel, following every new philosophic fashion; she is content with her own native beauty, and her aspect is in the main the same yesterday, today, and forever.

When men change often they generally need to be changed in the most emphatic sense. Our "modern thought" gentry are doing incalculable mischief to the souls of men, and resemble Nero fiddling upon the top of a tower with Rome burning at his feet. Souls are being damned, and yet these men are spinning theories. Hell gapes wide, and with her open mouth swallows up myriads, and those who should spread the tidings of salvation are "pursuing fresh lines of thought." Highly cultured soul-murderers will find their boasted "culture" to be no excuse in the day of judgment. For God's sake, let us know how men are to be saved, and get to the work. To be forever deliberating as to the proper mode of making bread while a nation dies of famine is detestable trifling. It is time we knew what to teach, or else renounce our office. "Forever learning and never coming to the truth" is the motto of the worst rather than the best of men.

I saw in Rome a statue of a boy extracting a thorn from his foot; I went my way, and returned in a year's time, and there sat the selfsame boy, extracting the intruder still. Is this to be our model? "I shape my creed every week," was the confession of one of these divines to me. Whereunto shall I liken such unsettled ones? Are they not like those birds which frequent the Golden Horn, and are to be seen from Constantinople, of which it is said that they are always on the wing, and never rest? No one ever saw them alight on the water or on the land, they are forever poised in mid-air. The natives call them "lost souls," seeking rest and finding none.

Assuredly, men who have no personal rest in the truth, if they are not saved themselves, are, at least, very unlikely to save others. He who has no assured truth to tell must not wonder if his hearers set small store by him. We must know the truth, understand it, and hold it with firm grip, or we cannot hope to lead others to believe it.

Brethren, I charge you, seek to know and to discriminate; and then, having discriminated, labor to be rooted and grounded in the truth. Keep in full operation the processes of filling the barn, winnowing the grain, and storing it in granaries, so shall you mentally "Go forward."

2. We need to go forward in ORATORICAL qualifications. I am beginning at the bottom, but even this is important, for it is a pity that even the feet of this image should be of clay. Nothing is trifling which can be of any service to our grand design.

Only for lack of a nail the horse lost his shoe, and so became unfit for the battle; that shoe was only a trifling rim of iron which smote the ground, and yet the neck clothed with thunder was of no avail when the shoe was gone.

A man may be irretrievably ruined for spiritual usefulness, not because he fails either in character or spirit, but because he breaks down mentally or oratically, and, therefore, I have begun with these points, and again remark that we must improve in utterance.

It is not every one of us who can speak as some can do, and even these men cannot speak up to their own ideal. If there is any brother here who thinks he can preach as well as he should, I would advise him to leave off altogether. If he did so he would be acting as wisely as the great painter who broke his palette, and, turning to his wife, said, "My painting days are over, for I have satisfied myself, and therefore I am sure my power is gone."

Whatever other perfection may be reachable, I am certain that he who thinks he has gained perfection in oratory mistakes volubility for eloquence, and verbiage for argument. Whatever you may know, you cannot be truly efficient ministers if you are not "apt to teach." You know ministers who have mistaken their calling, and evidently have no gifts for it: make sure that none think the same of you.

There are brethren in the ministry whose speech is intolerable; either they rouse you to anger, or else they put you to sleep. No anesthetic can ever equal some discourses in sleep-giving properties. No human being, unless gifted with infinite patience, could long endure to listen to them, and nature does well to give the victim deliverance through sleep.

I heard one say the other day that a certain preacher had no more gifts for the ministry than an oyster. In my own judgment this was a slander on the oyster, for that worthy bivalve shows great discretion in his openings, and knows when to close. If some men were sentenced to hear their own sermons, it would be a righteous judgment upon them, and they would soon cry out with Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" Let us not fall under the same condemnation.

Brethren, we should cultivate a clear style. When a man does not make me understand what he means, it is because he does not himself know what he means. An average hearer, who is unable to follow the course of thought of the preacher, ought not to worry himself, but to blame the preacher, whose business it is to make the matter plain. If you look down into a well, if it is empty it will appear to be very deep, but if there be water in it you will see its brightness. I believe that many "deep" preachers are simply so because they are like dry wells with nothing whatever in them, except decaying leaves, a few stones, and perhaps a dead cat or two. If there is living water in your preaching it may be very deep, but the light of truth will give clearness to it. It is not enough to be so plain that you can be understood, you must speak so that you cannot be misunderstood.

We must cultivate an effective as well as a clear style; our speech must be forceful. Some imagine that this consists in speaking loudly, but I can assure them they are in error. Nonsense does not improve by being bellowed. God does not require us to shout as if we were speaking to ten thousand when we are only addressing three hundred. Let us be forcible by reason of the excellence of our matter, and the energy of spirit which we throw into the delivery of it. In a word, let our speaking be natural and living. I hope we have foresworn the tricks of professional orators, the strain for effect, the studied climax, the pre-arranged pause, the theatric strut, the mouthing of words, and I know not what besides, which you may see in certain pompous divines who still survive upon the face of the earth. May such become extinct animals before long, and may a living, natural, simple way of talking out the gospel be learned by us all; for I am persuaded that such a style is one which God is likely to bless.

Among many other things, we must cultivate persuasiveness. Some of our brethren have great influence over men, and yet others with greater gifts are devoid of it; these last do not appear to get near to the people, they cannot grip them and make them feel. There are preachers who in their sermons seem to take their hearers one by one by the button-hole, and drive the truth right into their souls, while others generalize so much, and are so cold withal, that one would think they were speaking of dwellers in some remote planet, whose affairs did not much concern them. Learn the art of pleading with men. You will do this well if you often see the Lord.

If I remember rightly, the old classic story tells us that, when a soldier was about to kill Darius, his son, who had been dumb from his childhood, suddenly cried out in surprise, "Know you not that he is the king?" His silent tongue was unloosed by love to his father, and well may ours find earnest speech when the Lord is seen by us crucified for sin. If there be any speech in us, this will rouse it.

The knowledge of the terrors of the Lord should also bestir us to persuade men. We cannot do other than plead with them to be

reconciled to God.

Brethren, mark those who woo sinners to Jesus, find out their secret, and never rest until you obtain the same power. If you find them very simple and homely—yet if you see them really useful, say to yourself, "That is my fashion." But if on the other hand you listen to a preacher who is much admired, and on inquiry find that no souls are savingly converted, say to yourself, "This is not the thing for me, for I am not seeking to be great, but to be really useful."

Let your oratory, therefore, constantly improve in clearness, effectiveness, naturalness, and persuasiveness. Try, dear brethren, to get such a style of speaking that you suit yourselves to your audiences. Much lies in that. The preacher who should address an educated congregation in the language which he would use in speaking to a company of street vendors would prove himself a fool. On the other hand, he who goes down among miners and colliers with technical theological terms and drawing-room phrases acts like an idiot. The confusion of tongues at Babel was more thorough than we imagine. It did not merely give different languages to great nations, but it made the speech of each class to vary from that of others.

A fellow of Billingsgate cannot understand a Fellow of Brasenose.

Now as the street vendor cannot learn the language of the college, let the college learn the language of the street vendor. "We use the language of the market," said Whitfield, and this was much to his honor; yet when he stood in the drawing-room of the Countess of Huntingdon, and his speech entranced the infidel noblemen whom she brought to hear him, he adopted another style. His language was equally plain in each case, because it was equally familiar to the audience: he did not use the same words, or his language would have lost its plainness in the one case or the other, and would either have been slang to the nobility, or Greek to the crowd.

In our modes of speech we should aim at being "all things to all men." He is the greatest master of oratory who is able to address any class of people in a manner suitable to their condition, and likely to touch their hearts.

Brethren, let none excel us in power of speech—let none surpass us in the mastery of our mother tongue. Beloved fellow-soldiers, our tongues are the swords which God has given us to use for Him, even as it is said of our Lord, "Out of His mouth went a two-edged sword." Let these swords be sharp! Cultivate your powers of speech, and be among the foremost in the land for utterance. I do not exhort you to this because you are remarkably deficient; far from it, for everybody says to me, "We know the college men by their plain, bold speech." This leads me to believe that you have the gift largely in you, and I beseech you to take pains to perfect it.

3. Brethren, we must be even more earnest to go forward in MORAL qualities. Let the points I shall mention here come home to those who shall require them, but I assure you I have no special people among you in my mind's eye. We desire to rise to the highest style of ministry, and if so, even if we obtain the mental and oratorical qualifications, we shall fail, unless we also possess high moral qualities.

There are evils which we must shake off, as Paul shook the viper from his hand, and there are virtues which we must gain at any cost.

SELF-INDULGENCE has slain its thousands; let us tremble lest we perish by the hands of that Delilah! Let us have every passion and habit under due restraint: if we are not masters of ourselves, then we are not fit to be leaders in the church.

We must put away all notion of SELF-IMPORTANCE. God will not bless the man who thinks himself great. To glory even in the work of God the Holy Spirit in yourself, is to tread dangerously near to self-adulation. "Let another praise you, and not your own lips," and be very glad when that other has sense enough to hold his tongue.

We must also have our TEMPERS well under restraint. A vigorous temper is not altogether an evil. Men who are as easy as an old shoe are generally of as little worth. I would not say to you, "Dear brethren, have a temper," but I do say, "If you have it, control it carefully." I thank God when I see a minister have temper enough to be indignant at wrong, and to be firm for the right. Still, temper is a sharp-edged tool, and often cuts the man who handles it. "Gentle, easy to be entreated," preferring to bear evil rather than inflict it, this is to be our spirit. If any brother here naturally boils over too soon, let him mind that when he does so he scalds nobody but the devil, and then let him boil away.

We must conquer—some of us especially—our tendency to LEVITY. A great distinction exists between holy cheerfulness, which is a virtue, and that general levity, which is a vice. There is a levity which has not enough heart to laugh, but trifles with everything; it is flippant, hollow, unreal. A hearty laugh is no more levity than a hearty cry. I speak of that religious veneering which is pretentious, but thin, superficial, and insincere about the weightiest matters. Godliness is no jest, nor is it a mere form.

Beware of being ACTORS. Never give earnest men the impression that you do not mean what you say, and are mere professionals. To be burning at the lip and freezing at the soul is a mark of reprobation. God deliver us from being superfine and superficial: may

we never be the butterflies of the garden of God.

At the same time, we should avoid everything like the FEROCITY OF DOGMATISM. I know a class of religious people who, I have no doubt, were born of a woman, but they appear to have been suckled by a wolf! I have done them no dishonor: were not Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, so reared? Some warlike men of this order have had sufficient mental power to found dynasties of thought; but human kindness and brotherly love consort better with the kingdom of Christ. We are not to go about the world searching out heresies, like terrier dogs sniffing for rats; nor are we to be so confident of our own infallibility as to erect Ecclesiastical stakes at which to roast all who differ from us—not with fagots of wood, but with those coals of juniper, which consist of strong prejudice and cruel suspicion.

In addition to all this, there are mannerisms, and moods, and ways which I cannot now describe, against which we must struggle, for little faults may often be the source of failure, and to get rid of them may be the secret of success. Count nothing little which even in a small degree hinders your usefulness; cast out from the temple of your soul the seats of them that sell doves as well as the traffickers in sheep and oxen.

And, dear brethren, we must acquire certain moral faculties and habits, as well as put aside their opposites. He will never do much for God who has not INTEGRITY. If we be guided by public policy, if there be any mode of action for us but that which is straightforward, we shall make shipwreck before long. Resolve, dear brethren, that you can be poor, that you can be despised, that you can lose life itself, but that you cannot do a crooked thing. For you, let the only policy be HONESTY.

May you also possess the grand moral characteristic of COURAGE. By this we do not mean impertinence, impudence, or self-conceit; but real courage to do and say calmly the right thing, and to go straight on at all hazards, though there should be none to give you a good word.

I am astonished at the number of Christians who are afraid to speak the truth to their brethren. I thank God I can say this, there is no member of my church, no officer of the church, and no man in the world to whom I am afraid to say before his face what I would say behind his back. Under God I owe my position in my own church to the absence of all policy, and the habit of saying what I mean. The plan of making things pleasant all round, is a perilous as well as a wicked one. If you say one thing to one man, and another to another, they will one day compare notes and find you out, and then you will be despised. The man of two faces will sooner or later be the object of contempt, and justly so.

Above all things avoid cowardice, for it makes men liars. If you have anything that you feel you ought to say about a man, let the measure of what you say be this, "How much dare I say to his face?" You must not allow yourselves a word more in censure of any man living. If that be your rule, your courage will save you from a thousand difficulties, and win you lasting respect.

Having the integrity and the courage, dear brethren, may you be gifted with an indomitable ZEAL. Zeal—what is it? How shall I describe it? Possess it, and you will know what it is. Be consumed with love for Christ, and let the flame burn continuously, not flaming up at public meetings and dying out in the routine work of every day. We need indomitable perseverance, dogged resolution, and a combination of sacred obstinacy, self-denial, holy gentleness, and invincible courage.

Excel also in one power, which is both mental and moral, namely, the power of concentrating all your forces upon the work to which you are called. Collect your thoughts, rally all your faculties, mass your energies, focus your capacities. Turn all the springs of your soul into one channel, causing it to flow onward in an undivided stream.

Some men lack this quality. They scatter themselves and fail. Mass your battalions, and hurl them upon the enemy. Do not try to be great at this and great at that—to be "everything by turns, and nothing long"; but allow your entire nature to be led in captivity by Jesus Christ, and lay everything at His dear feet who bled and died for you.

4. Above all these, we need SPIRITUAL qualifications, graces which must be wrought in us by the Lord Himself. This is the main matter, I am sure. Other things are precious, but this is priceless; we must be rich towards God.

We need to know ourselves. The preacher should be great in the science of the heart, the philosophy of inward experience. There are two schools of experience, and neither is content to learn from the other; let us be content, however, to learn from both.

The one school speaks of the child of God as one who knows the deep depravity of his heart, who understands the loathsomeness of his nature, and daily feels that in his flesh there dwells no good thing. "That man has not the life of God in his soul," say they, "who does not know and feel this, and feel it by bitter and painful experience from day to day." It is in vain to talk to them about liberty, and joy in the Holy Spirit; they will not have it. Let us learn from these one-sided brethren. They know much that should be known, and woe to that minister who ignores their set of truths. Martin Luther used to say that temptation is the best teacher for a minister. There is truth on that side of the question.

Another school of believers dwell much upon the glorious work of the Spirit of God, and rightly and blessedly so. They believe in the

Spirit of God as a cleansing power, sweeping the filthy stable of the soul, and making it into a temple for God. But frequently they talk as if they had ceased to sin, or to be annoyed by temptation. They glory as if the battle were already fought, and the victory won. Let us learn from these brethren. All the truth they can teach us, let us know. Let us become familiar with the hill-tops, and the glory that shines thereon, the Hermons and the Tabors, where we may be transfigured with our Lord. Do not be afraid of becoming too holy. Do not be afraid of being too full of the Holy Spirit.

I would have you wise on all sides, and able to deal with man both in his conflicts and in his joys, as one familiar with both. Know where Adam left you; know where the Spirit of God has placed you. Do not know either of these so exclusively as to forget the other. I believe that if any men are likely to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" it will always be the ministers, because we need to be tempted in all points, so that we may be able to comfort others.

In a railway carriage last week I saw a poor man with his leg placed upon the seat. A guard happening to see him in this posture, remarked, "Those cushions were not made for you to put your dirty boots on." As soon as the guard was gone the man put up his leg again, and said to me, "He has never broken his leg in two places, I am sure, or he would not be so sharp with me."

When I have heard brethren who have lived at ease, enjoying good incomes, condemning others who are much tried, because they could not rejoice in their fashion—I have felt that they knew nothing of the broken bones which others have to carry throughout the whole of their pilgrimage.

Brethren, know man in Christ, and out of Christ. Study him at his best, and study him at his worst; know his anatomy, his secrets, and his passions. You cannot do this by books; you must have personal spiritual experience; God alone can give you that.

Among spiritual acquirements, it is beyond all other things needful to know him who is the sure remedy for all spiritual diseases. Know Jesus. Sit at His feet. Consider His nature, His work, His sufferings, His glory. Rejoice in His presence—commune with Him from day to day. To know Christ is to understand the most excellent of sciences. You cannot fail to be wise if you commune with wisdom. You cannot miss of strength if you have fellowship with the mighty Son of God.

I saw the other day in an Italian grotto a little fern, which grew where its leaves continually glistened and danced in the spray of a fountain. It was always green, and neither summer's drought nor winter's cold affected it. So let us forever abide under the sweet influence of Jesus' love. Dwell in God, brethren; do not occasionally visit Him, but abide in Him.

They say in Italy that where the sun does not enter, the physician must. Where Jesus does not shine, the soul is sick. Bask in His beams and you shall be vigorous in the service of the Lord. Last Sunday night I had a text which mastered me: "No man knows the Son but the Father." I told the people that poor sinners who had gone to Jesus and trusted Him thought they knew Him, but that they knew only a little of Him. Saints of sixty years' experience, who have walked with Him every day, think they know Him; but they are only beginners yet. The perfect spirits before the throne, who have been for five thousand years perpetually adoring Him, perhaps think they know Him, but they do not to the full. "No man knows the Son but the Father." He is so glorious, that only the infinite God has full knowledge of Him, therefore there will be no limit to our study, or narrowness in our line of thought, if we make our Lord the great object of all our meditations.

Brethren, as the outcome of this, if we are to be strong men, we must be conformed to our Lord. Oh, to be like Him! Blessed be that cross on which we shall suffer, if we suffer for being made like unto the Lord Jesus. If we obtain conformity to Christ, we shall have a wondrous unction upon our ministry—and without that, what is a ministry worth?

In a word, we must labor for holiness of character. What is holiness? Is it not wholeness of character? a balanced condition in which there is neither lack nor redundancy? It is not morality—that is a cold lifeless statue; holiness is life. You must have holiness; and, dear brethren, if you should fail in mental qualifications (as I hope you will not), and if you should have a slender measure of the oratorical faculty (as I trust you will not)—yet, depend upon it, a holy life is, in itself, a wonderful power, and will make up for many deficiencies; it is, in fact, the best sermon the best man can deliver. Let us resolve that all the purity which can be had we will have, that all the sanctity which can be reached we will obtain, and that all the likeness to Christ that is possible in this world of sin shall certainly be in us through the work of the Spirit of God. The Lord lift us all as a college right up to a higher platform, and He shall have the glory!

5. Still I have not done, dear brethren. I have to say to you, go forward in actual work, for, after all, we shall be known by what we have done. We ought to be mighty in deed as well as word. There are good brethren in the world who are impractical. The grand doctrine of the second advent makes them stand with open mouths, peering into the skies, so that I am ready to say, "You men of Plymouth, why stand you here gazing up into Heaven?" The fact that Jesus Christ is to come is not a reason for star-gazing, but for working in the power of the Holy Spirit. We must have done with day-dreams, and get to work!

I believe in eggs, but we must get chickens out of them. I do not mind how big your egg is; it may be an ostrich's egg if you like, but if there is nothing in it, please clear away the shells. If something comes of it, God bless your speculations, and even if you should

go a little further than I think it wise to venture, still, if you are more useful, God be praised for it.

We want facts—deeds done, souls saved. It is all very well to write essays, but what souls have you saved from going down to Hell? Your excellent management of your school interests me, but how many children have been brought into the church by it? We are glad to hear of those special meetings, but how many have really been born to God in them? Are saints edified? Are sinners converted? To swing to and fro on a five-barred gate is not progress—yet some seem to think so. I see them in perpetual Elysium, humming over to themselves and their friends, "We are very comfortable." God save us from living in comfort while sinners are sinking into Hell.

In traveling along the mountain roads in Switzerland you will continually see marks of the boring-rod; and in every minister's life there should be traces of stern labor. Brethren, do something; do something; do something. While committees waste their time over resolutions, do something. While Societies and Unions are making constitutions, let us win souls. Too often we discuss, and discuss, and discuss, and Satan laughs in his sleeve. It is time we had done planning and sought something to plan. I beg you, be men of action all of you. Get to work and behave like men. Old Suvarov's idea of war is mine: "Forward and strike! No theory! Attack! Form column! Charge bayonets! Plunge into the center of the enemy." Our one aim is to save sinners, and this we are not only to talk about, but to do in the power of God.

6. Lastly, and here I am going to deliver a message which weighs upon me—Go forward in the matter of the choice of your sphere of action. I plead this day for those who cannot plead for themselves, namely, the great outlying masses of the heathen world. Our existing pulpits are tolerably well supplied, but we need men who will build on new foundations. Who will do this? Are we, as a company of faithful men, clear in our consciences about the heathen? Millions have never heard the name of Jesus. Hundreds of millions have seen a missionary only once in their lives, and know nothing of our King. Shall we let them perish? Can we go to our beds and sleep while China, India, Japan, and other nations are being damned? Are we clear of their blood? Have they no claim upon us? We ought to put it on this footing—not "Can I prove that I ought to go?" but "Can I prove that I ought not to go?" When a man can prove honestly that he ought not to go then he is clear, but not else.

What answer do you give, my brethren? I put it to you man by man. I am not raising a question among you which I have not honestly put to myself. I have felt that if some of our leading ministers would go forth it would have a grand effect in stimulating the churches, and I have honestly asked myself whether I ought to go. After balancing the whole thing I feel bound to keep my place, and I think the judgment of most Christians would be the same; but I hope I would cheerfully go if it were my duty to do so. Brethren, put yourselves through the same process.

We must have the heathen converted! God has myriads of His elect among them, we must go and search for them until we find them. Many difficulties are now removed, all lands are open to us, and distance is annihilated. True we have not the Pentecostal gift of tongues, but languages are now readily acquired, while the art of printing is a full equivalent for the lost gift. The dangers incident to missions ought not to keep any true man back, even if they were very great, but they are now reduced to a minimum. There are hundreds of places where the cross of Christ is unknown, to which we can go without risk. Who will go? The men who ought to go are young brethren of good abilities who have not yet taken upon themselves family cares.

Each student entering the college should consider this matter, and surrender himself to the work unless there are conclusive reasons for his not doing so. It is a fact that even for the colonies it is very difficult to find men, for I have had openings in Australia which I have been obliged to decline. It ought not to be so. Surely there is some self-sacrifice among us yet, and some among us are willing to be exiled for Jesus.

The Mission languishes for lack of men. If the men were forthcoming the liberality of the church would supply their needs, and, in fact, the liberality of the church had made the supply, and yet there are not the men to go. I shall never feel, brethren, that we, as a band of men, have done our duty until we see our comrades fighting for Jesus in every land in the van of conflict. I believe that if God moves you to go, you will be among the best of missionaries, because you will make the preaching of the gospel the great feature of your work, and that is God's sure way of power.

I wish that our churches would imitate that of Pastor Harms, in Germany, where every member was consecrated to God indeed and of a truth. The farmers gave the produce of their lands, the working-men their labor; one gave a large house to be used as a missionary college, and Pastor Harms obtained money for a ship which he fitted out, to make voyages to Africa, and then he sent missionaries, and little companies of his people with them, to form Christian communities among the Bushmen.

When will our churches be equally self-denying and energetic? Look at the Moravians! how every man and woman becomes a missionary, and how much they do in consequence. Let us catch their spirit. Is it a right spirit? Then it is right for us to have it. It is not enough for us to say, "Those Moravians are very wonderful people!" We ought to be wonderful people too. Christ did not purchase the Moravians any more than He purchased us; they are under no more obligation to make sacrifices than we are. Why then this backwardness? When we read of heroic men who gave up all for Jesus, we are not merely to admire, but to imitate them.

Who will imitate them now? Come to the point. Are there not some among you willing to consecrate yourselves to the Lord? "Forward" is the watchword today! Are there no bold spirits to lead the van? Pray all of you that during this Pentecost the Spirit may say, "Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul for the work." Forward! In God's name, Forward!!

Lecture 16. The Need of Decision for the Truth

Some things are true and some things are false: I regard that as an axiom; but there are many people who evidently do not believe it. The current principle of the present age seems to be, "Some things are either true or false, according to the point of view from which you look at them. Black is white, and white is black according to circumstances; and it does not particularly matter which you call it. Truth of course is true, but it would be rude to say that the opposite is a lie; we must not be bigoted, but remember the motto, 'So many men, so many minds!'"

Our forefathers were particular about maintaining landmarks; they had strong notions about fixed points of revealed doctrine, and were very tenacious of what they believed to be scriptural; their fields were protected by hedges and ditches, but their sons have grubbed up the hedges, filled up the ditches, laid all level, and played at leap-frog with the boundary stones. The school of modern thought laughs at the ridiculous positiveness of Reformers and Puritans; it is advancing in glorious liberality, and before long will publish a grand alliance between Heaven and Hell, or, rather, an amalgamation of the two establishments upon terms of mutual concession, allowing falsehood and truth to lie side by side, like the lion with the lamb.

Still, for all that, my firm old-fashioned belief is that some doctrines are true, and that statements which are diametrically opposite to them are not true—that when "No" is the fact, "Yes" is out of court; and that when "Yes" can be justified, "No" must be abandoned. I believe that the gentleman who has for so long a time perplexed our courts is either Sir Roger Tichborne or somebody else; I am not yet able to conceive of his being the true heir and an impostor at the same time. Yet in religious matters the fashionable standpoint is somewhat in that latitude.

We have a fixed faith to preach, my brethren, and we are sent forth with a definite message from God. We are not let to fabricate the message as we go along. We are not sent forth by our Master with a general commission arranged on this fashion: "As you shall think in your heart and invent in your head, so preach. Keep abreast of the times. Whatever the people want to hear, tell them that, and they shall be saved." Truly, we read not so. There is something definite in the Bible. It is not quite a lump of wax to be shaped at our will, or a roll of cloth to be cut according to the prevailing fashion. Your great thinkers evidently look upon the Scriptures as a box of letters for them to play with, and make what they like of, or a wizard's bottle, out of which they may pour anything they choose, from atheism up to spiritualism.

I am too old-fashioned to fall down and worship this theory. There is something told me in the Bible—told me for certain—not put before me with a "but" and a "perhaps," and an "if," and a "may be," and fifty thousand suspicions behind it, so that really the long and the short of it is, that it may not be so at all; but revealed to me as infallible fact, which must be believed, the opposite of which is deadly error, and comes from the father of lies.

Believing, therefore, that there is such a thing as truth, and such a thing as falsehood, that there are truths in the Bible, and that the gospel consists in something definite which is to be believed by men, it befits us to be decided as to what we teach, and to teach it in a decided manner. We have to deal with men who will be either lost or saved, and they certainly will not be saved by erroneous doctrine. We have to deal with God, whose servants we are, and He will not be honored by our delivering falsehoods; neither will He give us a reward, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, you have mangled the gospel as judiciously as any man that ever lived before you."

We stand in a very solemn position, and ours should be the spirit of old Micaiah, who said, "As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, whatever the Lord says unto me that will I speak." Neither less nor more than God's word are we called to state, but that word we are bound to declare in a spirit which convinces the sons of men that, whatever they may think of it, we believe God, and are not to be shaken in our confidence in Him.

Brethren, in what ought we to be positive? Well, there are gentlemen alive who imagine that there are no fixed principles to go upon. "Perhaps a few doctrines," said one to me, "perhaps a few doctrines may be considered as established. It is, perhaps, ascertained that there is a God; but one ought not to dogmatize upon His personality; a great deal may be said for pantheism." Such men creep into the ministry, but they are generally cunning enough to conceal the breadth of their minds beneath Christian phraseology, thus acting in consistency with their principles, for their fundamental rule it that truth is of no consequence.

As for us—as for me, at any rate—I am certain that there is a God, and I mean to preach it as a man does who is absolutely sure. He is the Maker of Heaven and earth, the Master of providence, and the Lord of grace; let His name be blessed forever and ever!

We will have no questions and debates as to Him.

We are equally certain that the book which is called "the Bible" is His word, and is inspired: not inspired in the sense in which Shakespeare, and Milton, and Dryden may be inspired, but in an infinitely higher sense; so that, provided we have the exact text, we regard the words themselves as infallible. We believe that everything stated in the book that comes to us from God is to be accepted by us as His sure testimony, and nothing less than that. God forbid that we should be ensnared by those various interpretations of the modus of inspiration, which amount to little more than frittering it away. The book is a divine production; it is perfect, and is the last court of appeal, "the judge which ends the strife." I would as soon dream of blaspheming my Maker as of questioning the infallibility of His word.

We are also sure concerning the doctrine of the blessed Trinity. We cannot explain how the Father, Son, and Spirit can be each one distinct and perfect in himself, and yet that these three are one, so that there is but one God; yet we do truly believe it, and mean to preach it, notwithstanding Unitarian, Socinian, Sabellian, or any other error. We shall hold fast evermore the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.

And, brethren, there will be no uncertain sound from us as to the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot leave the blood out of our ministry, or the life of it will be gone; for we may say of the gospel, "The blood is the life thereof." The proper substitution of Christ, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, on the behalf of His people, that they might live through Him—this we must publish until we die.

Neither can we waver in our mind for a moment concerning the great and glorious Spirit of God—the fact of His existence, His personality, the power of His working, the necessity of His influences, the certainty that no man is regenerated except by Him; that we are born again by the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit dwells in believers, and is the author of all good in them, their sanctifier and preserver, without whom they can do no good thing whatever. We shall not at all hesitate as to preaching these truths.

The absolute necessity of the new birth is also a certainty. We come down with demonstration when we touch that point. We shall never poison our people with the notion that a moral reformation will suffice, but we will over and over again say to them, "You must be born again." We have not got into the condition of the Scotch minister who, when old John Macdonald preached to his congregation a sermon to sinners, remarked, "Well, Mr. Macdonald, that was a very good sermon which you have preached, but it is very much out of place, for I do not know one single unregenerate person in my congregation." Poor soul, he was in all probability unregenerated himself. No, we dare not flatter our hearers, but we must continue to tell them that they are born sinners, and must be born saints, or they will never see the face of God with acceptance.

The tremendous evil of sin—we shall not hesitate about that. We shall speak on that matter both sorrowfully and dogmatically.

Though some very wise men raise difficult questions about Hell, we shall not fail to declare the terrors of the Lord, and the fact that the Lord has said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Neither will we ever give an uncertain sound as to the glorious truth that salvation is all of grace. If ever we ourselves are saved, we know that sovereign grace alone has done it, and we feel it must be the same with others. We will publish, "Grace! grace! grace!" with all our might, living and dying.

We shall be very decided, also, as to justification by faith; for salvation is "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "Life in a look at the Crucified One!" will be our message. Trust in the Redeemer will be that saving grace which we will pray the Lord to implant in all our hearers' hearts.

And everything else which we believe to be true in the Scriptures we shall preach with decision. If there be questions which may be regarded as moot, or comparatively unimportant, we shall speak with such a measure of decision about them as may be fitting. But points which cannot be moot, which are essential and fundamental, will be declared by us without any stammering, without any inquiring of the people, "What would you wish us to say?" Yes, and without the apology, "Those are my views, but other people's views may be correct."

We ought to preach the gospel, not as our views at all, but as the mind of God—the testimony of Jehovah concerning His own Son, and in reference to salvation for lost men. If we had been entrusted with the making of the gospel, we might have altered it to suit the taste of this modest century, but never having been employed to originate the good news, but merely to repeat it, we dare not stir beyond the record. What we have been taught of God we teach. If we do not do this, we are not fit for our position. If I have a servant in my house, and I send a message by her to the door, and she amends it on her own authority, she may take away the very soul of the message by so doing, and she will be responsible for what she has done. She will not remain long in my employment, for I need a servant who will repeat what I say, as nearly as possible, word for word; and if she does so, I am responsible for the message, she is not. If anyone should be angry with her on account of what she said, they would be very unjust; their quarrel lies with me, and not with the person whom I employ to act as mouth for me.

He who has God's Word, let him speak it faithfully, and he will have no need to answer gainsayers, except with a "Thus says the Lord." This, then, is the matter concerning which we are decided.

How are we to show this decision? We need not be hesitant to answer this question; our decision will show itself in its own way. If we really believe a truth, we shall be decided about it. Certainly we are not to show our decision by that obstinate, furious, wolfish bigotry which cuts off every other body from the chance and hope of salvation and the possibility of being regenerate or even decently honest if they happen to differ from us about the color of a scale of the great leviathan.

Some individuals appear to be naturally cut on the cross; they are manufactured to be rasps, and rasp they will. Sooner than not quarrel with you they would raise a question upon the color of invisibility, or the weight of a non-existent substance. They are up in arms with you, not because of the importance of the question under discussion, but because of the far greater importance of their being always the Pope of the party. Don't go about the world with your fist doubled up for fighting, carrying a theological revolver in the leg of your trousers. There is no sense in being a terrier of orthodoxy, ready to tackle heterodox rats by the score.

Be prepared to fight, and always have your sword buckled on your thigh, but wear a scabbard; there can be no sense in waving your weapon about before everybody's eyes to provoke conflict, after the manner of our beloved friends of the Emerald Isle, who are said to take their coats off at Donnybrook Fair, and drag them along the ground, crying out, while they flourish their shillelaghs, "Will any gentleman be so good as to tread on the tail of my coat?" These are theologians of such warm blood, that they are never at peace until they are fully engaged in war.

If you really believe the gospel, you will be decided for it in more sensible ways. Your very tone will betray your sincerity. You will speak like a man who has something to say, which he knows to be true. Have you ever watched a rogue when he is about to tell a falsehood? Have you noticed the way in which he has to mouth it? It takes a long time to be able to tell a lie well, for the facial organs were not originally constituted and adapted for the complacent delivery of falsehood. When a man knows he is telling you the truth, everything about him corroborates his sincerity. Any accomplished cross-examining lawyer knows within a little whether a witness is genuine or a deceiver.

Truth has her own air and manner, her own tone and emphasis. Yonder is a blundering, ignorant country fellow in the witness-box; the counsel tries to bamboozle and confuse him, if possible, but all the while he feels that he is an honest witness, and he says to himself, "I would like to shake this fellow's evidence, for it will greatly damage my side of the question."

There ought to be always that same air of truth about the Christian minister; only as he is not only bearing witness to the truth, but wants other people to feel that truth and own the power of it, he ought to have more decision in his tone than a mere witness who is stating facts which may be believed or not without any serious consequences following either way.

Luther was the man for decision. Nobody doubted that he believed what he spoke. He spoke with thunder, for there was lightning in his faith. The man preached all over, for his entire nature believed. You felt, "Well, he may be mad, or he may be altogether mistaken, but he assuredly believes what he says. He is the incarnation of faith; his heart is running over at his lips."

If we would show decision for the truth, we must not only do so by our tone and manner, but by our daily actions. A man's life is always more forcible than his speech; when men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as pounds and his words as pence. If his life and his doctrines disagree, the mass of lookers-on accept his practice and reject his preaching. A man may know a great deal about truth, and yet be a very damaging witness on its behalf, because he is no credit to it.

The quack who in the classic story cried up an infallible cure for colds, coughing and sneezing between every sentence of his sales pitch, may serve as the image and symbol of an unholy minister.

The Satyr in Aesop's fable was indignant with the man who blew hot and cold with the same mouth, and well he might be. I can conceive no surer method of prejudicing men against the truth than by sounding her praises through the lips of men of suspicious character.

When the devil turned preacher in our Lord's day, the Master bade him hold his peace; He did not care for Satanic praises.

It is very ridiculous to hear good truth from a bad man; it is like flour in a coal-sack. When I was last in one of our Scottish towns I heard of an idiot at the asylum, who thought himself a great historic character. With much solemnity the poor fellow put himself into an impressive attitude and exclaimed, "I'm Sir William Wallace! Give me a bit of tobacco." The descent from Sir William Wallace to a piece of tobacco was too absurd for gravity; yet it was neither so absurd nor so sad as to see a professed ambassador of the cross covetous, worldly, angry, or sluggish.

How strange it would be to hear a man say, "I am a servant of the Most High God, and I will go wherever I can get the most salary. I am called to labor for the glory of Jesus only, and I will go nowhere unless the church is of most respectable standing. For me to live

is Christ, but I cannot do it under five hundred pounds per year."

Brother, if the truth be in you it will flow out of your entire being as the perfume streams from every bough of the sandal-wood tree. It will drive you onward as the trade-wind speeds the ships, filling all their sails. It will consume your whole nature with its energy as the forest fire burns up all the trees of the forest. Truth has not fully given you her friendship until all your doings are marked with her seal.

We must show our decision for the truth by the sacrifices we are ready to make. This is, indeed, the most efficient as well as the most trying method. We must be ready to give up anything and everything for the sake of the principles which we have espoused, and must be ready to offend our best supporters, to alienate our warmest friends, sooner than belie our consciences. We must be ready to be beggars in purse, and offscourings in reputation, rather than act treacherously. We can die, but we cannot deny the truth. The cost is already counted, and we are determined to buy the truth at any price, and sell it at no price.

Too little of this spirit is abroad nowadays. Men have a saving faith, and save their own people from trouble. They have great discernment, and know on which side their bread is buttered. They are large-hearted, and are all things to all men, if by any means they may save a sum. There are plenty of curs about, who would follow at the heel of any man who would keep them in meat. They are among the first to bark at decision, and call it obstinate dogmatism, and ignorant bigotry. Their condemnatory verdict causes us no distress; it is what we expected.

Above all we must show our zeal for the truth by continually, in season and out of season, endeavoring to maintain it in the tenderest and most loving manner, but still very earnestly and firmly. We must not talk to our congregations as if we were half asleep. Our preaching must not be articulate snoring. There must be power, life, energy, vigor. We must throw our whole selves into it, and show that the zeal of God's house has eaten us up.

How are we to manifest our decision? Certainly not by harping on one string and repeating over and over again the same truths with the declaration that we believe them. Such a course of action could only suggest itself to the incompetent. The barrel-organ grinder is not a pattern of decision; he may have persistency, but that is not the same thing as consistency. I could indicate certain brethren who have learned four or five doctrines, and they grind them over and over again with everlasting monotony. I am always glad when they grind their tunes in some street far removed from my abode. To weary with perpetual repetition, is not the way to manifest our firmness in the faith.

My brethren, you will strengthen your decision by the recollection of the importance of these truths to your own souls. Are your sins forgiven? Have you a hope of Heaven? How do the solemnities of eternity affect you? Certainly you are not saved apart from these things, and therefore you must hold them, for you feel you are a lost man if they be not true. You have to die, and, being conscious that these things alone can sustain you in the last article, you hold them with all your might. You cannot give them up. How can a man resign a truth which he feels to be vitally important to his own soul? He daily feels, "I have to live on it, I have to die on it, I am wretched now, and lost forever apart from it—and therefore by the help of God I cannot relinquish it."

Your own experience from day to day will sustain you, beloved brethren. I hope you have realized already and will experience much more the power of the truth which you preach.

I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I would never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that doctrine.

I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart, because I find myself depraved in heart, and have daily proofs that there dwells in my flesh no good thing.

I cannot help holding that there must be an atonement before there can be pardon, because my conscience demands it, and my peace depends upon it. The little court within my own heart is not satisfied unless some retribution be exacted for dishonor done to God.

They tell us sometimes that such and such statements are not true; but when we are able to reply that we have tried them and proved them, what answer is there to such reasoning?

A man propounds the wonderful discovery that honey is not sweet. "But I had some for breakfast, and I found it very sweet," say you, and your reply is conclusive. He tells you that salt is poisonous, but you point to your own health, and declare that you have eaten salt these twenty years. He says that to eat bread is a mistake—a vulgar error, an antiquated absurdity; but at each meal you make his protest the subject for a merry laugh.

If you are daily and habitually experienced in the truth of God's Word, I am not afraid of your being shaken in mind in reference to it.

Those young fellows who never felt conviction of sin, but obtained their religion as they get their bath in the morning, by jumping into it—these will as readily leap out of it as they leaped in. Those who feel neither the joys nor yet the depressions of spirit which indicate spiritual life, are torpid, and their palsied hand has no firm grip of truth. Mere skimmers of the Word, who, like swallows, touch the water with their wings, are the first to fly from one land to another as personal considerations guide them. They believe this, and then believe that; for, in truth, they believe nothing intensely.

If you have ever been dragged through the mire and clay of soul-despair, if you have been turned upside down, and wiped out like a dish as to all your own strength and pride, and have then been filled with the joy and peace of God, through Jesus Christ—I will trust you among fifty thousand infidels. Whenever I hear the sceptic's stale attacks upon the Word of God, I smile within myself and think, "Why, you simpleton! How can you urge such trifling objections? I have felt, in the contentions of my own unbelief, ten times greater difficulties." We who have contended with horses are not to be wearied by footmen. Gordon Cumming and other lion-killers are not to be scared by wild cats, nor will those who have stood foot to foot with Satan resign the field to pretentious sceptics, or any other of the evil one's inferior servants.

If, my brethren, we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot be made to doubt the fundamentals of the gospel; neither can we be undecided. A glimpse at the thorn-crowned head and pierced hands and feet is the sure cure for "modern doubt" and all its vagaries. Get into the "Rock of Ages, cleft for you," and you will abhor the quicksand.

That eminent American preacher, the seraphic Summerfield, when he lay a-dying, turned round to a friend in the room and said, "I have taken a look into eternity. Oh, if I could come back and preach again, how differently would I preach from what I have done before!" Take a look into eternity, brethren, if you want to be decided.

Remember how Atheist met Christian and Hopeful on the road to the New Jerusalem, and said, "There is no celestial country. I have gone a long way, and could not find it." Then Christian said to Hopeful, "Did we not see it from the top of Mount Clear, when we were with the shepherds?" There was an answer! So when men have said, "There is no Christ—there is no truth in religion," we have replied to them, "Have we not sat under Christ's shadow with great delight? Was not His fruit sweet to our taste? Go with your scepticisms to those who do not know whom they have believed. We have tasted and handled the good word of life. What we have seen and heard, that we do testify; and whether men receive our testimony or not, we cannot but speak it, for we speak what we know, and testify what we have seen." That, my brethren, is the sure way to be decided.

And now, lastly, why should we at this particular age be decided and bold? We should be so because this age is a doubting age. It swarms with doubters as Egypt of old with frogs. You rub against them everywhere. Everybody is doubting everything, not merely in religion, but in politics and social economics, in everything indeed. It is the era of progress, and I suppose it must be the age, therefore, of unloosening, in order that the whole body politic may move on a little further. Well, brethren, as the age is doubting, it is wise for us to put our foot down and stand still where we are sure we have truth beneath us. Perhaps, if it were an age of bigotry, and men would not learn, we might be more inclined to listen to new teachers; but now the Conservative side must be ours, or rather the Radical side, which is the truly Conservative side. We must go back to the root of truth, and stand sternly by that which God has revealed, and so meet the wavering of the age.

Our eloquent neighbor, Mr. Arthur Mursell, has well hit off the present age: "Have we gone too far in saying that modern thought has grown impatient with the Bible, the gospel, and the cross? Let us see. What part of the Bible has it not assailed? The Pentateuch it has long ago swept from the canon as unauthentic. What we read about the creation and the flood is branded as fable. And the laws about the landmarks, from which Solomon was not ashamed to quote, are buried or laid upon the shelf.

"Different men assail different portions of the book, and various systems level their batteries of prejudice at various points; until by some the Scripture is torn all to pieces, and cast to the four winds of Heaven, and by even the most forbearing of the cultured vandals of what is called modern thought, it is condensed into a thin pamphlet of morality, instead of the tome of teaching through which we have eternal life. There is hardly a prophet but has been reviewed by the wiseacres of the day in precisely the same spirit as they would review a work from Mudie's library. The Temanite and the Shuhite never misconstrued the baited Job with half the prejudice of the acknowledged intellects of our time. Isaiah, instead of being sawn asunder, is quartered and hacked in pieces. The weeping prophet is drowned in his own tears. Ezekiel is ground to atoms amidst his wheels. Daniel is devoured bodily by the learned lions. And Jonah is swallowed by the deep monsters with a more inexorable voracity than the fish, for they never cast him up again.

"The histories and events of the great chronicle are rudely contradicted and gainsaid, because some schoolmaster with a slate and pencil cannot bring his sums right. And every miracle which the might of the Lord wrought for the favor of His people, or the frustration of their foes, is pooh-poohed as an absurdity, because the professors cannot do the like with their enchantments. A few of what are called miracles may be credible, because our leaders think they can do them themselves. A few natural phenomena, which some doctor can show to a company of martinets in a dark room, or with a table-full of apparatus, will account for the miracle of the Red Sea. An aeronaut goes up in a balloon, and then comes down again, and quite explains away the pillar of fire and of cloud, and trifles of that kind. And so our great men are satisfied when they think that their toy wand has swallowed up the wand of Aaron: but

when Aaron's wand threatens to swallow up theirs, they say that part is not authentic, and that miracle never occurred.

"Nor does the New Testament fare any better than the Old at the hands of these invaders. There is no toll of deference levied on their homage as they pass across the line. They recognize no voice of warning with the cry, 'Take your shoes from off your feet, because the place whereon you stand is holy ground.' The mind which halts in its career of spiritual rapine on any reverential pretext, is denounced as ignorant or slavish. To hesitate to stamp the hoof upon a lily or a spring flower is the sentimental folly of a child, and the vanguard of the thought of the age has only pity and a sneer for such a feeling, as it stalks upon its boasted march of progress.

"We are told that the legends of our nurseries are obsolete, and that broader views are gaining ground with thoughtful minds. We are unwilling to believe it. The truth is, that a few, a very few, thoughtful men, whose thinking consists in negation from first to last, and whose minds are tortured with a chronic twist or curve, which turns them into intellectual notes of interrogation, have laid the basis of this system. These few honest doubters have been joined by a larger band who are simply restless; and these again by men who are inimical to the spirit and the truths of Scripture, and together they have formed a coterie, and called themselves the leaders of the thought of the age. They have a following, it is true; but of whom does it consist? Of the mere satellites of fashion. Of the wealth, the pedantry, and the stupidity of our large populations.

"A string of carriages is seen 'setting down' and 'taking up' at the door where an advanced professor is to lecture, and because the milliner is advertised from floor to ceiling in the lecture room, these views are said to be gaining ground. But in an age of fashion like this, who ever suspects these minions of the mode of having any views at all? It becomes respectable to follow a certain name for a time, and so the vainlings go to follow the name and to display the dress. But as to views, one would no more suspect such people of having any views, than they would dream of charging more than a tenth part of the crowds who go to the Royal Academy's exhibition with understanding the laws of perspective. It is the thing to do—and so every one who has a dress to show and a lounge to air, goes to show it, and all who would be in the fashion (and who would not?) are bound to advance with the times.

"And hence we find the times advancing over the sacred precincts of the New Testament, as though it were the floor of St. Alban's or of a professor's lecture room; and ladies drag their trains, and dandies set their dress-boots on the authenticity of this, or the authority of that, or the inspiration of the other. People who never heard of Strauss, of Bauer, or of Tubingen, are quite prepared to say that our Savior was but a well-meaning man, who had a great many faults, and made a great many mistakes; that His miracles, as recorded in the New Testament, were in part imaginary, and in part accountable by natural theories; that the raising of Lazarus never occurred, since the Gospel of John is a forgery from first to last; that the atonement is a doctrine to be scouted as bloody and unrighteous; that Paul was a fanatic who wrote unthinkingly, and that much of what bears his name was never written by him at all. Thus is the Bible rubbed through the tribulum of criticism from Genesis to Revelation, until, in the faith of the age in which we live, as represented by its so-called leaders, there are but a few inspired fragments here and there remaining."

Moreover, after all, this is not an earnestly doubting age; we live among a careless, frivolous race. If the doubters were honest there would be more infidel places of concourse than there are; but infidelity as an organized community does not prosper. Infidelity in London, open and avowed, has come down to one old corrugated iron shed opposite St. Luke's. I believe that is the present position of it. "The Hall of Science" is it not called? Its literature was carried on for a long time in half a shop in Fleet Street; that was all it could manage to support, and I don't know whether even that half shop is used now. It is a poor, dotting, driveling thing.

In Tom Paine's time it bullied like a vigorous blasphemer, but it was outspoken, and, in its own way, downright and earnest in its outspokenness. It commanded in former days some names which one might mention with a measure of respect; Hume, to wit, and Bolingbroke, and Voltaire were great in talent, if not in character. But where now will you find a Hobbes or a Gibbon? The doubters now are usually doubters because they do not care about truth at all. They are indifferent altogether.

Modern skepticism is playing and toying with truth; and it takes to "modern thought" as an amusement, as ladies take to croquet or archery. This is nothing less than an age of millinery and dolls and comedy. Even good people do not believe out and out as their fathers used to do. Some even among Nonconformists are shamefully lax in their convictions; they have few masterly convictions such as would lead them to the stake, or even to imprisonment. Molluscs have taken the place of men, and men are turned to jelly-fishes. Far from us be the desire to imitate them.

Moreover it is an age which is very impressible, and therefore I would like to see you very decided, that you may impress it. The wonderful progress made in England by the High Church movement shows that earnestness is power. The Ritualists believe something, and that fact has given them influence. To me their distinctive creed is intolerable nonsense, and their proceedings are childish foolery; but they have dared to go against the mob, and have turned the mob round to their side. Bravely did they battle, let us say it to their honor; when their churches became the scenes of riot and disorder, and there was raised the terrible howl of "No Popery" by the lower orders, they boldly confronted the foe and never winced. They went against the whole current of what was thought to be the deep-seated feeling of England in favor of Protestantism, and with scarcely a bishop to patronize them, and but few loaves and fishes of patronage, they have increased from a handful to become the dominant and most vital party in the Church

of England, and to our intense surprise and horror, they have brought people to receive again the Popery which we thought dead and buried.

If anybody had told me twenty years ago that the witch of Endor would become Queen of England, I would as soon have believed it as that we should now have such a High Church development; but the fact is, the men were earnest and decided, and held what they believed most firmly, and did not hesitate to push their cause. The age, therefore, can be impressed; it will receive what is taught by zealous men, whether it be truth or falsehood. It may be objected that falsehood will be received the more readily; that is just possible, but anything will be accepted by men if you will but preach it with tremendous energy and living earnestness. If they will not receive it into their hearts in a spiritual sense—yet at any rate there will be a mental assent and consent, very much in proportion to the energy with which you proclaim it; ay, and God will bless our decision too, so that when the mind is gained by our earnestness, and the attention is won by our zeal, the heart itself will be opened by the Spirit of God.

We must be decided! What have Dissenters been doing to a great extent lately but trying to be fine? How many of our ministers are laboring to be grand orators or intellectual thinkers? That is not the thing. Our young ministers have been dazzled by that, and have gone off to bray like wild donkeys under the notion that they would then be reputed to have come from Jerusalem, or to have been reared in Germany. The world has found them out. There is nothing now I believe that genuine Christians despise more than the foolish affectation of intellectualism.

You will hear a good old deacon say, "Mr. So-and-so, whom we had here, was a very clever man, and preached wonderful sermons, but the cause has gone down through it. We can hardly support the minister, and we mean next time to have one of the old-fashioned ministers back again who believe in something and preach it. There will be no addition to our church otherwise."

Will you go out and tell the people that you believe you can say something, but you hardly know what; you are not quite sure that what you preach is correct, but the trust-deed requires you to say it, and therefore you say it? Why, you may cause fools and idiots to be pleased with you, and you will be sure to propagate infidelity, but you cannot do more. When a prophet comes forward he must speak as from the Lord, and if he cannot do that, let him go back to his bed. It is quite certain, dear friends, that now or never we must be decided, because the age is manifestly drifting.

You cannot watch for twelve months without seeing how it is going down the tide; the anchors are pulled up, and the vessel is floating to destruction. It is drifting now, as near as I can tell you, south-east, and is nearing Cape Vatican, and if it drives much further in that direction it will be on the rocks of the Roman reef. We must get aboard her, and connect her with the glorious steam-tug of gospel truth, and drag her back. I would be glad if I could take her round by Cape Calvin, right up into the Bay of Calvary, and anchor her in the fair haven which is close over by Vera Cruz, or the cross. God grant us grace to do it. We must have a strong hand, and have our steam well up, and defy the current; and so by God's grace we shall both save this age and the generations yet to come.

Lecture 17. Open Air Preaching—a Sketch of its History

There are some customs for which nothing can be pleaded, except that they are very old. In such cases antiquity is of no more value than the rust upon a counterfeit coin. It is, however, a happy circumstance when the usage of ages can be pleaded for a really good and scriptural practice, for it invests it with a halo of reverence. Now, it can be argued, with small fear of refutation, that open-air preaching is as old as preaching itself.

We are at full liberty to believe that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, when he prophesied, asked for no better pulpit than the hillside.

Noah, as a preacher of righteousness, was willing to reason with his contemporaries in the ship-yard wherein his marvelous ark was built.

Certainly, Moses and Joshua found their most convenient place for addressing vast assemblies beneath the unpillared arch of Heaven.

Samuel closed a sermon in the field at Gilgal amid thunder and rain, by which the Lord rebuked the people and drove them to their knees.

Elijah stood on Carmel, and challenged the vacillating nation, with "How long halt you between two opinions?"

Jonah, whose spirit was somewhat similar, lifted up his cry of warning in the streets of Nineveh, and in all her places of concourse gave forth the warning utterance, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

To hear Ezra and Nehemiah "all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate."

Indeed, we find examples of open-air preaching everywhere around us in the records of the Old Testament.

It may suffice us, however, to go back as far as the origin of our own holy faith, and there we hear the forerunner of the Savior crying in the wilderness and lifting up his voice from the river's bank.

Our Lord Himself, who is yet more our pattern, delivered the larger proportion of His sermons on the mountain's side, or by the sea shore, or in the streets. Our Lord was to all intents and purposes an open-air preacher. He did not remain silent in the synagogue, but He was equally at home in the field. We have no discourse of His on record delivered in the chapel royal, but we have the sermon on the mount, and the sermon in the plain; so that the very earliest and most divine kind of preaching was practiced out of doors by Him who spoke as never man spoke.

There were gatherings of His disciples after His decease, within walls, especially that in the upper room; but the preaching was even then most frequently in the court of the temple, or in such other open spaces as were available. The notion of holy places and consecrated meeting-houses had not occurred to them as Christians; they preached in the temple because it was the chief place of concourse, but with equal earnestness "in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

The apostles and their immediate successors delivered their message of mercy not only in their own hired houses, and in the synagogues, but also anywhere and everywhere as occasion served them. This may be gathered incidentally from the following statement of Eusebius: "The divine and admirable disciples of the apostles built up the superstructure of the churches, the foundations whereof the apostles had laid, in all places where they came; they everywhere prosecuted the preaching of the gospel, sowing the seeds of heavenly doctrine throughout the whole world. Many of the disciples then alive distributed their estates to the poor; and, leaving their own country, did the work of evangelists to those who had never yet heard the Christian faith, preaching Christ, and delivering the evangelical writings to them. No sooner had they planted the faith in any foreign countries, and ordained guides and pastors, to whom they committed the care of these new plantations, but they went to other nations, assisted by the grace and powerful working of the Holy Spirit. As soon as they began to preach the gospel, the people flocked universally to them, and cheerfully worshiped the true God, the Creator of the world, piously and heartily believing in His name."

When Antichrist had commenced its more universal sway, the Reformers before the Reformation were full often open-air preachers, as, for instance, Arnold of Brescia, who denounced Papal usurpations at the very gates of the Vatican.

It would be very easy to prove that revivals of religion have usually been accompanied, if not caused, by a considerable amount of preaching out of doors, or in unusual places. The first avowed preaching of protestant doctrine was almost necessarily in the open air, or in buildings which were not dedicated to worship, for these were in the hands of the Papacy. True, Wycliffe for a while preached the gospel in the church at Lutterworth. Huss, and Jerome, and Savonarola for a time delivered semi-gospel addresses in connection with the Ecclesiastical arrangements around them; but when they began more fully to know and proclaim the gospel, they were driven to find other platforms.

The Reformation when yet a babe was like the new-born Christ, and had not where to lay its head, but a company of men comparable to the heavenly host proclaimed it under the open heavens, where shepherds and common people heard them gladly.

Throughout England we have several trees remaining called "gospel oaks." There is one spot on the other side of the Thames known by the name of "Gospel Oak," and I have myself preached at Addlestone, in Surrey, under the far-spreading boughs of an ancient oak, beneath which John Knox is said to have proclaimed the gospel during his sojourn in England. Full many a wild moor, and lone hillside, and secret spot in the forest have been consecrated in the same fashion; and traditions still linger over caves, and dells, and hill tops, where of old time the bands of the faithful met to hear the word of the Lord.

Nor was it alone in solitary places that in days of yore the voice of the preacher was heard, for scarcely is there a market cross which has not served as a pulpit for itinerant gospellers. During the lifetime of Wycliffe his missionaries traversed the country, everywhere preaching the word. An Act of Parliament of Richard II (1382) sets it forth as a grievance of the clergy that a number of people in frieze gowns went from town to town, without the licence of the ordinaries, and preached not only in churches, but in churchyards, and market-places, and also at fairs.

To hear these heralds of the cross the country people flocked in great numbers, and the soldiers mingled with the crowd, ready to defend the preachers with their swords if any offered to molest them. After Wycliffe's decease his followers scrupled not to use the same methods. It is specially recorded of William Swinderby that "being excommunicated, and forbidden to preach in any church or churchyard, he made a pulpit of two millstones in the High-street of Leicester, and there preached 'in contempt of the bishop.' 'There,' says Knighton, 'you might see throngs of people from every part, as well from the town as the country, double the number there used to be when they might hear him lawfully.'"

It would be an interesting task to prepare a volume of notable facts connected with open-air preaching, or, better still, a consecutive history of it. I have no time for even a complete outline, but would simply ask you: where would the Reformation have been if its great preachers had confined themselves to churches and cathedrals? How would the common people have become indoctrinated with the gospel had it not been for those far wandering evangelists, the colporteurs, and those daring innovators who found a pulpit on every heap of stones, and an audience chamber in every open space near the abodes of men?

I earnestly wish that some person possessed of sufficient wealth would purchase a central space in our great metropolis, erect a pulpit, and a certain number of benches, and then set it apart for the use of approved ministers of the gospel, who would there freely declare the gospel to all comers without favor or distinction. It would be of more real service to our ever-growing city than all its cathedrals, abbeys, and grand Gothic edifices. Before all open spaces are utterly swept away by the ever-swelling tide of mortar and brick, it would be a wise policy to secure Gospel Fields, or God's-acres-for-the-living, or whatever else you may please to call open spaces for free gospel preaching.

All through the Puritan times there were gatherings in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, for fear of persecutors. "We took," says Archbishop Laud, in a letter dated Fulham, June, 1632, "another conventicle of separatists in Newington Woods, in the very brake where the king's stag was to be lodged, for his hunting next morning." A hollow or gravel pit on Hounslow Heath sometimes served as a conventicle, and there is a dell near Hitchin where John Bunyan was accustomed to preach in perilous times. All over Scotland the straths, and dells, and vales, and hillsides are full of covenanting memories to this day. You will not fail to meet with rock pulpits whence the stern fathers of the Presbyterian church thundered forth their denunciations of Erastianism, and pleaded the claims of the King of kings. Cargill and Cameron and their fellows found congenial scenes for their brave ministries mid the lone mountains rents and ravines.

At the risk of being prolix I feel I must add the following touching description of one of these scenes. The prose picture even excels the poet's painting.

What the world would have been if there had not been preaching outside of walls, and beneath a more glorious roof than these rafters of fir, I am sure I cannot guess. It was a brave day for England when Whitefield began field preaching. When Wesley stood and preached a sermon on his father's grave, at Epworth, because the parish priest would not allow him admission within the (so-called) sacred edifice, Mr. Wesley writes: "I am well assured that I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit." The same might be said of all the open-air preaching which followed, as compared with the regular discourses within doors.

"The thought of preaching in the open air was suggested to Whitefield by a crowd of a thousand people unable to gain admission to Bermondsey church, where he preached one Sunday afternoon. He met with no encouragement when he mentioned it to some of his friends; they thought it was a 'mad notion.' However, it would have been carried out the next Sunday at Ironmongers' Almshouses had not the preacher been disappointed in his congregation, which was small enough to hear him from the pulpit. He took two sermons with him, one for within and the other for without." The idea which had thus ripened into a resolve had not long to wait before it was carried into execution.

The Chancellor of the Diocese having put impediments in the way of Whitefield's preaching in the churches of Bristol on behalf of his Orphan-house, he went to preach to the colliers at Kingswood "for the first time on a Saturday afternoon, taking his stand on Hannan Mount. He spoke on Matthew 5:1, 2, 3, to as many as came to hear; upwards of two hundred attended. His only remark in his journal is, Blessed be God that the ice is now broken, and I have now taken the field! Some may censure me. But is there not a cause? Pulpits are denied; and the poor colliers ready to perish for lack of knowledge." Now he was the owner of a pulpit that no man could take from him, and his heart rejoiced in this great gift. On the following day the journal relates, "All the church doors being now shut, and if open not able to contain half that came to hear, at three in the afternoon I went to Kingswood among the colliers. God highly favored us in sending us a fine day, and near two thousand people were assembled on that occasion. I preached and enlarged on John 3:3 for near an hour, and, I hope, to the comfort and edification of those that heard me."

Two days afterwards he stood upon the same spot, and preached to a congregation of four or five thousand with great freedom. The bright sun overhead, and the immense throng standing around him in awful silence formed a picture which filled him with 'holy admiration.' On a subsequent Sunday, Bassleton, a village two miles from Bristol, opened its church to him, and a numerous congregation coming together, he first read prayers in the church, and then preached in the churchyard. At four he hastened to Kingswood. Though the month was February the weather was unusually open and mild; the setting sun shone with its fullest power; the trees and hedges were crowded with hearers who wanted to see the preacher as well as to hear him. For an hour he spoke with a voice loud enough to be heard by everyone, and his heart was not without joy in his own message. He writes in his journal: 'Blessed be God, The fire is kindled; may the gates of Hell never be able to prevail against it!'

It is important to know what were his feelings when he met those immense field congregations, whose numbers had grown from two

hundred to twenty thousand, and what were the effects of his preaching upon his audience. His own words are, 'Having no righteousness of their own to renounce, the colliers were glad to hear of Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was, to see the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks, as they came out of their coal pits. Hundreds and hundreds of them were soon brought under deep convictions, which (as the event proved) happily ended in a sound and thorough conversion. The change was visible to all, though numbers chose to impute it to anything rather than the finger of God.

As the scene was quite new, and I had just begun to be an extempore preacher, it often occasioned many inward conflicts. Sometimes, when twenty thousand people were before me, I had not, in my own apprehension, a word to say, either to God or them. But I was never totally deserted, and frequently knew by happy experience what our Lord meant when he said, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands and thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some on the trees, and, at times, all affected and drenched in tears together, to which sometimes was added the solemnity of the approaching evening, was almost too much for, and quite overcame, me."

Wesley writes in his journal, "Saturday, 31 [March, 1731]. In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarcely reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (until very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I would have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if had it not been done in a church." Such were the feelings of a man who in after life became one of the greatest open-air preachers that ever lived!

I shall not tarry to describe Mr. Whitefield on our own Kennington Common among the tens of thousands, or at Moorfields early in the morning, when the lanterns twinkled like so many glow-worms on a grassy bank on a summer's night, neither will I mention the multitudes of glorious scenes with Wesley and his more renowned preachers; but a picture more like that which some of you can easily copy has taken a strong hold upon my memory; and I set it before you that you may never in times to come despise the day of small things:

"Wesley reached Newcastle on Friday, the 28th of May. On walking out, after tea, he was surprised and shocked at the abounding wickedness. Drunkenness and swearing seemed general, and even the mouths of little children were full of curses. How he spent the Saturday we are not informed; but, on Sunday morning at seven, he and John Taylor took their stand near the pump, in Sandgate, 'the poorest and most contemptible part of the town,' and began to sing the Old Hundredth Psalm and tune. Three or four people came about them, to see what was the matter; these soon increased in number, and, before Wesley finished preaching, his congregation consisted of from twelve to fifteen hundred people. When the service was ended, the people still stood gaping, with the most profound astonishment, upon which Wesley said, 'If you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again.'"

Glorious were those great gatherings in fields and commons which lasted throughout the long period in which Wesley and Whitefield blessed our nation. Field-preaching was the wild note of the birds singing in the trees, in testimony that the true springtime of religion had come. Birds in cages may sing more sweetly, perhaps, but their music is not so natural, nor so sure a pledge of the coming summer. It was a blessed day when Methodists and others began to proclaim Jesus in the open air; then were the gates of Hell shaken, and the captives of the devil set free by hundreds and by thousands.

Once recommenced, the fruitful agency of field-preaching was not allowed to cease. Amid jeering crowds and showers of rotten eggs and filth, the immediate followers of the two great Methodists continued to storm village after village and town after town. Very varied were their adventures, but their success was generally great. One smiles often when reading incidents in their labors. A string of packhorses is so driven as to break up a congregation, and a fire-engine is brought out and played over the throng to achieve the same purpose. Handbells, old kettles, marrow-bones and cleavers, trumpets, drums, and entire bands of music were engaged to drown the preachers' voices.

In one case the parish bull was let loose, and in others dogs were set to fight. The preachers needed to have faces set like flints, and so indeed they had.

John Furz says: "As soon as I began to preach, a man came straight forward, and presented a gun at my face; swearing that he would blow my brains out, if I spoke another word. However, I continued speaking, and he continued swearing, sometimes putting the muzzle of the gun to my mouth, sometimes against my ear. While we were singing the last hymn, he got behind me, fired the gun, and burned off part of my hair."

After this, my brethren, we ought never to speak of petty interruptions or annoyances. The proximity of a blunderbuss in the hands of a son of Belial is not very conducive to collected thought and clear utterance, but the experience of Furz was probably no worse than that of John Nelson, who coolly says, "But when I was in the middle of my discourse, one at the outside of the congregation

threw a stone, which cut me on the head. However, that made the people give greater attention, especially when they saw the blood run down my face; so that all was quiet until I had done, and was singing a hymn."

The life of Gideon Ouseley, by Dr. Arthur, is one of the most powerful testimonies to the value of outdoor preaching. In the early part of the present century, from 1800 to 1830, he was in full vigor, riding throughout the whole of Ireland, preaching the gospel of Jesus in every town. His pulpit was generally the back of his horse, and he himself and his coadjutors were known as the men with the black caps, from their habit of wearing skull caps. This cavalry ministry was in its time the cause of a great revival in Ireland, and gave promise of really touching Erin's deep-seated curse—the power of the priesthood, and the superstition of the people. Ouseley showed at all times much shrewdness, and a touch of common-sense humor; hence he generally preached in front of the apothecary's window because the mob would be the less liberal with their stones, or next best he chose to have the residence of a respectable Catholic in his rear, for the same reason. His sermon from the stone stairs of the market house of Enniscorthy was a fair specimen of his dexterous method of meeting an excited mob of Irishmen. I will give it you at length, that you may know how to act if ever you are placed in similar circumstances:

"He took his stand, put off his hat, assumed his black velvet cap, and, after a few moments spent in silent prayer, commenced to sing. People began to gather round him, and, during the singing of a few verses, were quiet, and apparently attentive, but soon began to be restless and noisy. He then commenced to pray, and quietness for a short time followed; but presently, as the crowd increased, it became uneasy, and even turbulent. He closed his prayer, and began to preach; but evidently his audience was not disposed to hear him. Before many sentences had been uttered, missiles began to fly—at first not of a very destructive character, being refuse—vegetables, potatoes, turnips, etc., but before long harder materials were thrown— brickbats and stones, some of which reached him and inflicted slight wounds. He stopped, and, after a pause, cried out, 'Boys dear, what's the matter with you today? Won't you let an old man talk to you a little?'

'We don't want to hear a word out of your old head,' was the prompt reply from one in the crowd.

'But I want to tell you what, I think, you would like to hear.'

'No, we'll like nothing you can tell us.'

'How do you know? I want to tell you a story about one you all say you respect and love.'

'Who's that?'

'The blessed Virgin.'

'And what do you know about the blessed Virgin?'

'More than you think; and I'm sure you'll be pleased with what I have to tell you, if you'll only listen to me.'

'Come then,' said another voice, 'let us hear what he has to say about the Holy Mother.'

And there was a lull, and the missionary began: 'There was once a young couple to be married, belonging to a little town called Cana. It's away in that country where our blessed Savior spent a great part of his life among us; and the decent people whose children were to be married thought it right to invite the blessed Virgin to the wedding feast, and her blessed Son too, and some of His disciples; and they all thought it right to come. As they sat at table, the Virgin Mother thought she saw that the wine provided for the entertainment began to run short, and she was troubled lest the decent young people should be shamed before their neighbors; and so she whispered to her blessed Son, "They have no wine." "Don't let that trouble you, ma'am," said He. And in a minute or two after, she, knowing well what was in His good heart, said to one of the servants that was passing behind them, "Whatever he says unto you, do it." Accordingly, by-and-by, our blessed Lord said to another of them—I suppose they had passed the word among themselves, "Fill those large waterpots with water." (There were six of them standing in a corner of the room, and they held nearly three gallons apiece, for the people of those countries use a great deal of water every day.) And, remembering the words of the Holy Virgin, they did His bidding, and came back, and said, "Sir, they are full to the brim." "Take some, then, to the master, at the head of the table," He said. And they did so, and the master tasted it, and lo and behold! it was wine, and the best of wine too. And there was plenty of it for the feast, ay, and, it may be, some left to help the young couple setting up house-keeping. And all that, you see, came of the servants taking the advice of the blessed Virgin, and doing what she bid them. Now, if she was here among us this day, she would give just the same advice to every one of us, "Whatever He says to you, do it," and with good reason too, for well she knows there is nothing but love in His heart to us, and nothing but wisdom comes from His lips. And now I'll tell you some of the things He says to us. He says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will strive to enter in, and shall not be able."

And immediately the preacher briefly, but clearly and forcibly, expounded the nature of the gate of life, its straitness, and the dread necessity for pressing into it, winding up with the Virgin's counsel, 'Whatever he says unto you, do it.'

In like manner he explained, and pressed upon his hearers, some other of the weighty words of our divine Lord—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"; and, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me'—enforcing His exhortation in each instance by the Virgin's counsel to the servants at Cana. 'But no,' at last he broke forth, 'no; with all the love and reverence you pretend for the blessed Virgin, you won't take her advice, but will listen willingly to any drunken schoolmaster that will wheedle you into a public-house, and put mischief and wickedness into your heads.' Here he was interrupted by a voice, which seemed to be that of an old man, exclaiming, 'True for you, true for you. If you were tellin' lies all the days of your life, it's the truth you're tellin' now.' And so the preacher got permission to finish his discourse with not a little of good effect."

The history of Primitive Methodism might here be incorporated bodily as part of our sketch of Field-preaching, for that wonderful mission movement owed its rise and progress to this agency. It is, however, a singular reproduction of the events which attended the earlier Methodism of eighty or ninety years before. The Wesleyans had become respectable, and it was time that the old fire should burn up among another class of men. Had Wesley been alive he would have glorified in the poor but brave preachers who risked their lives to proclaim the message of eternal love among the depraved, and he would have headed them in their crusade. As it was, other leaders came forward, and it was not long before their zeal called forth a host of fervent witnesses who could not be daunted by mobs, or squires, or clergymen; nor even chilled by the genteel brethren whose proprieties they so dreadfully shocked.

Then came forth the old weapons in abundance. Agricultural produce in all stages of decomposition rewarded the zealous apostles—turnips and potatoes were a first course, and rotten eggs followed in special abundance, these last we note were frequently goose eggs, selected we suppose for their size. A tub of coal-tar was often in readiness, filth from the horse-ponds was added, and all this to the music of tin whistles, horns, and watchmens' rattles. Barrels of ale were provided by the advocates of "Church and king" to refresh the orthodox assailants, while both preachers and disciples were treated with brutality such as to excite compassion even in the hearts of adversaries. All this was, happily, a violation of law, but the great unpaid winked at the transgressors, and endeavored to bully the preacher into silence.

For Christ's sake they were content to be treated as vagrants and vagabonds, and the Lord put great honor upon them. Disciples were made and the Ranters multiplied. Even until a late period these devoted brethren have been opposed with violence, but their joyful experience has led them to persevere in their singing through the streets, camp-meetings, and other irregularities: blessed irregularities by which hundreds of wanderers have been met with and led to the fold of Jesus.

I have no time further to illustrate my subject by descriptions of the work of Christmas Evans and others in Wales, or of the Haldanes in Scotland, or even of Rowland Hill and his brethren in England. If you wish to pursue the subject these names may serve as hints for discovering abundant materials; and I may add to the list The Life of Dr. Guthrie, in which he records notable open-air assemblies at the time of the Disruption, when as yet the Free Church had no places of worship built with human hands.

I must linger a moment over Robert Flockhart, of Edinburgh, who, though a lesser light, was a constant one, and a fit example to the bulk of Christ's street witnesses. Every evening, in all weathers and amid many persecutions, did this brave man continue to speak in the street for forty-three years. Think of that, and never be discouraged. When he was tottering to the grave, the old soldier was still at his post. "Compassion to the souls of men drove me," said he, "to the streets and lanes of my native city, to plead with sinners and persuade them to come to Jesus. The love of Christ constrained me." Neither the hostility of the police, nor the insults of Papists, Unitarians, and the like could move him, he rebuked error in the plainest terms, and preached salvation by grace with all his might. So lately has he passed away that Edinburgh remembers him still. There is room for such in all our cities and towns, and need for hundreds of his noble order in this huge nation of London.

In America men like Peter Cartwright, Lorenzo Dow, Jacob Gruber, and others of a past generation, carried on a glorious warfare under the open heavens in their own original fashion; and in later times Father Taylor has given us another proof of the immeasurable power of this mode of crusade in his Seven Years of Street Preaching in San Francisco, California. Though sorely tempted, I shall forbear at this time from making extracts from that very remarkable work.

The camp-meeting is a sort of associated field-preaching, and has become an institution in the United States, where everything must needs be done upon a great scale. This would lead me into another subject, and therefore I shall merely give you a glimpse at that means of usefulness, and then forbear.

The following description of the earlier camp meetings in America is from the pen of the author of a Narrative of a Mission to Nova Scotia: "The tents are generally pitched in the form of a crescent, in the center of which is an elevated stand for the preachers, round which, in all directions, are placed rows of planks for the people to sit upon while they hear the word. Among the trees, which spread their tops over this forest church, are hung the lamps, which burn all night, and give light to the various exercises of religion which occupy the solemn midnight hours. It was nearly eleven o'clock at night when I first arrived on the border of the camp. I left my boat at the edge of the wood, one mile from the scene; and when I opened upon the camp ground, my curiosity was converted into

astonishment, to behold the pendant lamps among the trees; the tents half-encircling a large space; four thousand people in the center of this, listening with profound attention to the preacher, whose stentorian voice and animated manner carried the vibration of each word to a great distance through the deeply umbrageous wood, where, save the twinkling lamps of the camp, brooding darkness spread a tenfold gloom. All excited my astonishment, and forcibly brought before my view the Hebrews in the wilderness. The meetings generally begin on Monday morning, and on Friday morning following break up. The daily exercises are carried forward in the following manner: in the morning at five o'clock the horn sounds through the camp, either for preaching or for prayer; this, with similar exercises, or a little intermission, brings on the breakfast hour, eight o'clock; at ten, the horn sounds for public preaching, after which, until noon, the interval is filled up with little groups of praying people, who scatter themselves up and down the camp, both in the tents and under the trees. After dinner the horn sounds at two o'clock; this is for preaching. I should have observed that a female or two is generally left in each tent, to prepare materials for dinner. A fire is kept burning in different parts of the camp, where water is boiled for tea, the use of ardent spirits being forbidden. After the afternoon preaching things take nearly the same course as in the morning, only the praying groups are upon a larger scale, and more scope is given to animated exhortations and loud prayers. Some who exercise on these occasions soon lose their voices, and, at the end of a camp meeting, many of both preachers and people can only speak in a whisper. At six o'clock in the evening the horn summons to preaching, after which, though in no regulated form, all the above means continue until evening; yes, and during whatever part of the night you awake, the wilderness is vocal with praise."

Whether or not under discreet management some such gatherings could be held in our country I cannot decide, but it does strike me as worthy of consideration whether in some spacious grounds services might not be held in summer weather, say for a week at a time, by ministers who would follow each other in proclaiming the gospel beneath the trees. Sermons and prayer-meetings, addresses and hymns, might follow each other in wise succession, and perhaps thousands might be induced to gather to worship God, among whom would be scores and hundreds who never enter our regular sanctuaries. Not only must something be done to evangelize the millions, but everything must be done, and perhaps amid variety of effort the best thing would be discovered. "If by any means I may save some" must be our motto, and this must urge us onward to go forth into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in. Brethren, I speak as unto wise men, consider what I say.

Lecture 18. Open Air Preaching—Remarks Thereon

I fear that in some of our less enlightened country churches there are conservative individuals who almost believe that to preach anywhere except in the church would be a shocking innovation, a sure token of heretical tendencies, and a mark of zeal without knowledge. Any young brother who studies among them must not suggest anything so irregular as a sermon outside the walls of their Zion. In the olden times we are told "Wisdom cries without, she utters her voice in the streets, she cries in the chief places of concourse, in the openings of the gates"; but the wise men of orthodoxy would have wisdom gagged except beneath the roof of a licensed building. These people believe in a New Testament which says, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in," and yet they dislike a literal obedience to the command.

Do they imagine that a special blessing results from sitting upon a particular deal board with a piece of straight-up panelling at their back—an invention of discomfort which ought long ago to have made people prefer to worship outside on the green grass? Do they suppose that grace rebounds from sounding-boards, or can be beaten out of pulpit cushions in the same fashion as the dust? Are they enamored of the bad air, and the stifling stuffiness which in some of our meeting-houses make them almost as loathsome to the nose and to the lungs as the mass-houses of Papists with their cheap and nasty incense?

To reply to these objectors is a task for which we have no heart: we prefer foemen worthy of the steel we use upon them, but these are scarcely worth a passing remark. One smiles at their prejudice, but we may yet have to weep over it, if it be allowed to stand in the way of usefulness.

No sort of defense is needed for preaching out of doors; but it would need very potent arguments to prove that a man had done his duty who has never preached beyond the walls of his meeting-house. A defense is required rather for services within buildings than for worship outside of them. Apologies are certainly wanted for architects who pile up brick and stone into the skies when there is so much need for preaching rooms among poor sinners down below. Defense is greatly needed for forests of stone pillars, which prevent the preacher's being seen and his voice from being heard; for high-pitched Gothic roofs in which all sound is lost, and men are killed by being compelled to shout until they burst their bloodvessels; and also for the willful creation of echoes by exposing hard, sound-refracting surfaces to satisfy the demands of art, to the total overlooking of the comfort of both audience and speaker.

Surely also some decent excuse is badly needed for those childish people who must needs waste money in placing hobgoblins and monsters on the outside of their preaching houses, and must have other ridiculous pieces of Popery stuck up both inside and outside, to deface rather than to adorn their churches and chapels.

But no defense whatever is wanted for using the heavenly Father's vast audience chamber, which is in every way so well fitted for the proclamation of a gospel so free, so full, so expansive, so sublime. The usual holding of religious assemblies under cover may be excused in England, because our climate is so execrably bad; but it were well to cease from such use when the weather is fine and fixed, and space and quiet can be obtained. We are not like the people of Palestine, who can foresee their weather, and are not every hour in danger of a shower. We can always have a deluge if we do not wish for it, but if we fix a service out of doors for next Sunday morning, we have no guarantee that we shall not all be drenched to the skin. It is true that some notable sermons have been preached in the rain, but as a general rule the ardor of our auditors is hardly so great as to endure much damping. Besides, the cold of our winters is too intense for services out of doors all the year round, though in Scotland I have heard of sermons amid the sleet, and John Nelson writes of speaking to "a crowd too large to get into the house, though it was dark and snowed."

Such things may be done now and then, but exceptions only prove the rule. It is fair also to admit that when people will come within walls, if the house be so commodious that a man could not readily make more people hear, and if it be always full, there can be no need to go out of doors to preach to fewer than there would be indoors; for, all things considered, a comfortable seat screened from the weather, and shut in from noise and intrusion, is helpful to a man's hearing the gospel with solemnity and quiet thought. A well ventilated, well managed building is an advantage if the crowds can be accommodated and can be induced to come; but these conditions are very rarely met, and therefore my voice is for the fields.

The great benefit of open-air preaching is that we get so many newcomers to hear the gospel who otherwise would never hear it. The gospel command is, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," but it is so little obeyed that one would imagine that it ran thus, "Go into your own place of worship and preach the gospel to the few creatures who will come inside."

"Go you into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in"—albeit it constitutes part of a parable, is worthy to be taken very literally, and in so doing its meaning will be best carried out. We ought actually to go into the streets and lanes and highways, for there are lurkers in the hedges, tramps on the highway, street-walkers, and lane-haunters, whom we shall never reach unless we pursue them into their own domains.

Sportsmen must not stop at home and wait for the birds to come and be shot at, neither must fishermen throw their nets inside their boats and hope to take many fish. Traders go to the markets, they follow their customers and go out after business if it will not come to them; and so must we. Some of our brethren are prozing on and on, to empty pews and musty hassocks, while they might be conferring lasting benefit upon hundreds by quitting the old walls for a while, and seeking living stones for Jesus. Let them come out of Rehoboth and find room at the street corner, let them leave Salem and seek the peace of neglected souls, let them dream no longer at Bethel, but make an open space to be none other than the house of God, let them come down from Mount Zion, and up from Aenon, and even away from Trinity, and St. Agnes, and St. Michael-and-All-Angels, and St. Margaret-Pattens, and St. Vedast, and St. Ethelburga, and all the rest of them, and try to find new saints among the sinners who are perishing for lack of knowledge.

I have known street preaching in London remarkably blessed to people whose character and condition would quite preclude their having been found in a place of worship. I know, for instance, a Jewish friend who, on coming from Poland, understood nothing whatever of the English language. In going about the streets on the Sunday he noticed the numerous groups listening to earnest speakers. He had never seen such a thing in his own country, where the Russian police would be alarmed if groups were seen in conversation, and he was therefore all the more interested. As he acquired a little English he became more and more constant in his attendance upon street speakers; indeed, it was very much with the view of learning the language that he listened at the first. I am afraid that the English which he acquired was not of the very best, which judgment I form as much from what I have heard of open-air oratory as from having listened to our Jewish friend himself, whose theology is better than his English. However, that "Israelite indeed" has always reason to commend the street preachers.

How many other strangers and foreigners may, by the same instrumentality, have become fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God we cannot tell.

Romanists also are met with in this manner more frequently than some would suppose. It is seldom prudent to publish cases of conversion among Papists, but my own observation leads me to believe that they are far more common than they were ten years ago, and the gracious work is frequently commenced by what is heard of the gospel at our street corners.

Infidels, also, are constantly yielding to the word of the Lord thus brought home to them.

The street evangelist, moreover, wins attention from those eccentric people whose religion can neither be described nor imagined. Such people hate the very sight of our churches and meeting houses, but will stand in a crowd to hear what is said, and are often most impressed when they affect the greatest contempt.

Besides, there are numbers of people in great cities who have not fit clothes to worship in, according to the current idea of what clothes ought to be; and not a few whose people as well as their garments are so filthy, so odorous, so unapproachable, that the

greatest philanthropist and the most leveling democrat might desire to have a little space between himself and their lively individualities. There are others who, whatever clothing they wear, would not go into a chapel upon any consideration, for they consider it to be a sort of punishment to attend divine service. Possibly they remember the dull Sundays of their childhood and the dreary sermons they have heard when for a few times they have entered a church, but it is certain that they look upon people who attend places of worship as getting off the punishment they ought to endure in the next world by suffering it in this world instead. The Sunday newspaper, the pipe, and the pot, have more charms for them than all the preachments of bishops and parsons, whether of church or dissent.

The open-air evangelist frequently picks up these members of the "No church" party, and in so doing he often finds some of the richest gems that will at last adorn the Redeemer's crown: jewels, which, by reason of their roughness, are apt to be unnoticed by a more fastidious class of soul-winners. Jonah in the streets of Nineveh was heard by multitudes who would never have known of his existence if he had hired a hall; John the Baptist by the Jordan awakened an interest which would never have been aroused had he kept to the synagogue; and those who went from city to city proclaiming everywhere the word of the Lord Jesus would never have turned the world upside down if they had felt it needful to confine themselves to iron rooms adorned with the orthodox announcement, "The gospel of the grace of God will (D.V.) be preached here next Lord's day evening."

I am quite sure, too, that if we could persuade our friends in the country to come out a good many times in the year and hold a service in a meadow, or in a shady grove, or on the hill side, or in a garden, or on a common, it would be all the better for the usual hearers. The mere novelty of the place would freshen their interest, and wake them up. The slight change of scene would have a wonderful effect upon the more somnolent. See how mechanically they move into their usual place of worship, and how mechanically they go out again. They fall into their seats as if at last they had found a resting place; they rise to sing with an amazing effort, and they drop down before you have time for a doxology at the close of the hymn because they did not notice it was coming.

What logs some regular hearers are! Many of them are asleep with their eyes open. After sitting a certain number of years in the same old spot, where the pews, pulpit, galleries, and all things else are always the same, except that they get a little dirtier and dingier every week, where everybody occupies the same position forever and for evermore, and the minister's face, voice, tone are much the same from January to December—you get to feel the holy quiet of the scene and listen to what is going on as though it were addressed to "the dull cold ear of death."

As a miller hears his wheels as though he did not hear them, or a stoker scarcely notices the clatter of his engine after enduring it for a little time; or as a dweller in London never notices the ceaseless grind of the traffic; so do many members of our congregations become insensible to the most earnest addresses, and accept them as a matter of course. The preaching and the rest of it get to be so usual that they might as well not be at all. Hence a change of place might be useful, it might prevent monotony, shake up indifference, suggest thought, and in a thousand ways promote attention, and give new hope of doing good. A great fire which should burn some of our chapels to the ground might not be the greatest calamity which has ever occurred, if it only aroused some of those rivals of the seven sleepers of Ephesus who will never be moved so long as the old house and the old pews hold together. Besides, the fresh air and plenty of it is a grand thing for every mortal man, woman, and child.

I preached in Scotland twice on a Sabbath day at Blairmore, on a little height by the side of the sea, and after discoursing with all my might to large congregations, to be counted by thousands, I did not feel one-half so much exhausted as I often am when addressing a few hundreds in some horrible black hole of Calcutta, called a chapel. I trace my freshness and freedom from lassitude at Blairmore to the fact that the windows could not be shut down by people afraid of draughts, and that the roof was as high as the heavens are above the earth. My conviction is that a man could preach three or four times on a Sabbath out of doors with less fatigue than would be occasioned by one discourse delivered in an impure atmosphere, heated and poisoned by human breath, and carefully preserved from every refreshing infusion of natural air.

Tents are bad—unutterably bad: far worse than the worst buildings. I think a tent is the most objectionable covering for a preaching place that was ever invented. I am glad to see tents used in London, for the very worst place is better than none, and because they can easily be moved from place to place, and are not very expensive; but still, if I had my choice between having nothing at all and having a tent, I would prefer the open air by far. Under canvas the voice is deadened and the labor of speaking greatly increased. The material acts as a wet blanket to the voice, kills its resonance, and prevents its traveling. With fearful exertion, in the sweltering air generated in a tent, you will be more likely to be killed than to be heard. You must have noticed even at our own College gatherings, when we number only some two hundred, how difficult it is to hear at the end of a tent, even when the sides are open, and the air is pure. Perhaps you may on that occasion attribute this fact in some degree to a lack of attentiveness and quietness on the part of that somewhat jubilant congregation, but still even when prayer is offered, and all is hushed, I have observed a great lack of traveling power in the best voice beneath a marquee.

If you are going to preach in the open air in the country, you will perhaps have your choice of a spot wherein to preach; if not, of

course you must have what you can get, and you must in faith accept it as the very best. Hobson's choice of that or none makes the matter simple, and saves a deal of debate. Do not be very squeamish. If there should happen to be an available meadow near by your chapel, select it because it will be very convenient to turn into the meeting-house should the weather prove unsuitable, or if you wish to hold a prayer-meeting or an after-meeting at the close of your address. It is well to preach before your regular services on a spot near your place of worship, so as to march the crowd right into the building before they know what they are about. Half-an-hour's out-of-door speaking and singing before your ordinary hour of assembly will often fill an empty house. At the same time, do not always adhere to near and handy spots, but choose a locality for the very opposite reason, because it is far away from any place of worship and altogether neglected. Hang up the lamps wherever there is a dark corner; the darker the more need of light. Paradise Row and Pleasant Place are generally the least paradisiacal and the most unpleasant: there let your steps be turned. Let the dwellers in the valley of the shadow of death perceive that light has sprung up for them.

I have somewhere met with the recommendation always to preach with a wall behind you, but against that I respectfully enter my caveat. Have a care of what may be on the other side of the wall! One evangelist received a can of scalding water from over a wall with the kindly remark, "There's soup for Protestants!" and another was favored with most unsavory bespatterings from a vessel emptied from above. Gideon Ouseley began to preach in Roscommon with his back against the gable of a tobacco factory in which there was a window with a wooden door, through which goods were hoisted into the loft. Would you be surprised to learn that the window suddenly opened, and that from it descended a pailful of tobacco water, an acrid fluid most painful to the eyes? The preacher in after years knew better than to put himself in such a tempting position. Let his experience instruct you.

If I had my choice of a pitch for preaching, I should prefer to front a rising ground, or an open spot bounded at some little distance by a wall. Of course there must be sufficient space to allow of the congregation assembling between the pulpit and the bounding object in front, but I like to see an end, and not to shout into boundless space. I do not know a prettier site for a sermon than that which I occupied in my friend Mr. Duncan's grounds at Benmore. It was a level sweep of lawn, backed by rising terraces covered with fir-trees. The people could either occupy the seats below, or drop down upon the grassy banks, as best comported with their comfort, and thus I had part of my congregation in rising galleries above me, and the rest in the area around me. My voice readily ascended, and I conceive that if the people had been seated up the hill for half-a-mile they would have been able to hear me with ease. I would suppose that Wesley's favorite spot at Gwennap Pit must be somewhat after the same order. Amphitheatres and hillsides are always favorite spots with preachers in the fields, and their advantages will be at once evident to you.

My friend Mr. Abraham once produced for me a grand cathedral in Oxfordshire. The remains of it are still called "Spurgeon's Tabernacle," and may be seen near Minster Lovell, in the form of a quadrilateral of oaks. Originally it was the beau ideal of a preaching place, for it was a cleared spot in the thick forest of Witchwood, and was reached by roads cut through the dense underwood. I shall never forget those "alleys green," and the verdant walls which shut them in. When you reached the inner temple it consisted of a large square, out of which the underwood and smaller trees had been cut away, while a sufficient number of young oaks had been left to rise to a considerable height, and then overshadow us with their branches. Here was a truly magnificent cathedral, with pillars and arches—a temple not made with hands, of which we might truly say, "Father, your hand has reared these venerable columns, you did weave this verdant roof."

I have never, either at home or on the Continent, seen architecture which could rival my cathedral. "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood." The blue sky was visible through our clerestory, and from the great window at the further end the sun smiled upon us toward evening. Oh, sirs, it was grand indeed, to worship thus beneath the vaulted firmament, beyond the sound of city hum, where all around ministered to quiet fellowship with God.

That spot is now cleared, and the place of our assembly has been selected at a little distance from it. It is of much the same character, only that my boundary walls of forest growth have disappeared to give place to an open expanse of ploughed fields. Only the pillars and the roof of my temple remain, but I am still glad, like the Druids, to worship among the oak trees. This year a dove had built her nest just above my head, and she continued flying to and fro to feed her young, while the sermon proceeded. Why not? Where should she be more at home than where the Lord of love and Prince of Peace was adored? It is true my arched cathedral is not waterproof, and other showers besides those of grace will descend upon the congregation, but this has its advantages, for it makes us the more grateful when the day is propitious, and the very precariousness of the weather excites a large amount of earnest prayer.

I once preached a sermon in the open air in haying time during a violent storm of rain. The text was, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth," and surely we had the blessing as well as the inconvenience. I was sufficiently wet, and my congregation must have been drenched, but they stood it out, and I never heard that anybody was the worse in health, though, I thank God, I have heard of souls brought to Jesus under that discourse. Once in a while, and under strong excitement, such things do no one any harm, but we are not to expect miracles, nor wantonly venture upon a course of procedure which might kill the sickly and lay the foundations of disease in the strong.

I remember well preaching between Cheddar Cliffs. What a noble position! What beauty and sublimity! But there was great danger from falling pieces of stone, moved by the people who sat upon the higher portions of the cliff, and hence I would not choose the spot again. We must studiously avoid positions where serious accident might be possible. An injured head qualifies no one for enjoying the beauties of nature, or the consolations of grace. Concluding a discourse in that place, I called upon those mighty rocks to bear witness that I had preached the gospel to the people, and to be a testimony against them at the last great day, if they rejected the message. Only the other day I heard of a person to whom that appeal was made useful by the Holy Spirit.

Look well to the ground you select, that it is not swampy. I never like to see a man slip up to his knees in mire while I am preaching. Rushy places are often so smooth and green that we select them without noting that they are apt to be muddy, and to give our hearers wet feet. Always inconvenience yourself rather than your audience: your Master would have done so. Even in the streets of London a concern for the convenience of your hearers is one of the things which conciliates a crowd more than anything.

Avoid as your worst enemy the neighborhood of the Normandy poplar. These trees cause a perpetual hissing and rustling sound, almost like the noise of the sea. Every leaf of certain kinds of poplar is in perpetual motion, like the tongue of Talkative. The noise may not seem very loud, but it will drown the best of voices. "The sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" is all very well, but keep clear of the noise of poplars and some other trees, or you will suffer for it. I have had painful experience of this misery. The old serpent himself seemed to hiss at me out of those unquiet boughs.

Practiced preachers do not care to have the sun directly in their faces if they can help it, neither do they wish their hearers to be distressed in like manner, and therefore they take this item into consideration when arranging for a service. In London we do not see that luminary often enough to be much concerned upon this point.

Do not try to preach against the wind, for it is an idle attempt. You may hurl your voice a short distance by an amazing effort, but you cannot be well heard even by the few. I do not often advise you to consider which way the wind blows, but on this occasion I urge you to do it, or you will labor in vain. Preach so that the wind carries your voice towards the people, and does not blow it down your throat, or you will have to eat your own words. There is no telling how far a man may be heard with the wind. In certain atmospheres and climates, as for instance in that of Palestine, people might be heard for several miles; and single sentences of well-known speech may in England be recognized a long way off, but I should gravely doubt a man if he asserted that he understood a new sentence beyond the distance of a mile. Whitefield is reported to have been heard a mile, and I have been myself assured that I was heard for that distance, but I am somewhat skeptical. Half-a-mile is surely enough, even with the wind, but you must make sure of that to be heard at all.

In the country it ought to be easy to find a fit place for preaching. One of the earliest things that a minister should do when he leaves College and settles in a country town or village is to begin open-air speaking. He will generally have no difficulty as to the position; the land is before him and he may choose according to his own sweet will. The market-cross will be a good beginning, then the head of a court crowded with the poor, and next the favorite corner of the idlers of the parish. Cheap-Jack's stand will make a capital pulpit on Sunday night during the village fair, and a wagon will serve well on the green, or in a field at a little distance, during the week-day evenings of the rustic festival. A capital place for an open air discourse is the green where the old elm trees, felled long ago, are still lying in reserve as if they were meant to be seats for your congregation; so also is the burial ground of the meeting-house where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." Consecrate it to the living and let the people enjoy "Meditations among the Tombs." Make no excuses, then, but get to work at once.

In London, or any other large town, it is a great thing to find a vacant spot where you can obtain a right to hold services at your pleasure. If you can discover a piece of ground which is not yet built over, and if you can obtain the use of it from the owner until he covers it, it will be a great acquisition, and worth a slight expense in fencing; for you are then king of the castle and disturbers will be trespassers. I suppose that such a spot is not often obtainable, especially by people who have no money; but it is worth thinking about. It is a great gain when your place of worship has even a small outside space, like that at Surrey Chapel, or upon the Tabernacle steps; for here you are beyond the interference of the police or drunken men. If we have none of these, we must find street corners, triangles, quiet nooks, and wide spaces wherein to proclaim the gospel.

Years ago I preached to enormous assemblies in King Edward's Road, Hackney, which was then open fields, but now not a spare yard remains. On those occasions the rush was perilous to life and limb, and there seemed no limit to the throngs. Half the number would have been safer. That open space has vanished, and it is the same with fields at Brixton, where in years gone by it was delightful to see the assembled crowds listening to the word. Burdened with the rare trouble of drawing too many together, I have been compelled to abstain from these exercises in London, but not from any lessened sense of their importance. With the Tabernacle always full I have as large a congregation as I desire at home, and therefore do not preach outside except in the country; but for those ministers whose area under cover is but small, and whose congregations are thin, the open air is the remedy whether in London or in the provinces.

In raising a new interest, and in mission operations, out of door services are a main agency. Get the people to listen outside that they may by-and-by worship inside. You need no pulpit, a chair will do, or the curb of the road. The less formality the better, and if you begin by merely talking to the two or three around you and make no pretense of sermonizing you will do well. More good may be done by personal talk to one than by a rhetorical address to fifty. Do not purposely interfere with the thoroughfare, but if the crowd should accumulate do not hasten away in sheer fright: the policeman will let you know soon enough.

You are most wanted, however, where you will be in no danger of impeding passers-by, but far more likely to be in danger yourself—I refer to those central courts and blind alleys in our great cities which lie out of the route of decency, and are known to nobody but the police, and to them principally through bruises and wounds. Talk of discovering the interior of Africa—we need explorers for Fryngpan Alley and Emerald-Island Court: the Arctic regions are well near as accessible as Dobinson's Rents and Jack Ketch's Warren.

Heroes of the cross—here is a glorious field for you. "Who will bring me into the strong city?" Who will enable us to win these slums and dens for Jesus? Who can do it but the Lord? Soldiers of Christ who venture into these regions must expect a revival of the practices of the good old times, so far as brickbats are concerned, and I have known a flower-pot fall accidentally from an upper window in a remarkably slanting direction. Still, if we are born to be drowned we shall not be killed by flower-pots.

Under such treatment it may be refreshing to read what Christopher Hopper wrote under similar conditions more than a hundred years ago. "I did not much regard a little dirt, a few rotten eggs, the sound of a cow's horn, the noise of bells, or a few snowballs in their season; but sometimes I was saluted with blows, stones, brickbats, and bludgeons. These I did not well like: they were not pleasing to flesh and blood. I sometimes lost a little skin, and once a little blood, which was drawn from my forehead with a sharp stone. I wore a patch for a few days, and was not ashamed; I gloried in the cross. And when my small sufferings abounded for the sake of Christ, my comfort abounded much more. I never was more happy in my own soul, or blessed in my labors."

I am somewhat pleased when I occasionally hear of a brother's being locked up by the police, for it does him good, and it does the people good also. It is a fine sight to see the minister of the gospel marched off by the servant of the law! It excites sympathy for him, and the next step is sympathy for his message. Many who felt no interest in him before are eager to hear him when he is ordered to leave off, and still more so when he is taken to the station. The vilest of mankind respect a man who gets into trouble in order to do them good, and if they see unfair opposition excited they grow quite zealous in the man's defense.

I am persuaded that the more of open-air preaching there is in London the better. If it should become a nuisance to some, it will be a blessing to others, if properly conducted. If it be the gospel which is spoken, and if the spirit of the preacher be one of love and truth, the results cannot be doubted. The bread cast upon the waters must be found again after many days. The gospel must, however, be preached in a manner worth the hearing, for mere noise-making is an evil rather than a benefit.

I know a family almost driven out of their senses by the hideous shouting of monotonous exhortations, and the howling of "Safe in the arms of Jesus" near their door every Sabbath afternoon by the year together. They are zealous Christians, and would willingly help their tormentors if they saw the slightest probability of usefulness from the violent bawling: but as they seldom see a hearer, and do not think that what is spoken would do any good if it were heard, they complain that they are compelled to lose their few hours of quiet because two good men think it their duty to perform a noisy but perfectly useless service.

I once saw a man preaching with no hearer but a dog, which sat upon its tail and looked up very reverently while its master orated. There were no people at the windows nor passing by, but the brother and his dog were at their post whether the people would hear or whether they would forbear.

Once also I passed an earnest declaimer, whose hat was on the ground before him, filled with papers, and there was not even a dog for an audience, nor anyone within hearing—yet did he "waste his sweetness on the desert air." I hope it relieved his own mind. Really it must be viewed as an essential part of a sermon that somebody should hear it: it cannot be a great benefit to the world to have sermons preached in vacuo.

As to style in preaching out of doors, it should certainly be very different from much of that which prevails within, and perhaps if a speaker were to acquire a style fully adapted to a street audience, he would be wise to bring it indoors with him. A great deal of sermonizing may be defined as saying nothing at extreme length; but out of doors verbosity is not admired, you must say something and have done with it and go on to say something more, or your hearers will let you know. "Now then," cries a street critic, "let us have it, old fellow." Or else the observation is made, "Now then, pitch it out! You'd better go home and learn your lesson." "Cut it short, old boy," is a very common admonition, and I wish the presenters of this gratis advice could let it be heard inside Ebenezer and Zoar and some other places sacred to long-winded orations. Where these outspoken criticisms are not employed, the hearers rebuke prosiness by quietly walking away. Very unpleasant this, to find your congregation dispersing, but a very plain intimation that your ideas are also much dispersed.

In the street, a man must keep himself alive, and use many illustrations and anecdotes, and sprinkle a quaint remark here and there.

To dwell long on a point will never do. Reasoning must be brief, clear, and soon done with. The discourse must not be labored or involved, neither must the second head depend upon the first, for the audience is a changing one, and each point must be complete in itself. The chain of thought must be taken to pieces, and each link melted down and turned into bullets. Come to the point at once, and come there with all your might.

Short sentences of words and short passages of thought are needed for out of doors. Long paragraphs and long arguments had better be reserved for other occasions. In quiet country crowds there is much force in an eloquent silence, now and then interjected; it gives people time to breathe, and also to reflect. Do not, however, attempt this in a London street; you must go ahead, or someone else may run off with your congregation. In a regular field sermon pauses are very effective, and are useful in several ways, both to speaker and listeners, but to a passing company who are not inclined for anything like worship, quick, short, sharp address is most adapted.

In the streets a man must from beginning to end be intense, and for that very reason he must be condensed and concentrated in his thought and utterance. It would never do to begin by saying, "My text, dear friends, is a passage from the inspired word, containing doctrines of the utmost importance, and bringing before us in the clearest manner the most valuable practical instruction. I invite your careful attention and the exercise of your most candid judgment while we consider it under various aspects and place it in different lights, in order that we may be able to perceive its position in the analogy of the faith. In its exegesis we shall find an arena for the cultured intellect, and the refined sensibilities. As the purling brook meanders among the meadows and fertilizes the pastures, so a stream of sacred truth flows through the remarkable words which now lie before us. It will be well for us to divert the crystal current to the reservoir of our meditation, that we may quaff the cup of wisdom with the lips of satisfaction."

There, gentleman, is not that rather above the average of word-spinning, and is not the art very generally in vogue in these days? If you go out to the obelisk in Blackfriars Road, and talk in that fashion, you will be saluted with "Go home, old buffer," or "Aren't he fine? My eye!" A very vulgar youth will cry, "What a mouth for a tater!" and another will shout in a tone of mock solemnity, "Amen!"

If you give them chaff they will cheerfully return it into your own bosom. Good measure, pressed down and running over will they mete out to you. Shams and shows will have no mercy from a street gathering. But have something to say, look them in the face, say what you mean, put it plainly, boldly, earnestly, courteously, and they will hear you. Never speak against time or for the sake of hearing your own voice, or you will obtain some information about your personal appearance or manner of oratory which will probably be more true than pleasing.

"Crikey," says one, "wouldn't he do for an undertaker! He'd make 'em weep." This was a compliment paid to a melancholy brother whose tone is peculiarly funereal.

"There, old fellow," said a critic on another occasion, "you go and wet your whistle. You must feel awfully dry after jawing away at that rate about nothing at all." This also was specially appropriate to a very heavy brother of whom we had aforetime remarked that he would make a good martyr, for there was no doubt of his burning well, he was so dry.

It is sad, very sad, that such rude remarks should be made, but there is a wicked vein in some of us, which makes us take note that the vulgar observations are often very true, and "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature." As caricature often gives you a more vivid idea of a man than a photograph would afford you, so do these rough mob critics hit off an orator to the life by their exaggerated censures. The very best speaker must be prepared to take his share of street wit, and to return it if need be; but primness, demureness, formality, sanctimonious long-windedness, and the affectation of superiority, actually invite offensive pleasantries, and to a considerable extent deserve them.

A very great man in his own esteem will provoke immediate opposition, and the affectation of supernatural saintliness will have the same effect. The less you are like a parson the more likely you are to be heard; and, if you are known to be a minister, the more you show yourself to be a man the better. "What do you get for that, governor?" is sure to be asked, if you appear to be a cleric, and it will be well to tell them at once that this is extra, that you are doing overtime, and that there is to be no collection. "You'd do more good if you gave us some bread or a drop of beer, instead of them tracts," is constantly remarked, but a manly manner, and the outspoken declaration that you seek no wages but their good, will silence that stale objection.

The manner of the street preacher should be of the very best. It should be purely natural and unconstrained. No speaker should stand up in the street in a grotesque manner, or he will weaken himself and invite attack. The street preacher should not imitate his own minister, or the crowd will spy out the imitation very speedily, if the brother is anywhere near home. Neither should he strike an attitude as little boys do who say, "My name is Norval." The stiff straight posture with the regular up and down motion of arm and hand is too commonly adopted: and I would even more condemn the wild-raving-maniac manner which some are so fond of, which seems to be a cross between Whitefield with both his arms in the air, and Saint George with both his feet violently engaged in

trampling on the dragon. Some good men are grotesque by nature, and others take great pains to make themselves so. The wicked Londoners say, "What a cure!" I only wish I knew of a cure for the evil.

All mannerisms should be avoided. Just now I observe that nothing can be done without a very large Bagster's Bible with a limp cover. There seems to be some special charm about the large size, though it almost needs a little perambulator in which to push it about. Take off your hat, put your Bible in it, and place it on the ground. Let the kind friend who approaches you on the right hold your umbrella. See how eager the dear man is to do so! Is it not pleasing? He assures you he is never so happy as when he is helping good men to do good. Now close your eyes in prayer. When your devotions are over, somebody will have profited by the occasion. Where is your affectionate friend who held your umbrella and your hymn-book? Where is that well-brushed hat, and that orthodox Bagster? Where? oh, where? Echo answers, "Where?"

The catastrophe which I have thus described suggests that a brother had better accompany you in your earlier ministries, that one may watch while the other prays. If a number of friends will go with you and make a ring around you it will be a great acquisition, and if these can sing it will be still further helpful. The friendly company will attract others, will help to secure order, and will do good service by sounding forth sermons in song.

It will be very desirable to speak so as to be heard, but there is no use in incessant bawling. The best street preaching is not that which is done at the top of your voice, for it must be impossible to lay the proper emphasis upon telling passages when all along you are shouting with all your might. When there are no hearers near you, and yet people stand upon the other side of the road and listen, would it not be as well to cross over and so save a little of the strength which is now wasted? A quiet, penetrating, conversational style would seem to be the most telling. Men do not bawl and halloa when they are pleading in deepest earnestness; they have generally at such times less wind and a little more rain: less rant and a few more tears. On, on, on with one monotonous shout and you will weary everybody and wear out yourself. Be wise now, therefore, O you who would succeed in declaring your Master's message among the multitude, and use your voices as common sense would dictate.

In a tract published by that excellent society "The Open Air Mission," I notice the following:

QUALIFICATIONS FOR OPEN-AIR PREACHERS

1. A good voice.
2. Naturalness of manner.
3. Self-possession.
4. A good knowledge of Scripture and of common things.
5. Ability to adapt himself to any congregation.
6. Good illustrative powers.
7. Zeal, prudence, and common sense.
8. A large, loving heart.
9. Sincere belief in all he says.
10. Entire dependence on the Holy Spirit for success.
11. A close walk with God by prayer.
12. A consistent walk before men by a holy life.

If any man has all these qualifications, the Queen had better make a bishop of him at once—yet there is no one of these qualities which could well be dispensed with.

Interruptions are pretty sure to occur in the streets of London. At certain places all will go well for months, but in other positions the fight begins as soon as the speaker opens his mouth. There are seasons of opposition: different schools of adversaries rise and fall, and accordingly there is disorder or quiet. The best tact will not always avail to prevent disturbance; when men are drunk there is no reasoning with them, and of furious Irish Papists we may say much the same. Little is to be done with such unless the crowd around will co-operate, as oftentimes they will, in removing the obstructor. Certain characters, if they find that preaching is going on, will interrupt by hook or by crook. They go on purpose, and if answered once and again they still persevere.

One constant rule is to be always courteous and good tempered, for if you become cross or angry it is all over with you. Another rule is to keep to your subject, and never be drawn into side issues. Preach Christ or nothing—don't dispute or discuss except with your

eye on the cross. If driven off for a moment always be on the watch to get back to your sole topic. Tell them the old, old story, and if they will not hear that, move on. Yet be adroit, and take them with deceit. Seek the one object by many roads.

A little mother-wit is often the best resource and will work wonders with a crowd. Bonhomie is the next best thing to grace on such occasions. A brother of my acquaintance silenced a violent Romanist by offering him his stand and requesting him to preach. The man's comrades for the very fun of the thing urged him on, but, as he declined, the dog in the manger fable was narrated and the disturber disappeared.

If it be a real skeptic who is assailing you it is prudence to shun debate as much as possible, or ask him questions in return, for your business is not to argue but to proclaim the gospel. Mr. John McGregor says "Skeptics are of many kinds, Some of them ask questions to get answers, and others put difficulties to puzzle the people. An honest skeptic said to me in a crowd in Hyde-park, 'I have been trying to believe for these ten years, but there is a contradiction I cannot get over, and it is this: we are told that printing was invented not five hundred years ago, and yet that the Bible is five thousand years old, and I cannot for the life of me see how this can be.' Nay! the crowd did not laugh at this man. Very few people in a crowd know much more than he did about the Bible. But how deeply they drank in a half-hour's account of the Scripture manuscripts, their preservation, their translations and versions, their dispersion and collection, their collation and transmission, and the overwhelming evidence of their genuine truth!"

I remember an infidel on Kennington Common being most effectually stopped. He continued to cry up the beauties of nature and the works of nature until the preacher asked him if he would kindly tell them what nature was. He replied that "everybody knew what nature was." The preacher retorted, "Well, then, it will be all the easier for you to tell us." "Why, nature—nature," he said, "nature—nature is nature." Of course, the crowd laughed and the wise man subsided.

Ignorance when it is allied with a coarse voluble tongue is to be met by letting it have rope enough. One fellow wanted to know "how Jacob knew that Esau hated him." He had hold of the wrong end of the stick that time, and the preacher did not enlighten him, or he would have set him up with ammunition for future encounters.

Our business is not to supply men with arguments by informing them of difficulties. In the process of answering them ministers have published the sentiments of infidels more widely than the infidels themselves could have done. Unbelievers only "sharpen their blunted shafts, and shoot them at the shield of truth again." Our object is not to conquer them in logical encounters, but to save their souls. Real difficulties we should endeavor to meet, and hence a competent knowledge of the evidences is most desirable; but honest objectors are best conversed with alone, when they are not ashamed to own themselves in the wrong, and this we could not expect of them in the crowd.

Christ is to be preached whether men will believe in Him or not. Our own experience of His power to save will be our best reasoning, and earnestness our best rhetoric. The occasion will frequently suggest the fittest thing to say, and we may also fall back on the Holy Spirit who will teach us in the self-same hour what we shall speak.

The open-air speaker's calling is as honorable as it is arduous, as useful as it is laborious. God alone can sustain you in it, but with Him at your side you will have nothing to fear. If ten thousand rebels were before you and a legion of devils in every one of them, you need not tremble. More is He who is for you than all they that be against you.

"By all hell's host withstood,
We all hell's host o'erthrow;
And conquering them through Jesus' blood,
We still to conquer go."

Lecture 19. Posture, Action, Gesture, etc.

The subjects of this lecture are to be "Posture, Gesture, and Action in the Delivery of a Sermon." I shall not attempt to draw any hard and fast line of division between the one and the other; for it would need a very highly discriminating mind to keep them separate; indeed, it could not be done at all, for they naturally merge into each other. As I have, after a fair trial, found it impossible to keep even "posture" and "gesture" in an absolutely unmingled state in my own mind, I have allowed them to run together; but I hope that no confusion will appear in the result.

The sermon itself is the main thing: its matter, its aim, and the spirit in which it is brought before the people, the sacred anointing upon the preacher, and the divine power applying the truth to the hearer—these are infinitely more important than any details of manner. Posture and action are comparatively small and inconsiderable matters; but still even the sandal in the statue of Minerva should be correctly carved, and in the service of God even the smallest things should be regarded with holy care. Life is made, up of

little incidents, and success in it often depends upon attention to minor details. Small flies make the apothecary's ointment to stink, and little foxes spoil the vines, and therefore small flies and little foxes should be kept out of our ministry.

Doubtless, faults in even so secondary a matter as posture have prejudiced men's minds, and so injured the success of what would otherwise have been most acceptable ministries. A man of more than average abilities may, by ridiculous action, be thrown into the rear rank and kept there. This is a great pity, even if there were only one such case, but it is to be feared that many are injured by the same cause. Little oddities and absurdities of mode and gesture which wise men would endeavor not to notice are not overlooked by the general public; in fact, the majority of hearers fix their eyes mainly upon those very things, while those who come to scoff observe nothing else. People are either disgusted or diverted by the oddities of certain preachers, or else they want an excuse for inattention, and jump at this convenient one: there can be no reason why we should help men to resist our own endeavors for their good. No minister would willingly cultivate a habit which would blunt his arrows, or drift them aside from the mark; and, therefore, since these minor matters of movement, posture, and gesture may have that effect, you will give them your immediate attention.

We very readily admit that action in preaching is an affair of minor consequence; for some who have succeeded in the highest sense have been exceedingly faulty from the rhetorician's point of view. At the present moment there is in Boston, a preacher of the very highest order of power, of whom a friendly critic writes: "In the opening sentences one or the other of his arms shakes at his side in a helpless fashion, as if it were made of caudal vertebrae loosely jointed. He soon exhibits a most engaging awkwardness, waddling about in a way to suggest that each leg is shorter than the other, and shaking his head and shoulder in ungainly emphasis. He raises one eyebrow in a quite impossible fashion. No one else can squint so." This is an instance of mind overcoming matter, and the excellence of the teaching condoning defects in utterance; but it would be better if no such drawbacks existed. Are not apples of gold all the more attractive for being placed in baskets of silver? Why should powerful teaching be associated with waddling and squinting? Still it is evident that proper action is, to say the least, not essential to success. Homer would appear to have considered the entire absence of gesture to be no detriment to eminent power in speech, for he pictures one of his greatest heroes as entirely abjuring it, though not without some sense of censure from his audience.

Nor need we go back to the ancients for proof that an exceedingly quiet action may be connected with the highest power of eloquence, for several instances occur to us among the moderns. One may suffice: our own supremely gifted Robert Hall had no oratorical action, and scarcely any motion in the pulpit, except an occasional lifting or waving of the right hand, and in his most impassioned moments an alternate retreat and advance.

It is not so much incumbent upon you to acquire right pulpit action as it is to get rid of that which is wrong. If you could be reduced to motionless dummies, it would be better than being active and even vigorous incarnations of the grotesque, as some of our brethren have been. Some men by degrees fall into a suicidal style of preaching, and it is a very rare thing indeed to see a man escape when once he has entangled himself in the meshes of an evil mannerism. No one likes to tell them of their odd antics, and so they are unaware of them; but it is surprising that their wives do not mimic them in private and laugh them out of their awkwardness.

I have heard of a brother who in his earlier days was most acceptable, but who afterwards dropped far behind in the race because he by degrees fell into bad habits: he spoke with a discordant whine, assumed most singular attitudes, and used such extraordinary mouthings that people could not hear him with pleasure. He developed into a man to be esteemed and honored, but not to be listened to. Excellent Christian men have said that they did not know whether to laugh or to cry when they were hearing him preach: they felt as if they must laugh at the bidding of nature, and then they felt that they ought to cry from the impulse of grace when they saw so good a preacher utterly ruined by absurd affectations.

If you do not care to cultivate proper action, at least be wise enough to steer clear of that which is grotesque or affected. There is a wide range between the fop, curling and perfuming his locks, and permitting one's hair to hang in matted masses like the mane of a wild beast. We should never advise you to practice postures before a looking-glass, nor to imitate great divines, nor to ape the fine gentleman; but there is no need, on the other hand, to be vulgar or absurd. Postures and attitudes are merely a small part of the dress of a discourse, and it is not in dress that the substance of the matter lies: a man in fustian is "a man for all that," and so a sermon which is oddly delivered may be a good sermon for all that; but still, as none of you would care to wear a pauper's suit if you could procure better clothing, so you should not be so slovenly as to clothe truth like a mendicant when you might array her as a prince's daughter.

Some men are naturally very awkward in their people and movements. I suppose we must blame what the countryman called their "broughtens up." The rustic's gait is heavy, and his walk is slouching. You can see that his natural habitat is a ploughed field. On the pavement or the carpet he is suspicious of his footing, but down a muddy lane, with a mule's burden of earth on each boot, he progresses with ease, if not with elegance. There is a lumpishness and lubberliness innate in the elements of some men's constitutions. You could not make them elegant if you brayed them in a mortar among wheat with a pestle. The drill-sergeant is of the utmost use in our schools, and those parents who think that drill exercise is a waste of time are very much mistaken. There is a

shape and handiness, a general propriety of form, which the human body acquires under proper drill which seldom comes in any other manner. Drill brings a man's shoulders down, keeps his arms from excessive swinging, expands the chest, shows him what to do with his hands, and, in a word, teaches a man how to walk uprightly, and to bring himself into something like ship-shape, without any conscious effort to do so, which effort would be a sure betrayal of his awkwardness. Very spiritual people will think me trifling, but indeed I am not. I hope the day will come when it will be looked upon as an essential part of education to teach a young man how to carry himself, and move without clumsiness.

It may happen that awkward gestures arise from feeble utterance, and a nervous consciousness of lack of power in that direction. Certain splendid men of our acquaintance are so modest as to be diffident, and hence they become hesitating in speech, and disarranged in manner. Perhaps no more notable instance of this can be mentioned than the late beloved Dr. James Hamilton. He was the most beautiful and chaste of speakers, with an action painful to the last degree. His biographer says: "In mental resources and acquirements he was possessed of great wealth; but in the capacity to utter his thoughts, with all the variation of tone and key which their nature required—yet so as to be thoroughly heard in a great edifice, he was far less gifted. In this department, accordingly, he was always pained by a conscious shortcoming from his own ideal. It is certain that lack of vocal force, and ready control over his intonations, largely detracted from the power and popularity of his preaching. In delicacy of conception, in the happy choice of idioms, in the command of striking and original imagery, and in the glow of evangelical fervor that pervaded all, he had few equals. These rare qualities, however, were shorn of half their strength, in as far as his public preaching was concerned, by the necessity under which he constantly lay of straining to make himself audible, by standing on his tip-toes, and throwing out his words in handfuls, if so be they might reach the far-distant aisles. If the muscles of his chest had been such as to enable him to stand solidly at ease, while his lips performed the task of articulation without the aid of auxiliary blasts from over-inflated lungs, James Hamilton would certainly have been followed by greater crowds, and obtained access for his message to a wider and more varied circle. But we do not know what counter-balancing evil might have come in along with such external success. Although with all his prayers and pains this thorn was still left in the flesh, the grand compensation remained: 'My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is perfect in your weakness.' What talents the Lord saw fit to bestow, he laid out with marvelous skill and diligence in the giver's service, and if some of the talents were withheld, the Withholder knows why. He has done all things well."

In this sentiment we heartily concur, but we should be sorry for any young man to submit at discretion to a similar defect, and ascribe it to the hand of the Lord. Dr. Hamilton did not so. He earnestly endeavored to overcome his natural disadvantage, and to our knowledge took lessons from more than one professor of elocution. He did not take refuge in the sluggard's plea, but labored hard to master the difficulty, and only failed because it was a physical defect beyond all remedy.

Let us wherever we see awkwardness, which is evidently unavoidable, take little or no notice of it, and take care to commend the brother that he does so well under the circumstances; counting it no small achievement for a divine to cover by richness of thought and fitness of language the ungainliness of his outer man, thus making the soul triumph over the body. Yet should we ourselves be afflicted with any fault of manner, let us resolve to overcome it, for it is not an impossible task.

Edward Irving was a striking instance of a man's power to improve himself in this respect. At first his manner was awkward, constrained, and unnatural; but by diligent culture his attitude and action were made to be striking aids to his eloquence.

Pulpits have much to answer for in having made men awkward. What horrible inventions they are! If we could once abolish them we might say concerning them as Joshua did concerning Jericho, "Cursed be he who builds this Jericho," for the old-fashioned pulpit has been a greater curse to the churches than is at first sight evident. No barrister would ever enter a pulpit to plead a case at the bar. How could he hope to succeed while buried alive almost up to his shoulders? The client would be ruined if the advocate were thus imprisoned.

How manly, how commanding is the attitude in which Chrysostom is usually represented! Forgetting his robes for the moment one cannot but feel that such a natural posture is far more worthy of sublime truth than that of a person crouching over a sheet of paper, looking up very occasionally, and then revealing no more than his head and shoulders.

Augustine properly says, "Freedom is also necessary to gracefulness of action. No gestures can be graceful which are either confined by external circumstances, or restrained by the mind. If a man were obliged to address an assembly from a narrow window, through which he could not extend his arms and his head, it would be in vain for him to attempt graceful gesture. Confinement in every lesser degree must be proportionally injurious to grace; thus the crowded bar is injurious to the action of the advocate, and the enclosed and bolstered pulpit, which often cuts off more than half of his figure, is equally injurious to the graceful action of the preacher."

The late Thomas Binney was unable to endure a platform, and was known to fetch gowns and other materials to hang over the rails of an open rostrum, if he found himself placed in one: this must have arisen solely from the force of habit, for there can be no real advantage in being enclosed in a wooden pen. This feeling will no doubt retain the close pulpit in its place for awhile longer, but in ages to come men will find an argument for the divinity of our holy faith in the fact that it survived pulpits.

Ministers cannot be blamed for ungainly postures and attitudes when only a very small part of their bodies can be seen during a discourse. If it was the custom to preach as Paul did at Athens public speakers would become models of propriety. By the way, it is interesting to note that Raphael in his representation of Paul at Athens evidently had in his mind the apostle's utterance, "God dwells not in temples made with hands, neither is worshiped with man's hands": hence he delineates him as lifting his hands. I am indebted for this hint to G. W. Hervey, M.A., who has written a very able and comprehensive "System of Rhetoric."

Remarkable are the forms which pulpits have assumed according to the freaks of human fancy and folly. Twenty years ago they had probably reached their very worst. What could have been their design and intent it would be hard to conjecture. A deep wooden pulpit of the old sort might well remind a minister of his mortality, for it is nothing but a coffin set on end: but on what rational ground do we bury our pastors alive? Many of these erections resemble barrels, others are of the fashion of egg cups and wine glasses; a third class were evidently modeled after corn bins upon four legs; and yet a fourth variety can only be likened to swallows' nests stuck upon the wall. Some of them are so high as to turn the heads of the occupants when they dare to peer into the awful depths below them, and they give those who look up to the elevated preacher for any length of time a crick in the neck. I have felt like a man at the mast-head while perched aloft in these "towers of the flock." These abominations are in themselves evils, and create evils.

While I am upon pulpits I will make a digression, and remark for the benefit of deacons and churchwardens that I frequently notice in pulpits a most abominable savor of gas, which evidently arises from leakage in the gas-pipes, and is very apt to make a preacher feel half intoxicated, or to sicken him. We ought to be spared this infliction. Frequently, also, a large lamp is placed close to each side of the minister's head, thus cramping all his movements and placing him between two fires. If any complaints are made of the hot-headedness of our ministers, it is readily to be accounted for, since the apparatus for the purpose is arranged with great care.

Only the other night I had the privilege, when I sat down in the pulpit, to feel as if someone had smitten me on the top of my head, and as I looked up there was an enormous Argand burner with a reflector placed immediately above me, in order to throw a light on my Bible: a very considerate contrivance no doubt, only the inventor had forgotten that his burners were pouring down a terrible heat upon a sensitive brain.

One has no desire to experience an artificial coup de soleil while preaching; if we must suffer from such a calamity let it come upon us during our holidays, and let it befall us from the sun himself. No one in erecting a pulpit seems to think of the preacher as a man of like feelings and senses with other people; the seat upon which you are to rest at intervals is often a mere ledge, and the door handle runs into the small of your back, while when you stand up and would come to the front there is often a intricate gutta-percha bag interposed between you and your pulpit. This gummy depositary is charitably intended for the assistance of certain deaf people, who are I hope benefitted; they ought to be, for every evil should have a compensating influence. You cannot bend forward without forcing this contrivance to close up, and I for my own part usually deposit my pocket-handkerchief in it, Which causes the deaf people to take the ends of the tubes out of their ears and to discover that they hear me well enough without them.

No one knows the discomfort of pulpits except the man who has been in very many, and found each one worse than the last. They are generally so deep that a short person like myself can scarcely see over the top of them, and when I ask for something to stand upon they bring me a hassock. Think of a minister of the gospel poising himself upon a hassock while he is preaching—a Boanerges and a Blondin in one person. It is too much to expect us to keep the balance of our minds and the equilibrium of our bodies at the same time. The tipplings up, and overturnings of stools and hassocks which I have had to suffer while preaching rush on my memory now, and revive the most painful sensations.

Surely we ought to be saved such petty annoyances, for their evil is by no means limited by our discomfort; if it were so, it would be of no consequence; but, alas! these little things often throw the mind out of gear, disconnect our thoughts, and trouble our spirit. We ought to rise superior to such trifles, but though the spirit truly is willing the flesh is weak. It is marvelous how the mind is affected by the most trifling matters: there can be no need to perpetuate needless causes of discomfort.

Sydney Smith's story shows that we have not been alone in our tribulation. "I can't bear," said he, "to be imprisoned in the true orthodox way in my pulpit, with my head just peeping above the desk. I like to look down upon my congregation—to fire into them. The common people say I am a bold preacher, for I like to have my arms free, and to thump the pulpit. A singular contretemps happened to me once, when, to effect this, I had ordered the clerk to pile up some hassocks for me to stand on. My text was, 'We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.' I had scarcely uttered these words, and was preparing to illustrate them, when I did so practically, and in a way I had not at all anticipated. My fabric of hassocks suddenly gave way; down I fell, and with difficulty prevented myself from being precipitated into the arms of my congregation, who, I must say, behaved very well, and recovered their gravity sooner than I could have expected."

But I must return to my subject, and I do so by repeating the belief that boxed-up pulpits are largely accountable for the ungainly postures which some of our preachers assume when they are out of their cages and are loose upon a platform. They do not know

what to do with their legs and arms, and feel awkward and exposed, and hence drop into ridiculous attitudes. When a man has been accustomed to regard himself as an "animated bust" he feels as if he had become too long when he is made to appear at full length.

There can be no doubt that many men are made awkward through fear. It is not the man's nature, nor his pulpit, but his nervousness which makes a guy of him. To some it is a display of great courage even to stand before an audience, and to speak is an ordeal indeed: no wonder that their attitude is constrained, for they are twitching and trembling all over. Every nerve is in a state of excitement, and their whole body is tremulous with fear.

Especially are they perplexed what to do with their hands, and they move them about in a restless, irregular, meaningless manner; if they could have them strapped down to their sides they might rejoice in the deliverance. One of the clergy of the Church of England, in pleading for the use of the manuscript, makes use of the remarkable argument that a nervous man by having to turn over the leaves of his discourse thus keeps his hands occupied; whereas, if he had no paper before him, he would not know what to do with them. It is an ill wind that blows no one any good, and it must be a very bad practice indeed which has not some remote and occasional advantages.

For nervousness, however, there must be a more effectual treatment; the preacher should try to conquer the evil rather than look for a mode of concealing its outward manifestations. Practice is a great remedy, and faith in God is a still more potent cure. When the minister becomes accustomed to the people he stands at ease because he is at ease, he feels at home, and as to his hands or legs, or any other part of his person, he has no thought: he goes to work with all his heart, and drops into the positions most natural to an earnest man, and these are the most appropriate. Unstudied gestures, to which you never turned your thoughts for a moment, are the very best, and the highest result of art is to banish art, and leave the man as free to be graceful as the gazelle among the mountains.

Occasional oddities of posture and gesture may arise from the difficulty of finding the next word. An American observer some years ago said, "It is interesting, sometimes, to see the different ways in which different individuals get out of the same dilemma. Mr. Calhoun is not often at a loss for a word, but occasionally one sticks in his throat, in the pronunciation, like Macbeth's 'Amen.' In such a case he gives a petulant twitch or two at his shirt collar, and runs his bony fingers through his long grey hair, until it fairly bristles again. Webster, when bothered for a word, or snarled up in a sentence, almost invariably scratches the inner corner of his left eye carefully with the third finger of his right hand. Failing in this, he rubs his nose quite fiercely with the bent knuckle of his thumb. As a dernier ressort, he springs his knees apart until his legs resemble an ellipsis, then plunging his hands deep into his pockets, he throws the upper section of his body smartly forward, and the word is 'bound to come.'" A man ought to be forgiven for what he does when he is in an agony, but it would be a great gain if he never suffered such embarrassments, and so escaped from the consequent contortions.

Habit also frequently leads speakers into very singular movements, and to these they become so wedded that they cannot speak without them. Tugging at a button at the back of the coat, or twiddling the fingers, will be often seen, not as a part of the preacher's oratory, but as a sort of free accompaniment to it. Addison, in the Spectator, relates an amusing incident of this kind. "I remember, when I was a young man, and used to frequent Westminster Hall, there was a counselor who never pleaded without a piece of packthread in his hand, which he used to twist about a thumb or a finger all the while he was speaking: the wags of those days used to call it the thread of his discourse, for he was not able to utter a word without it. One of his clients, who was more merry than wise, stole it from him one day in the midst of his pleading, but he had better have let it alone, for he lost his cause by his jest."

Gentlemen who are as yet free from such little peculiarities should be upon their guard lest they should gradually yield to them; but, so long as they are mere trifles, observed only by the few, and not injurious to the preacher's efforts, no great stress needs to be laid upon them.

The posture of the minister should be natural, but his nature must not be of a coarse type; it should be graceful, educated nature. He should avoid especially those positions which are unnatural to a speaker, because they hamper the organs of utterance, or cramp his lungs. He should use his common sense, and not make it difficult for him to speak by leaning forward over the Bible or book-board. Bending over as if you were speaking confidentially to the people immediately below may be tolerated occasionally, but as a customary position it is as injurious as it is ungraceful. Who thinks of stooping when he speaks in the parlor? What killing work it would be to conduct a long conversation while pressing the breathing apparatus against the edge of a table! Stand upright, get a firm position, and then speak like a man.

A few orators even err in the other direction, and throw their heads far back as though they were addressing the angels, or saw a handwriting upon the ceiling. This also comes of evil, and unless the occasional sublime apostrophe requires it, is by no means to be practiced. John Wesley well says, "The head ought not to be held up too high, nor clownishly thrust too forward, neither to be cast down and hang, as it were, on the breast; nor to lean always on one or the other side; but to be kept modestly and decently upright, in its natural state and position. Further, it ought neither to be kept immovable, as a statue, nor to be continually moving and throwing itself about. To avoid both extremes, it should be turned gently, as occasion is, sometimes one way, sometimes the other;

and at other times, remain, looking straight forward, to the middle of the auditory."

Too many men assume a slouching attitude, lolling and sprawling as if they were lounging on the parapet of a bridge and chatting with somebody down in a boat on the river. We do not go into the pulpit to slouch about, and to look free and easy, but we go there upon very solemn business, and our posture should be such as becomes our mission. A reverent and earnest spirit will not be indicated by a sluggish lounge or a careless slouch.

It is said that among the Greeks even the ploughmen and herdsmen take up graceful attitudes without any idea that they are doing so. I think it is also true of the Italians, for wherever I have seen a Roman man or woman—no matter whether they are sleeping upon the Spagna steps, or sitting upon a fragment of the baths of Caracalla, or carrying a bundle on their heads, or riding a mule, they always look like studies for an artist; yet this is the last thing which ever crosses their minds. Those picturesque peasants have never taken lessons in calisthenics, nor do they trouble their heads as to how they appear to the foreigner; pure nature, delivered from mannerism, primness, and affectation, molds their habits into gracefulness. We should be foolish to imitate Greeks or Italians, except in their freedom from all imitation, but it were well if we could copy their unconstrained and natural action. There is no reason why a Christian should be a clown, and there are a great many reasons why a minister should not be a boor. As Rowland Hill said that he could not see why Satan should have the best tunes, so neither can I see why he should have the most graceful speakers!

Now, leaving posture, let us more distinctly notice ACTION in preaching; this also is a secondary and yet an important item. Our first observation shall be, it should never be excessive. In this matter bodily exercise profits little. We cannot readily judge when action is excessive, for what would be excessive in one man may be most fitting and proper in another. Different races employ different action in speaking. Two Englishmen will talk very quietly and soberly to one another compared with a couple of Frenchmen. Notice our Gallic neighbors: they talk all over, and shrug their shoulders, and move their fingers, and gesticulate most vehemently. Very well, then, we may allow a French preacher to be more demonstrative in preaching than an Englishman, because he is so in ordinary speech. I am not sure that a French divine is so as a matter of fact, but if he were so it could be accounted for by the national habit. If you and I were to converse in the Parisian fashion we would excite ridicule, and, in the same way, if we were to become violent and vehement in the pulpit we might run the same risk; for if Addison be an authority, English orators use less gestures than those of other countries.

As it is with races so it is with men: some naturally gesticulate more than others, and if it be really natural, we have little fault to find. For instance, we cannot censure John Gough's marvelous gesticulation and perambulation, for he would not have been Gough without them. I wonder how many miles he walks in the course of one of his lectures! Did we not see him climb the sides of a volcano in pursuit of a bubble? How we pitied him as we saw him ankle deep in the hot ashes! Then he was away, away at the other end of the platform at Exeter Hall, apostrophising a glass of water; but he only stopped there a moment, and anon made another rush over the corns of the temperance brethren in the front row. Now, this was right enough for John Gough; but if you, John Smith or John Brown, commence these perambulations you will soon be likened to the wandering Jew, or to the polar bear, at the Zoological Gardens, which forever goes backwards and forwards in its den.

Martin Luther was accustomed to smite with his fist at such a rate that they show, at Eisenach, a board—I think a three-inch board—which he broke while hammering at a text. The truth of the legend has been doubted, for it has been asserted that those delicate hands, which could play so charmingly upon the guitar, could hardly have been treated so roughly; but if the hand be an index of its owner's character, we can well believe it, for strength and tenderness were marvelously combined in Luther. There was much delicacy and sensitiveness about Luther's mind—yet these never diminished, but rather increased, its tremendous energy. It is by no means difficult to believe that he could smash up a plank, from the style in which he struck out at the Pope; and yet we can well imagine that he would touch the strings of his guitar with a maiden's hand; even as David could play skillfully upon the harp, and yet a bow of steel was broken by his arms.

John Knox is said at one time to have been so feeble that, before he entered the pulpit, you would expect to see him drop down in a fainting fit; but once before the audience he seemed as though he would "ding the pulpit into blads," which, being interpreted, means in English that he would knock it into shivers. That was evidently the style of the period when Protestants were fighting for their very existence, and the Pope and his priests and the devil and his angels were aroused to special fury: yet I do not suppose that Melancthon thought it needful to be quite so tremendous, nor did Calvin hammer and slash in a like manner.

At any rate, you need not try to break three-inch boards, for there might be a nail in one of them; neither need you ding a pulpit into "blads," for you might find yourself without a pulpit if you did. Come upon consciences with a crash, and aim at breaking hard hearts by the power of the Spirit, but these require spiritual power; physical energy is not the power of God unto salvation.

It is very easy to overdo the thing so much as to make yourself appear ridiculous. Perhaps it was a keen perception of this danger which led Dr. Johnson to forbid action altogether, and to commend Dr. Watts very highly because "he did not endeavor to assist his eloquence by any gesticulations; for as no corporeal actions have any correspondence with theological truth, he did not see how they could enforce it." The great lexicographer's remark is nonsense, but if it should be thought weighty enough to reduce a preacher

to absolute inaction, it will be better than overwrought posturing. When Nathan addressed David, I suppose that he delivered his parable very quietly, and that when the time came to say, "You are the man," he gave the king a deeply earnest look; but younger ministers imagine that the prophet strode into the middle of the room and, setting his right foot forward, pointed his finger like a pistol between the royal eyes, and giving a loud stamp of the foot, shouted, "you are the man!" Had it been so done it is to be feared that the royal culprit would have had his thoughts turned from himself to the insane prophet, and would have called for his guard to clear the hall. Nathan was too solemnly in earnest to be indecently violent; and as a general rule we may here note that it is the tendency of deep feeling rather to subdue the manner than to render it too energetic. He who beats the air, and bawls, and raves, and stamps, means nothing; and the more a man really means what he says the less of vulgar vehemence will there be.

John Wesley in his Directions concerning Pronunciation and Gesture cramps the preacher too much when he says, "He must never clap his hands, nor thump the pulpit. The hands should seldom be raised higher than the eyes:" but he probably had his eye upon some glaring case of extravagance. He is right, however, when he warns his preachers that "the hands should not be in perpetual motion, for this the ancients called the babbling of the hands."

Russell very wisely says: "True vehemence never degenerates into violence and vociferation. It is the force of inspiration—not of frenzy. It is not manifested in the screaming and foaming, the stamping and the contortions, of vulgar excess. It is ever manly and noble, in its intensest excitement: it elevates—it does not degrade. It never descends to the bawling voice, the guttural coarseness, the shrieking emphasis, the hysteric ecstasy of tone, the bullying attitude, and the clinched fist of extravagant passion."

When your sermon seems to demand of you a little imitative action, be peculiarly watchful lest you go too far, for this you may do before you are aware of it. I have heard of a young divine who in expostulation with the unconverted, exclaimed, "Alas, you shut your eyes to the light (here he closed both eyes); you stop your ears to the truth (here he put a finger into each ear); and you turn your backs upon salvation" (here he turned his back on the people). Do you wonder that when the people saw a man standing with his back to them and his fingers in his ears they all fell to laughing? The action might be appropriate, but it was overdone, and had better have been left undone. Violent gesture, even when commended by some, will be sure to strike others from its comic side.

When Burke in the House of Commons flung down the dagger to show that Englishmen were making weapons to be used against their own countrymen, his action seems to me to have been striking and much to the purpose, and yet Sheridan said, "The gentleman has brought us the knife, where is the fork?" and Gilray wickedly caricatured him. The risks of too little action are by no means great, but you can plainly see that there are great perils in the other direction. Therefore, do not carry action too far, and if you feel that you are naturally very energetic in your delivery, repress your energies a little. Wave your hands a little less, smite the Bible somewhat more mercifully, and in general take matters rather more calmly.

Perhaps a man is nearest to the golden mean in action when his manner excites no remark either of praise or censure, because it is so completely of a piece with the discourse that it is not regarded as a separate item at all. That action which gains conspicuous notice is probably out of proportion, and excessive. Mr. Hall once spent an evening with Mrs. Hannah More, and his judgment upon her manners might well serve as a criticism upon the mannerisms of ministers. "Nothing striking, madam, certainly not. Her manners are too perfectly proper to be striking. Striking manners are bad manners, you know, madam. She is a perfect lady, and studiously avoids those eccentricities which constitute striking manners."

In the second place, action should be expressive and appropriate. We cannot express so much by action as by language, but one may express a few things with even greater force. Indignantly to open a door and point to it is quite as emphatic as the words, "Leave the room!" To refuse the hand when another offers his own is a very marked declaration of ill-will, and will probably create a more enduring bitterness than the severest words. A request to remain silent upon a certain subject could be well conveyed by laying the finger across the lips. A shake of the head indicates disapprobation in a very marked manner. The lifted eyebrows express surprise in a forcible style; and every part of the face has its own eloquence of pleasure and of grief. What volumes can be condensed into a shrug of the shoulders, and what mournful mischief that same shrug has wrought!

Since, then, gesture and posture can speak powerfully, we must take care to let them speak correctly. It will never do to imitate the famous Grecian who cried, "O Heaven!" with his finger pointing to the earth; nor to describe dying weakness by thumping upon the book-board. Nervous speakers appear to fire at random with their gestures, and you may see them wringing their hands while they are dilating upon the joys of faith, or grasping the side of the pulpit convulsively when they are bidding the believer hold all earthly things with a loose hand. Even when no longer timorous, brethren do not always manage their gestures so as to make them run parallel with their words. Men may be seen denouncing with descending fist the very people whom they are endeavoring to comfort. No brother among you would, I hope, be so stupid as to clasp his hands while saying, "the gospel is not meant to be confined to a few. Its spirit is generous and expansive. It opens its arms to men of all ranks and nations." It would be an equal solecism if you were to spread forth your arms and cry, "Brethren, concentrate your energies! Gather them up, as a commander gathers his troops to the royal standard in the day of battle." Now, put the gestures into their proper places and see how diffusion may be expressed by the opened arms, and concentration by the united hands.

Action and tone together may absolutely contradict the meaning of the words. The Abbe Mullois tells us of a malicious wag who on hearing a preacher pronounce those terrible words, "Depart, you cursed," in the blindest manner, turned to his companion and said, "Come here, my lad, and let me embrace you; that is what the parson has just expressed." This is a sad business, but by no means an uncommon one. What force may the language of Scripture lose through the preacher's ill-delivery! Those words which the French preacher pronounced in so ill a manner are very terrible, and I felt them to be so when a short while ago I heard them hissed forth in awful earnest, by an insane person who thought himself a prophet sent to curse myself and my congregation. "Depart, you cursed!" came forth from his lips like the mutterings of thunder, and the last word seemed to bite into the very soul, as with flaming eye and outstretched hand the fanatic flashed it upon the assembly.

Too many speakers appear to have taken lessons from Bendigo, or some other professor of the noble art of self-defense, for they hold their fists as if they were ready for a round. It is not pleasant to watch brethren preaching the gospel of peace in that pugnacious style; yet it is by no means rare to hear of an evangelist preaching a free Christ with a clinched fist. It is amusing to see them putting themselves into an attitude and saying, "Come unto me," and then, with a revolution of both fists, "and I will give you—rest." Better not suggest such ridiculous ideas, but they have been suggested more than once by men who earnestly desired above all things to make their hearers think of better things.

Gentlemen, I am not at all surprised at your laughing, but it is infinitely better that you should have a hearty laugh at these absurdities here, than that your people should laugh at you in the future. I am giving you no imaginary sketch, but one which I have seen myself and fear I may yet see again.

Those awkward HANDS, if once brought into subjection, become our best allies. We can talk with them almost as well as with our tongues, and make a sort of silent music with them which will add to the charm of our words. If you have never read Sir Charles Bell on The Hand, be sure to do so, and note well the following passage: "We must not omit to speak of the hand as an instrument of expression. Formal dissertations have been written on this. But were we constrained to seek authorities, we might take the great painters in evidence, since by the position of the hands, in conformity with the figure, they have expressed every sentiment. Who, for example, can deny the eloquence of the hands in the Magdalens of Guido; their expression in the cartoons of Raphael, or in the "Last Supper," by Leonardo da Vinci? We see there expressed all that Quintilian says the hand is capable of expressing. For other parts of the body,' says he, 'assist the speaker, but these, I may say, speak themselves. By them we ask, we promise, we invoke, we dismiss, we threaten, we entreat, we deprecate, we express fear, joy, grief, our doubts, our assent, our penitence: we show moderation, or profusion; we mark number and time."

The FACE, and especially the eyes, will play a very important part in all appropriate action. It is very unfortunate when ministers cannot look at their people. It is singular to hear them pleading with people whom they do not see. They are entreating them to look to Jesus upon the cross! You wonder where the sinners are. The preacher's eyes are turned upon his book, or up to the ceiling, or into empty space. It seems to me that you must fix your eyes upon the people when you come to exhortation. There are parts of a sermon in which the sublimity of the doctrine may call for the uplifted gaze, and there are other portions which may allow the eyes to wander as you will; but when pleading time has come, it will be inappropriate to look anywhere but to the people addressed. Brethren who never do this at all lose a great power.

When Dr. Wayland was ill, he wrote, "Whether I am to recover my former health I know not. If, however, I should be permitted to preach again, I will certainly do what is in my power to learn to preach directly to men, looking them in their faces, and not looking at the paper on the desk."

The man who would be perfect in posture and gesture must regulate his whole frame, for in one case a man's most suitable action will be that of his head, and in another that of his hands, and in a third that of his trunk alone. Quintilian says, "The sides should bear their part in the gesture. The motion, also, of the whole body contributes much to the effect in delivery: so much so that Cicero is of opinion that more can be done by its gesture than even by the hands themselves. Thus he says in his work De Oratore: 'There will be no affected motions of the fingers, no fall of the fingers to suit the measured cadence of the language; but he will produce gestures by the movements of his whole body and by the manly inflexion of his side.'"

I might multiply illustrations of what I mean by appropriate action, but these must suffice. Let the gesture tally with the words, and be a sort of running commentary and practical exegesis upon what you are saying. Here I must make a pause, hoping to continue the subject in my next lecture. But so conscious am I that many may think my subject so secondary as to be of no importance whatever, that I close by giving an instance of the careful manner in which great painters take heed to minute details, only drawing this inference, that if they are thus attentive to little things, much more ought we to be.

Vigneul Marville says: "When I was at Rome I frequently saw Claude, who was then patronized by the most eminent people in that city; I frequently met him on the banks of the Tiber, or wandering in the neighborhood of Rome, amidst the venerable remains of antiquity. He was then an old man—yet I have seen him returning from his walk with his handkerchief filled with mosses, flowers, stones, etc., that he might consider them at home with that indefatigable attention which rendered him so exact a copier of nature. I

asked him one day by what means he arrived at such an excellency of character among painters, even in Italy. 'I spare no pains whatever, even in the minutest trifles,' was the modest reply of this venerable genius."

Lecture 20. Posture, Action, Gesture, etc. (Second Lecture)

This lecture begins at thirdly. If you remember, we have said that gesture should not be excessive, and secondly that it should be appropriate.

Now comes the third rule, action and gesture should never be grotesque. This is plain enough, and I shall not enforce it except by giving specimens of the grotesque, that you may not only avoid the identical instances, but all of a similar character. In all ages absurd gestures would appear to have been very numerous, for in an old author I find a long list of oddities, some of which it is to be hoped have taken their leave of this world, while others are described in language so forcible that it probably caricatures the actual facts.

This writer says: "Some hold their heads immovable, and turned to one side, as if they were made of horn; others stare with their eyes as horribly as if they intended to frighten every one; some are continually twisting their mouths and working their chins while they are speaking, as if, all the time, they were cracking nuts; some like the apostate Julian, breathe insult, and express contempt and impudence in their countenances. Others, as if they impersonated the fictitious heroes in tragedy, gape enormously, and extend their jaws as widely as if they were going to swallow up everybody. Above all, when they bellow with fury, they scatter their foam about, and threaten with contracted brow, and eyes like Saturn. These, as if they were playing some game, are continually making motions with their fingers, and, by the extraordinary working of their hands, endeavor to form in the air, I may almost say, all the figures of the mathematicians: those, on the contrary, have hands so ponderous, and so fastened down by terror, that they could more easily move beams of timber. Many labor so with their elbows, that it is evident, either that they had been formerly shoemakers themselves, or had lived in no other society than that of cobblers. Some are so unsteady in the motions of their bodies, that they seem to be speaking out of a cock-boat; others again are so unwieldy and uncouth in their motions, that you would think them to be sacks of tow painted to look like men. I have seen some who jumped on the platform and capered nearly in measure; men that exhibited the fuller's dance, and, as the old poet says, expressed their wit with their feet. But who in a short compass is able to enumerate all the faults of gesture, and all the absurdities of bad delivery?"

This catalogue might surely content the most voracious collector for the chamber of horrors, but it does not include the half of what may be seen in our own times by anyone who is able to ramble from one assembly to another. As children seem never to have exhausted their mischievous tricks, so speakers appear never to be at the end of their singular gestures. Even the best fall into them occasionally.

The first species of grotesque action may be named THE STIFF; and this is very common. Men who exhibit this horror appear to have no bend in their bodies and to be rigid about the joints. The arms and legs are moved as if they were upon iron hinges, and were made of exceedingly hard metal. A wooden anatomical doll, such as artists use, might well represent their limbs so straight and stiff, but it would fail to show the jerks with which those limbs are thrown up and down. There is nothing round in the action of these brethren; everything is angular, sharp, mechanical.

If I were to set forth what I mean by putting myself into their rectangular attitudes I might be supposed to caricature more than one exceedingly able northern divine, and having the fear of this before my eyes, and, moreover, holding these brethren in supreme respect, I dare not go into very minute particulars. Yet it is supposable that these good men are themselves aware that their legs should not be set down as if they belonged to a linen-horse, or a huge pair of tongs, and that their arms should not be absolutely rigid like pokers. Oil for the joints has been suggested, but there appears to be a lack of oil in the limbs themselves, which move up and down as if they belonged to a machine rather than to a living organism. Surely any sort of physical exercise might help to cure this mischief, which in some living preachers almost amounts to a deformity.

On the platform of Exeter Hall, gentlemen afflicted with unnatural stiffness not only furnish matter for the skillful caricaturist, but unfortunately call off the attention of their auditors from their admirable speeches by their execrable action. On a certain occasion we heard five or six remarks upon the awkwardness of the doctor's posturing, and only one or two encomiums upon his excellent speech. "People should not notice such trifles," remarks our friend Philo; but people do notice such trifles whether they ought to do so or not, and therefore it is well not to display them. It is probable that the whole of this lecture will be regarded by some very excellent people as beneath their notice, and savoring of questionable humor, but that I cannot help; for although I do not set so much value upon action as Demosthenes did when he made it the first, the second, and the third point in oratory—yet it is certain that much good speech is bereft of power through the awkward deportment of the speaker; and therefore if I may in any measure redress the evil I will cheerfully bear the criticism of my more somber brethren. I am deeply in earnest, however playful my remarks

may seem to be. These follies may be best shot at by the light arrows of ridicule, and therefore I employ them, not being of the same mind as those

"Who think all virtue lies in gravity,
And smiles are symptoms of depravity."

The second form of the grotesque is not unlike the first, and may be best distinguished as the REGULAR MECHANICAL. Men in this case move as if they were not living beings possessed of will and intellect, but as if they were automata formed to go through prescribed movements at precise intervals. At the back of the Tabernacle a cottager has placed over his house a kind of vane, in the form of a little soldier, which lifts first one arm and then the other with rather an important air. It has made me smile many a time by irresistibly reminding me of _____, who alternately jerks each arm, or if he allows one arm to lie still, chops the other up and down as persistently as if he were moved by wind or by clockwork. Up and down, up and down the hand goes, turning neither to the right nor to the left, every other movement being utterly abjured, except this one monotonous ascent and descent. It matters little how unobjectionable a movement may be in itself, it will become intolerable if it be continued without variation.

Ludovicus Cresollius, of Brittany, (1620) in his treatise upon the action and pronunciation of an orator, speaks somewhat strongly of a learned and polished Parisian preacher, who had aroused his ire by the wearisome monotony of his action. "When he turned himself to the left he spoke a few words accompanied by a moderate gesture of the hand, then bending to the right he acted the same part over again; then back again to the left, and presently to the right again: almost at an equal and measured interval of time he worked himself up to his usual gesture, and went through his one kind of movement. You could compare him only to the blindfolded Babylonian oxen going forward and turning back by the same path. I was so disgusted that I shut my eyes, but even so I could not get over the disagreeable impression of the speaker's manner."

The prevailing House of Commons' style, so far as I have seen it in public meetings, consists of an up and down movement of the back and hand; one seems to see the M.P. bowing to Mr. Speaker and the honorable house much as a waiter will do at an eating-house when he is receiving an order for an elaborate dinner. "Yes sir," "Yes sir," "Yes sir," with a jerk between each exclamation.

This is near akin to what has been accurately described as the pump-handle style. This is to be witnessed very frequently, and consists of a long series of jerkings of the arm, meant, perhaps, to increase emphasis, but really doing nothing whatever.

Occasionally one meets with a saw-like action, in which the arm seems lengthened and contracted alternately. This motion is carried out to perfection when the orator leans over the rail, or over the front of the pulpit, and cuts downward at the people, like the top sawyer operating upon a piece of timber. One wonders how many planks a man would cut in the time if he were really working upon wood instead of sawing the air. We are all grateful for converted sawyers, but we trust they will feel at liberty to leave their saws behind them.

Much the same may be said for the numerous hammer-men who are at work among us, who pound and smite at a great rate, to the ruining of Bibles and the dusting of pulpit cushions. Their one and only action is to hammer, hammer, hammer, without sense or reason, whether the theme be pleasing or pathetic. They preach with demonstration and power, but evermore the manifestation is the same. We dare not say that they smite with the fist of wickedness, but certainly they do smite, and that most vigorously. They set forth the sweet influences of the Pleiades and the gentle wooings of love with blows of the fist; and they endeavor to make you feel the beauty and the tenderness of their theme by strokes from their never-ceasing hammer.

Some of them are dull enough in all conscience, and do not even hammer with a hearty good will, and then the business becomes intolerable. One likes to hear a good noise, and see a man go in for hammering vehemently, if the thing must be done at all; but the gentleman we have in our mind seldom or never warms to his work, and merely smites because it is the way of him.

"You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow."

If a man must strike, let him do it in earnest; but there is no need for perpetual pounding. There are better ways of becoming striking preachers than by imitating the divine of whom his preceptor said that he had dashed the inwards out of one Bible and was far gone with another. In certain old Latin MSS. sermons, with notes in the margin, the preacher is recommended to shake the crucifix, and to hammer upon the pulpit like Satan himself! By this means he was to collect his thoughts; but one would not give much for thoughts thus collected. Have any of our friends seen these manuscripts and fallen in love with the directions? It would seem so.

Now, the jerking, sawing, pumping, and pounding might all be endurable and even appropriate if they were blended; but the perpetual iteration of any one becomes wearisome and unmeaning. The figures of Mandarins in a tea-shop, continually nodding their heads, and the ladies in wax which revolve with uniform motions in the hair-dresser's window, are not fit models for men who have before them the earnest work of winning men to grace and virtue. You ought to be so true, so real, so deeply in earnest, that mere mechanical movements will be impossible to you, and everything about you will betoken life, energy, concentrated faculty, and

intense zeal.

Another method of the grotesque may be correctly called the LABORIOUS. Certain brethren will never fail in their ministry from lack of physical exertion: when they mount the rostrum they mean hard work, and before long they puff and blow at it as if they were laborers working by the piece. They enter upon a sermon with the resolve to storm their way through it, and carry all before them: the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence with them in another sense besides that which is intended in Scripture.

"How is your new minister getting on?" said an inquiring friend to a rustic hearer. "Oh," said the man, "he's sure to get on, for he drives at sin as if he were knocking down an ox." An excellent thing to do in spirit, but not to be performed literally. When I have occasionally heard of a wild brother taking off his collar and cravat, upon a very hot day, and even of his going so far as to divest himself of his coat, I have thought that he was only putting himself into a condition which the physical-force orator might desire, for he evidently regards a sermon as a battle or a wrestling match.

An Irish thunderer of my acquaintance broke a chair during a declamation against Popery, and I trembled for the table also. A distinguished actor, who became a convert and a preacher late in life, would repeatedly strike the table or floor with his staff when he grew warm in a speech. He has made me wish to close my ears when the smart raps of his cane have succeeded each other with great rapidity and growing force. What was the peculiar use of the noise, I could not tell, for we were all awake, and his voice was sufficiently powerful. One did not mind it, however, from the grand old man, for it suited the "fine frenzy" of his whole-hearted enthusiasm, but the noise was not so desirable as to be largely called for from any of us.

Laborious action is frequently a relic of the preacher's trade in former days: as an old hunter cannot quite forget the hounds, so the good man cannot shake off the habits of the shop. One brother who has been a wheelwright always preaches as if he were making wheels. If you understand the art of wheel wrighting, you can see most of the processes illustrated during one of his liveliest discourses. You can detect the engineer in another friend, the cooper in a third, and the grocer with his scales in a fourth. A brother who has been a butcher is pretty sure to show us how to knock down a bullock when he gets at all argumentative. As I have watched the discourse proceed from strength to strength, and the preacher has warmed to his work, I have thought to myself, "Here comes the pole-axe, there goes the fat ox, down falls the prize bullock."

Now, these reminiscences of former occupations are never very blameworthy, and are at all times less obnoxious than the altogether inexcusable awkwardnesses of gentlemen who from their youth up have dwelt in the halls of learning. These will sometimes labor quite as much, but with far less likeness to useful occupations; they beat the air and work hard at doing nothing. Gentlemen from the universities are frequently more hideous in their action than commonplace people; perhaps their education may have deprived them of confidence, and made them all the more fidgety and awkward.

It has occurred to me that some speakers fancy that they are beating carpets, or chopping sticks, or mincing sausage-meat, or patting butter, or poking their fingers into people's eyes. Oh, could they see themselves as others see them, they might cease thus to perform before the public, and save their bodily exercise for other occasions. After all, I prefer the vigorous, laborious displays to the more easy and even stately airs of certain self-possessed talkers. One rubs his hands together with abounding self-satisfaction,

"Washing his hands with invisible soap
In imperceptible water"

and meanwhile utters the truest platitudes with the air of a man who is outdoing Robert Hall or Chalmers. Another pauses and looks round with a dignified air, as if he had communicated inestimable information to a highly favored body of individuals who might reasonably be expected to rise in a state of intense excitement and express their overwhelming sense of obligation. Nothing has been said beyond the merest schoolboy talk; but the air of dignity, the attitude of authority, the very tone of the man, all show how thoroughly satisfied he is. This is not laborious preaching, but it occurs to me to mention it because it is the very reverse, and is so much more to be condemned. A few simpletons are, no doubt, imposed upon, and fancy that a man must be saying something great when he delivers himself in a pompous manner; but sensible people are at first amused and afterwards disgusted with the big manner, "à la grand seigneur."

One of the great advantages of our College training is the certainty that an inflated mannerism is sure to be abated by the amiable eagerness with which all our students delight in rescuing a brother from this peril. Many wind-bags have collapsed in this room beneath your tender handling, never, I hope, to be puffed out to their former dimensions. There are some in the ministry of all the churches who would be marvelously benefitted by a little of the very candid if not savage criticisms which have been endured by budding orators at your hands. I would that every minister who has missed such an instructive martyrdom could find a friend sufficiently honest to point out to him any oddities of manner into which he may insensibly have fallen.

But here we must not overlook another laborious orator who is in our mind's eye. We will name him the PERPETUAL MOTION PREACHER, who is all action, and lifts his finger, or waves his hand, or strikes his palm at every word. He is never at rest for a moment. So eager is he to be emphatic, that he effectually defeats his object, for where every word is emphasized by a gesture

nothing whatever is emphatic. This brother takes off men's minds from his words to his movements: the eye actually carries the thoughts away from the ear, and so a second time the preacher's end is missed. This continual motion greatly agitates some hearers, and gives them the fidgets, and no wonder, for who can endure to see such incessant patting, and pointing, and waving? In action, as well as everything else, "let your moderation be known unto all men."

Thus I have mentioned three species of the grotesque—the stiff, the mechanical, and the laborious—and I have also glanced at the lazily dignified. I will close the list by mentioning two others.

There is the MARTIAL, which also sufficiently borders on the grotesque to be placed in this category. Some preachers appear to be fighting the good fight of faith every time they stand before a congregation. They put themselves into a fencing attitude, and either stand on guard against an imaginary foe, or else assault the unseen adversary with stern determination. They could not look more fierce if they were at the head of a regiment of cavalry, nor seem more satisfied at the end of each division of discourse if they had fought a series of Waterloos. They turn their heads on one side with a triumphant air, as if about to say, "I have routed that enemy, and we shall hear no more of him."

The last singularity of action which I shall place under this head is the ILL-TIMED. In this case the hands do not keep time with the lips. The good brother is a little behindhand with his action, and therefore the whole operation is out of order. You cannot at first make the man out at all: he appears to chop and thump without rhyme or reason, but at last you perceive that his present action is quite appropriate to what he said a few seconds before. The effect is strange to the last degree. It puzzles those who do not possess the key to it, and when fully understood it loses none of its oddness.

Besides these oddities, there is a class of action which must, to use the mildest term, be described as altogether ugly. For these a platform is "generally necessary," for a man cannot make himself so thoroughly ridiculous when concealed in a pulpit. To grasp a rail, and to drop down lower and lower until you almost touch the ground is supremely absurd. It may be a proper position as a prelude to an agile gymnastic feat, but as an accompaniment to eloquence it is monstrous; yet have I seen it more than once. I have found it difficult to describe in words the extraordinary position, but a picture would show how ridiculous it is and would render the attitude obsolete. One or two brethren have disported themselves upon my platform in this queer manner, and they are quite welcome to do the same again, if upon seeing themselves thus roughly sketched they consider the posture to be commanding and impressive. It would be far better for such remarkable performers if it were reported of them as of that great Wesleyan, Richard Watson: "He stood perfectly erect, and nearly all the action that he used was a slight motion of the right hand, with occasionally a significant shake of the head."

The habit of shrugging the shoulders has been allowed to tyrannise over some preachers. A number of men are round-shouldered by nature, and many more seem determined to appear so, for when they have anything weighty to deliver they back themselves up by elevating their backs. An excellent preacher at Bristol, lately deceased, would hunch first one shoulder and then another as his great thoughts struggled forth, and when they obtained utterance he looked like a hunchback until the effort was over. What a pity that such a habit had become inveterate! How desirable to avoid its formation!

Quintilian says: "Some people raise up their shoulders in speaking, but this is a fault in gesture. Demosthenes, in order to cure himself of it, used to stand in a narrow pulpit, and practice speaking with a spear hanging over his shoulder, in such a manner that if in the heat of delivery he failed to avoid this fault, he would be corrected by hurting himself against the point." This is a sharp remedy, but the gain would be worth an occasional wound if men who distort the human form could thus be cured of the fault.

At a public meeting upon one occasion a gentleman who appeared to be very much at home and to speak with a great deal of familiar superiority, placed his hands behind him under his coat tails, and thus produced a very singular figure, especially to those who took a side view from the platform. As the speaker became more animated, he moved his tails with greater frequency, reminding the observer of a water-wagtail. It must be seen to be appreciated, but one exhibition will be enough to convince any sensible man that however graceful a dress coat may be, it by no means ministers to the solemnity of the occasion to see the tails of that garment projecting from the orator's rear.

You may also have seen at meetings the gentleman who places his hands on his hips, and either looks as if he defied all the world, or as if he endured considerable pain. This position savors of Billingsgate and its fish-women far more than of sacred eloquence. The arms "akimbo," I think they call it, and the very sound of the word suggests the ridiculous rather than the sublime. We may drop into it for the moment rightly enough, but to deliver a speech in that posture is preposterous. It is even worse to stand with your hands in your trousers like the people one sees at French railway stations, who probably thrust their hands into their pockets because there is nothing else there, and nature abhors a vacuum. For a finger in the waistcoat pocket for a moment no one will be blamed, but to thrust the hands into the trousers is outrageous. An utter contempt for audience and subject must have been felt before a man could come to this.

Gentlemen, because you are gentlemen, you will never need to be warned of this practice, for you will not descend to it. Once in a

while before a superfinely genteel and affected audience a man may be tempted to shock their foolish gentility by a freedom and easiness which is meant to be the protest of a brusque manliness; but to see a man preach the gospel with his hands in his pockets does not remind you of either a prophet or an apostle. There are brethren who do this ever and anon who can afford to do it from their general force of character: these are the very men who should do nothing of the kind, because their example is powerful, and they are somewhat responsible for the weaklings who copy them.

Another unseemly style is nearly allied to the last, though it is not quite so objectionable. It may be seen at public dinners of the common order, where white waistcoats need a little extra display, and at gatherings of artisans where an employer has given his men a treat, and is responding to the toast of "the firm."

Occasionally it is exhibited at religious meetings, where the speaker is a man of local importance, and feels that he is monarch of all he surveys. In this case the thumbs are inserted in the arm-holes of the waistcoat, and the speaker throws back his coat and reveals the lower part of the vest. I have called this the penguin style, and I am unable to find a better comparison. For a footman or a coachman at a soiree, or for a member of the United Order of Queer Fellows, this attitude may be suitable and dignified, and a venerable sire at a family gathering may talk to his boys and girls in that position; but for a public speaker, and much more for a minister, as a general habit, it is as much out of character as a posture can be.

First cousin to this fashion is that of holding on to the coat near the collar, as if the speaker considered it necessary to hold himself well in hand. Some grasp firmly, and then run the hands up and down as if they meant to double the coat in a new place, or to lengthen the collar. They appear to hang upon their coat-fronts like a man clutching at two ropes: one wonders the garment does not split at the back of the neck. This practice adds nothing to the force or perspicuity of a speaker's style, and its probable signification is, "I am quite at ease, and greatly enjoy hearing my own voice."

As it would be well to stamp out at many uglinesses as possible, I shall mention even those which are somewhat rare. I remember an able minister who was accustomed to look into the palm of his left hand while with his right he appeared to pick out his ideas therefrom. Divisions, illustrations, and telling points all seemed to be growing in his palm like so many flowers; and these he seemed carefully to take up by the roots one by one and exhibit to the people. It mattered little, for his thought was of a high order of excellence, but yet the action was by no means graceful.

A preacher of no mean order was accustomed to lift his fist to his brow and to tap his forehead gently, as if he must needs knock at the mind's door to wake up his thoughts: this also was more peculiar than forcible.

To point into the left hand with the first finger of the right as if boring small holes into it, or to use the aforesaid pointed finger as if you were stabbing the air, is another freak of action which has its amusing side.

Passing the hand over the brow when the thought is deep, and the exact word is not easy to find, is a very natural motion, but scratching the head is by no means equally advisable, though perhaps quite as natural. I have seen this last piece of action carried to considerable lengths, but I was never enamored with it.

I cannot avoid mentioning an accidental grotesqueness which is exceedingly common. Some brethren always lay down the law with an outspread hand, which they continue to move up and down with the rhythm of every sentence. Now this action is excellent in its way if not carried on too monotonously, but unfortunately it is liable to accidents. If the earnest orator continues to lift his hand upward and downward he is in great danger of frequently presenting an aspect with regrettable implications. The action verges upon the symbolic, but unhappily the symbol has been somewhat vulgarized, and has been described as "putting the thumb of scorn to the nose of contempt." Some men unwittingly perpetrate this a score of times during a discourse.

You have laughed at these portraits which I have drawn for your edification—take care that no one has to laugh at you because you fall into these or similar absurdities of action.

I must confess, however, that I do not think so badly of any of these, or all of them put together, as I do of the SUPERFINE STYLE, which is utterly despicable and abominable. It is worse than the commonly vulgar, for it is the very essence of vulgarity, flavored with affectations and airs of gentility. Rowland Hill sketched the thing which I condemn in his portrait of Mr. Taplash; of course it was a more correct representation as to detail fifty years ago than it is now, but in the main features it is still sufficiently accurate:

"The orator, when he first made his appearance, would be primmed and dressed up in the most finished style; not a hair would be found out of place on his empty pate, on which the barber had been exercising his occupation all the Sunday morning, and powdered until as white as the driven snow. Thus elegantly decorated, and smelling like a civet-cat, through an abundance of perfumery, he would scent the air as he passed. Then, with a most conceited skip, he would step into the pulpit, as though stepping out of a band-box; and here he had not only to display his elegant production, but his elegant self also: his delicate white hand exhibiting his diamond ring, while his richly-scented white handkerchief was unfurled, and managed with remarkable dexterity and art. His smelling-bottle was next occasionally presented to his nose, giving different opportunities to display his sparkling ring. Thus

having adjusted the important business of the handkerchief and the smelling-bottle, he had next to take out his glass, that he might reconnoitre the fair part of his auditory, with whom he might have been gallanting and entertaining them with his cheap talk the day before: and these, as soon as he could catch their eye, he would favor with a simpering look, and a graceful nod."

This is a pungent version of Cowper's review of certain "messengers of grace" who "relapsed into themselves" when the sermon was ended: very little selves they must have been.

"Rustic coarseness" is quite refreshing after one has been wearied with inane primness. Well did Cicero exhort orators to adopt their gestures rather from the camp or the wrestling ring than from the dancers with their effeminate niceties. Manliness must never be sacrificed to elegance. Our working classes will never be brought even to consider the truth of Christianity by teachers who are starched and fine. The British artisan admires manliness, and prefers to lend his ear to one who speaks in a hearty and natural style: indeed, working men of all nations are more likely to be struck by a brave negligence than by a foppish attention to personal appearances.

The story told by the Abbe Mullois is, we suspect, only one of a numerous class. "A converted Parisian operative, a man of a willful but frank disposition, full of energy and spirit, who had often spoken with great success at the clubs composed of men of his own class, was asked by the preacher who had led him to God, to inform him by what instrumentality he, who had once been so far estranged from religion, had eventually been restored to the faith. 'Your doing so,' said his interrogator, 'may be useful to me in my efforts to reclaim others.'

"'I would rather not,' replied he, 'for I must candidly tell you that you do not figure very conspicuously in the case.'

"'No matter,' said the other, 'it will not be the first time that I have heard the same remark.'

"'Well, if you must hear it, I can tell you in a few words how it took place. A good woman had pestered me to read your little book—pardon the expression, I used to speak in that style in those days. On reading a few pages, I was so impressed that I felt a strong desire to see you. I was told that you preached in a certain church, and I went to hear you. Your sermon had some further effect upon me; but, to speak frankly, very little; comparatively, indeed, none at all. What did much more for me was your open, and simple, and good-natured manner, and, above all, your ill-combed hair; for I have always detested those priests whose heads remind one of a hairdresser's assistant; and I said to myself, "That man forgets himself on our behalf, we ought, therefore, to do something for his sake. Thereupon I determined to pay you a visit, and you bagged me. Such was the beginning and end of the affair."

There are silly young ladies who are in raptures with a dear young man whose main thought is his precious person; these, it is to be hoped, are becoming fewer every day: but as for sensible men, and especially the sturdy workmen of our great cities, they utterly abhor foppery in a minister. Wherever you see affectation, you find at once a barrier between that man and the commonsense multitude. Few ears are delighted with the voices of peacocks.

It is a pity that we cannot persuade all ministers to be men, for it is hard to see how otherwise they will be truly men of God. It is equally to be deplored that we cannot induce preachers to speak and gesticulate like other sensible people, for it is impossible that they should grasp the masses until they do. All foreign matters of attitude, tone, or dress are barricades between us and the people: we must talk like men if we would win men. The late revival of millinery in the Anglican Church is for this reason, as well as for far graver ones, a step in the wrong direction. A hundred years ago the dressiness of the clergy was about as conspicuous as it is now, but it had no doctrinal meaning, and was mere foppery.

This fondness for lovely array led to a stiff propriety in the pulpit: they called it "dignity," and prided themselves upon it. Propriety and decorum were their chief concern, and these were mingled with pomposity or foolish simpering according to the creature's peculiarities, until honest men grew weary of their hollow performances and turned away from such stilted ministrations. The preachers were too much concerned to be proper to have any concern to be useful. The gestures which would have made their words a little more intelligible they would not condescend to use, for what cared they for the vulgar? If people of taste were satisfied, they had all the reward they desired, and meanwhile the multitudes were perishing for lack of knowledge. God save us from fine deportment and genteel propriety if these are to keep the masses in alienation from the public worship of God.

In our own day this sickening affectation is, we hope, far more rare, but it still survives. We had the honor of knowing a minister who could not preach without his black kid gloves, and when he upon one occasion found himself in a certain pulpit without them, he came down into the vestry for them. Unfortunately one of the deacons had carried into his pew, not his own hat, as he intended, but the preacher's, and while this discovery was being made, the divine was in terrible trepidation, exclaiming, "I never do preach without gloves. I cannot do it. I cannot go into the pulpit until you find them."

I wish he never had found them, for he was more fitted to stand behind a draper's counter than to occupy the sacred desk.

Slovenliness of any sort is to be avoided in a minister, but manliness more often falls into this fault than into the other effeminate

vice; therefore shun most heartily this worst error.

Cowper says, "In my soul I loathe all affectation," and so does every sensible man. All tricks and stage effects are unbearable when the message of the Lord is to be delivered. Better a ragged dress and rugged speech, with artless, honest manner, than clerical foppery. Better far to violate every rule of gracefulness than to be a mere performer, a consummate actor, a player upon a religious stage.

The caricaturist of twenty years ago favored me with the name of Brimstone, and placed side by side with me a simpering elocutionist whom he named Treacle. I was thoroughly satisfied with my lot, but I could not have said as much if I had been represented by the companion portrait. Molasses and other sugary matters are sickening to me. Jack-a-dandy in the pulpit makes me feel as Jehu did when he saw Jezebel's decorated head and painted face, and cried in indignation, "Fling her down."

It would greatly trouble me if any of my remarks upon grotesque action should lead even one of you to commence posturing and performing; this would be to fly from bad to worse. We mentioned that Dr. Hamilton took lessons from a master, in order to escape from his infirmity, but the result was manifestly not very encouraging, and I gravely fear that more faults are created than cured by professional teachers: perhaps the same result may follow from my own amateur attempt, but I would at least prevent that misfortune as far as possible by earnest warnings. Do not think of how you will gesticulate when you preach, but learn the art of doing the right thing without giving it any thought at all.

Our last rule is one which sums up all the others; be natural in your action. Shun the very appearance of studied gesture. Art is cold, only nature is warm; let grace keep you clear of all seeming, and in every action, and in every place, be truthful, even if you should be considered rough and uncultivated. Your mannerism must always be your own, it must never be a polished lie, and what is the aping of gentility, the simulation of passion, the feigning of emotion, or the mimicry of another man's mode of delivery—but a practical lie.

"Therefore, avaunt all attitude and stare,
And start theatric, practiced at the glass!"

Our object is to remove the excrescences of uncouth nature, not to produce artificiality and affectation; we would prune the tree and by no means clip it into a set form. We would have our students think of action while they are with us at college, that they may never have need to think of it in after days. The matter is too inconsiderable to be made a part of your weekly study when you get into the actual battle of ministerial life; you must attend to the subject now, and have done with it. You are not sent of God to court smiles but to win souls; your teacher is not the dancing-master, but the Holy Spirit, and your pulpit manner is only worth a moment's thought because it may hinder your success by causing people to make remarks about the preacher when you want all their thoughts for the subject. If the best action had this effect I would urge you to forswear it, and if the worst gestures would prevent such a result I would advise you to practice them. All that I aim at is to advocate quiet, graceful, natural movements, because they are the least likely to be observed. The whole business of delivery should be one; everything should harmonize; the thought, the spirit, the language, the tone, and the action should be all of a piece, and the whole should be, not for the winning of honor to ourselves, but for the glory of God and the good of men; if it be so there is no fear of your violating the rule as to being natural, for it will not occur to you to be otherwise.

Yet have I one fear, and it is this: you may fall into a foolish imitation of some admired minister, and this will to some extent put you off from the right track. Each man's action should suit himself and grow out of his own personality. The style of Dr. Goliath, who is six feet high, will not fit the stature and person of our friend Short who is a Zaccheus among preachers; neither will the respectable mannerism of an aged and honored divine at all befit the youthful Apollos who is barely out of his teens.

I have heard that for a season quite a number of young Congregational ministers imitated the pastor of the Weigh House, and so there were little Binneys everywhere copying the great Thomas in everything except his thoughtful preaching.

A rumor is current that there are one or two young Spurgeons about, but if so I hope that the reference is to my own sons, who have a right to the name by birth. If any of you become mere copyists of me I shall regard you as thorns in the flesh, and rank you among those whom Paul says "we suffer gladly." Yet it has been wisely said. that every beginner must of necessity be for a time a copyist; the artist follows his master while as yet he has barely acquired the elements of the art, and perhaps for life he remains a painter of the school to which he at first attached himself; but as he becomes proficient he develops his own individuality, grows into a painter with a style of his own, and is all the better and none the worse for having been in his earliest days content to sit at a master's feet.

It is of necessity the same in oratory, and therefore it may be too much to say never copy anyone, but it may be better to exhort you to imitate the best action you can find, in order that your own style during its formation may be rightly molded. Correct the influence of any one man by what you see of excellence in others; but still create a manner of your own. Slavish imitation is the practice of an ape, but to follow another where he leads aright, and there only, is the wisdom of a prudent man. Still never let a natural originality be missed by your imitating the best models of antiquity, or the most esteemed among the moderns.

In conclusion, do not allow my criticisms upon various grotesque postures and movements to haunt you in the pulpit; better perpetrate them all than be in fear, for this would make you cramped and awkward. Dash at it whether you blunder or not. A few mistakes in this matter will not be half so bad as being nervous. It may be that what would be eccentric in another may be most proper in you; therefore take no man's dictum as applicable to every case, or to your own.

See how John Knox is pictured in the well-known engraving. Is his posture graceful? Perhaps not. Yet is it not exactly what it should be? Can you find any fault with it? Is it not Knox-like, and full of power? It would not suit one man in fifty; in most preachers it would seem strained, but in the great Reformer it is characteristic, and accords with his life-work. You must remember the person, the times and his surroundings, and then the mannerism is seen to be well becoming a hero-preacher sent to do an Elijah's work, and to utter his rebukes in the presence of a Popish court which hated the reforms which he demanded. Be yourself as he was himself; even if you should be ungainly and awkward, be yourself. Your own clothes, though they be homespun, will fit you better than another man's, though made of the best broadcloth; you may follow your tutor's style of dress if you like, but do not borrow his coat, be content to wear one of your own.

Above all, be so full of matter, so fervent, and so gracious that the people will little care how you hand out the word; for if they perceive that it is fresh from Heaven, and find it sweet and abundant, they will pay little regard to the basket in which you bring it to them. Let them, if they please, say that your bodily presence is weak, but pray that they may confess that your testimony is weighty and powerful. Commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and then the mere mint and anise of posture will seldom be taken into account.

Lecture 21. Earnestness: its Marring and Maintenance

If I were asked—What in a Christian minister is the most essential quality for securing success in winning souls for Christ? I would reply, "earnestness": and if I were asked a second or a third time, I should not vary the answer, for personal observation drives me to the conclusion that, as a rule, real success is proportionate to the preacher's earnestness. Both great men and little men succeed if they are thoroughly alive unto God, and fail if they are not so. We know men of eminence who have gained a high reputation, who attract large audiences, and obtain much admiration, who nevertheless are very low in the scale as soul winners: for all they do in that direction they might as well have been lecturers on anatomy, or political orators. At the same time we have seen their compeers in ability so useful in the business of conversion that evidently their acquirements and gifts have been no hindrance to them, but the reverse; for by the intense and devout use of their powers, and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, they have turned many to righteousness.

We have seen brethren of very scanty abilities who have been terrible drags upon a church, and have proved as inefficient in their spheres as blind men in an observatory; but, on the other hand, men of equally small attainments are well known to us as mighty hunters before the Lord, by whose holy energy many hearts have been captured for the Savior.

I delight in M'Cheyne's remark, "It is not so much great talents that God blesses, as great likeness to Christ." In many instances ministerial success is traceable almost entirely to an intense zeal, a consuming passion for souls, and an eager enthusiasm in the cause of God, and we believe that in every case, other things being equal, men prosper in the divine service in proportion as their hearts are blazing with holy love. "The God that answers by fire, let him be God"; and the man who has the tongue of fire, let him be God's minister.

Brethren, you and I must, as preachers, be always earnest in reference to our pulpit work. Here we must labor to attain the very highest degree of excellence. Often have I said to my brethren that the pulpit is the Thermopylae of Christendom: there the fight will be lost or won. To us ministers the maintenance of our power in the pulpit should be our great concern; we must occupy that spiritual watch-tower with our hearts and minds awake and in full vigor. It will not avail us to be laborious pastors if we are not earnest preachers. We shall be forgiven a great many sins in the matter of pastoral visitation if the people's souls are really fed on the Sabbath-day; but fed they must be, and nothing else will make up for it.

The failures of most ministers who drift down the stream may be traced to inefficiency in the pulpit. The chief business of a captain is to know how to handle his vessel; nothing can compensate for deficiency there, and so our pulpits must be our main care, or all will go awry. Dogs often fight because the supply of bones is scanty, and congregations frequently quarrel because they do not get sufficient spiritual meat to keep them happy and peaceful. The ostensible ground of dissatisfaction may be something else, but nine times out of ten deficiency in their rations is at the bottom of the mutinies which occur in our churches. Men, like all other animals, know when they are fed, and they usually feel good tempered after a meal; and so when our hearers come to the house of God, and obtain "food convenient for them," they forget a great many grievances in the joy of the festival, but if we send them away hungry

they will be in as irritable a mood as a bear robbed of her whelps.

Now, in order that we may be acceptable, we must be earnest when actually engaged in preaching. Cecil has well said that the spirit and manner of a preacher often effect more than his matter. To go into the pulpit with the listless air of those gentlemen who loll about, and lean upon the cushion as if they had at last reached a quiet resting place, is, I think, most censurable. To rise before the people to deal out commonplaces which have cost you nothing, as if anything would do for a sermon, is not merely derogatory to the dignity of our office, but is offensive in the sight of God. We must be earnest in the pulpit for our own sakes, for we shall not long be able to maintain our position as leaders in the church of God if we are dull. Moreover, for the sake of our church members, and converted people, we must be energetic, for if we are not zealous, neither will they be. It is not in the order of nature that rivers should run uphill, and it does not often happen that zeal rises from the pew to the pulpit. It is natural that it should flow down from us to our hearers; the pulpit must therefore stand at a high level of ardor, if we are, under God, to make and to keep our people fervent.

Those who attend our ministry have a great deal to do during the week. Many of them have family trials, and heavy personal burdens to carry, and they frequently come into the assembly cold and listless, with thoughts wandering hither and thither; it is ours to take those thoughts and thrust them into the furnace of our own earnestness, melt them by holy contemplation and by intense appeal, and pour them out into the mold of the truth.

A blacksmith can do nothing when his fire is out, and in this respect he is the type of a minister. If all the lights in the outside world are quenched, the lamp which burns in the sanctuary ought still to remain undimmed; for that fire no curfew must ever be rung. We must regard the people as the wood and the sacrifice, well wetted a second and a third time by the cares of the week, upon which, like the prophet, we must pray down the fire from Heaven. A dull minister creates a dull audience.

You cannot expect the office-bearers and the members of the church to travel by steam if their own chosen pastor still drives the old broad-wheeled wagon. We ought each one to be like that reformer who is described as "countenance beaming with life, eyes and hands full of life—in fine, a vivid preacher, altogether alive."

"Your soul must overflow, if you
Another's soul would reach,
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech."

The world also will suffer as well as the church if we are not fervent. We cannot expect a gospel devoid of earnestness to have any mighty effect upon the unconverted around us. One of the excuses most soporific to the conscience of an ungodly generation is that of half-heartedness in the preacher. If the sinner finds the preacher nodding while he talks of judgment to come, he concludes that the judgment is a thing which the preacher is dreaming about, and he resolves to regard it all as mere fiction. The whole outside world receives serious danger from the cold-hearted preacher, for it draws the same conclusion as the individual sinner: it perseveres in its own listlessness, it gives its strength to its own transient objects, and thinks itself wise for so doing. How can it be otherwise? If the prophet leaves his heart behind him when he professes to speak in the name of God, what can he expect but that the ungodly around him will persuade themselves that there is nothing in his message, and that his commission is a farce.

Hear how Whitefield preached, and never dare to be lethargic again. Winter says of him that "sometimes he exceedingly wept, and was frequently so overcome, that for a few seconds you would suspect he never would recover; and when he did, nature required some little time to compose herself. I hardly ever knew him go through a sermon without weeping more or less. His voice was often interrupted by his affections; and I have heard him say in the pulpit, 'You blame me for weeping; but how can I help it, when you will not weep for yourselves, although your own immortal souls are on the verge of destruction, and, for anything I know, you are hearing your last sermon, and may never more have an opportunity to have Christ offered to you?'"

Earnestness in the pulpit must be real. It is not to be mimicked. We have seen it counterfeited, but every person with a grain of sense could detect the imposition. To stamp the foot, to smite the desk, to perspire, to shout, to bawl, to quote the pathetic portions of other people's sermons, or to pour out voluntary tears from a watery eye will never make up for true agony of soul and real tenderness of spirit. The best piece of acting is but acting; those who only look at appearances may be pleased by it, but lovers of reality will be disgusted. What presumption!—what hypocrisy it is by skillful management of the voice to mimic the passion which is the genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Let mere actors beware, lest they be found sinning against the Holy Spirit by their theatrical performances.

We must be earnest in the pulpit because we are earnest everywhere; we must blaze in our discourses because we are continually on fire. Zeal which is stored up to be let off only on grand occasions is a gas which will one day destroy its proprietor. Nothing but truth may appear in the house of the Lord; all affectation is strange fire, and excites the indignation of the God of truth. Be earnest, and you will seem to be earnest. A burning heart will soon find for itself a flaming tongue. To sham earnestness is one of the most contemptible of dodges for courting popularity; let us abhor the very thought. Go and be listless in the pulpit if you are so in your

heart. Be slow in speech, drawling in tone, and monotonous in voice, if so you can best express your soul; even that would be infinitely better than to make your ministry a masquerade and yourself an actor.

But our zeal while in the act of preaching must be followed up by intense solicitude as to the after results; for if it be not so we shall have cause to question our sincerity. God will not send a harvest of souls to those who never watch or water the fields which they have sown. When the sermon is over we have only let down the net which afterwards we are to draw to shore by prayer and watchfulness. Here, I think, I cannot do better than allow a far abler advocate to plead with you, and quote the words of Dr. Watts:

"Be very solicitous about the success of your labors in the pulpit. Water the seed sown, not only with public, but secret prayer. Plead with God importunately that he would not suffer you to labor in vain. Be not like that foolish bird the ostrich, which lays her eggs in the dust, and leaves them there regardless whether they come to life or not (Job 34:14-17). God has not given her understanding, but let not this folly be your character or practice; labor, and watch, and pray, that your sermons and the fruit of your studies may become words of Divine life to souls.

"It is an observation of pious Mr. Baxter (which I have read somewhere in his works), that he has never known any considerable success from the brightest and noblest talents, nor from the most excellent kind of preaching, nor even when the preachers themselves have been truly religious—if they have not had a solicitous concern for the success of their ministrations. Let the solemn and important thought of souls being saved by our preaching, or left to perish and to be condemned to Hell through our negligence—I say, let this awful and tremendous thought dwell ever upon our spirits. We are made watchmen to the house of Israel, as Ezekiel was; and, if we give no warning of approaching danger, the souls of multitudes may perish through our neglect; but the blood of souls will be terribly required at our hands (Ezekiel 3:17, etc.)."

Such considerations should make us instant in season and out of season, and cause us at all times to be clad with zeal as with a cloak. We ought to be all alive, and always alive. A pillar of light and fire should be the preacher's fit emblem. Our ministry must be emphatic, or it will never affect these thoughtless times; and to this end our hearts must be habitually fervent, and our whole nature must be fired with an all-consuming passion for the glory of God and the good of men.

Now, my brethren, it is sadly true that holy earnestness when we once obtain it may be easily damped; and as a matter of fact it is more frequently chilled in the loneliness of a village pastorate than amid the society of warm-hearted Christian brethren. Thomas Adam, the author of *Private Thoughts*, once observed that "a poor country parson, fighting against the devil in his parish, has nobler ideas than Alexander the Great ever had"; and I will add, that he needs more than Alexander's ardor to enable him to continue victorious in his holy warfare. Sleepy Hollow and Dormer's Land will be too much for us unless we pray for daily quickening.

Yet town life has its dangers too, and zeal is apt to burn low through numerous engagements, like a fire which is scattered abroad instead of being raked together into a heap. Those incessant knocks at our door, and perpetual visits from idle people, are so many buckets of cold water thrown upon our devout zeal. We must by some means secure uninterrupted meditation, or we shall lose power. London is a peculiarly trying sphere on this account.

Zeal also is more quickly checked after long years of continuance in the same service than when novelty gives a charm to our work. Mr. Wesley says, in his fifteenth volume of *Journals and Letters*, "I know that, were I myself to preach one whole year in one place, I should preach both myself and most of my congregation asleep!" What then must it be to abide in the same pulpit for many years! In such a case it is not the pace that kills, but the length of the race. Our God is evermore the same, enduring forever, and he alone can enable us to endure even to the end. He, who at the end of twenty years' ministry among the same people is more alive than ever, is a great debtor to the quickening Spirit.

Earnestness may be, and too often is, diminished by neglect of study. If we have not exercised ourselves in the word of God, we shall not preach with the fervor and grace of the man who has fed upon the truth he delivers, and is therefore strong and ardent. An Englishman's earnestness in battle depends, according to some authorities, upon his being well fed: he has no stomach for the fight if he is starved. If we are well nourished by sound gospel food we shall be vigorous and fervent. An old blunt commander at Cadiz is described by Selden as thus addressing his soldiers: "What a shame will it be, you Englishmen, who feed upon good beef and beer, to let these rascally Spaniards beat you that eat nothing but oranges and lemons!" His philosophy and mine agree: he expected courage and valor from those who were well nourished. Brethren, never neglect your spiritual meals, or you will lack stamina and your spirits will sink. Live on the substantial doctrines of grace, and you will out-live and out-work those who delight in the pastry and syllabubs of "modern thought."

Zeal may, on the other hand, be damped by our studies. There is, no doubt, such a thing as feeding the brain at the expense of the heart, and many a man in his aspirations to be literary has rather qualified himself to write reviews than to preach sermons. A quaint evangelist was accustomed to say that Christ hung crucified beneath Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. It ought not to be so, but it has often happened that the student in college has gathered fuel, but lost the fire which is to kindle it. It will be to our everlasting disgrace if we bury our flame beneath the faggots which are intended to sustain it. If we degenerate into bookworms it will be to the old serpent's

delight, and to our own misery.

True earnestness may be greatly lessened by levity in conversation, and especially by jesting with brother ministers, in whose company we often take greater liberties than we would like to do in the society of other Christians. There are excellent reasons for our feeling at home with our brethren, but if this freedom be carried too far we shall soon feel that we have suffered damage through vanity of speech. Cheerfulness is one thing, and frivolity is another; he is a wise man who by a serious happiness of conversation steers between the dark rocks of moroseness, and the quicksands of levity.

We shall often find ourselves in danger of being deteriorated in zeal by the cold Christian people with whom we come in contact. What terrible wet blankets some professors are! Their remarks after a sermon are enough to stagger you. You think that surely you have moved the very stones to feeling, but you painfully learn that these people are utterly unaffected. You have been burning and they are freezing; you have been pleading as for life or death and they have been calculating how many seconds the sermon occupied, and grudging you the odd five minutes beyond the usual hour, which your earnestness compelled you to occupy in pleading with men's souls.

If these frost-bitten men should happen to be the officers of the church, from whom you naturally expect the warmest sympathy, the result is chilling to the last degree, and all the more so if you are young and inexperienced: it is as though an angel were confined in an iceberg. "You shall not yoke the ox and the donkey together" was a merciful precept: but when a laborious, ox-like minister comes to be yoked to a deacon who is not another ox, it becomes hard work to plough. Some crabbed professors have a great deal to answer for in this matter. One of them not so very long ago went up to an earnest young evangelist who had been doing his best, and said, "Young man, do you call that preaching?" He thought himself faithful, but he was cruel and uncourteous, and though the good brother survived the blow it was none the less brutal. Such offences against the Lord's little ones are, I hope, very rare, but they are very grievous, and tend to turn aside our hopeful youth.

Frequently the audience itself, as a whole, will damp your zeal. You can see by their very look and manner that the people are not appreciating your warm-hearted endeavors, and you feel discouraged. Those empty benches also are a serious trial, and if the place be large, and the congregation small, the influence is seriously depressing: it is not every man who can bear to be "a voice crying in the wilderness."

Disorder in the congregation also sadly afflicts sensitive speakers. The walking up the aisle of a woman with a pair of pattens, the squeak of a pair of new boots, the frequent fall of umbrellas and walking-sticks, the crying of infants, and especially the consistent lateness of half the assembly—all these tend to irritate the mind, take it off from its object, and diminish its ardor. We hardly like to confess that our hearts are so readily affected by such trifles, but it is so, and not at all to be wondered at. As pots of the most precious ointment are more often spoilt by dead flies than by dead camels, so insignificant matters will destroy earnestness more readily than greater annoyances. Under a great discouragement a man pulls himself together, and then throws himself upon his God, and receives divine strength: but under lesser depressions he may possibly worry, and the trifle will irritate and fester until serious consequences follow.

Pardon my saying that the condition of your body must be attended to, especially in the matter of eating, for any measure of excess may injure your digestion and make you stupid when you should be fervent. From the memoir of Duncan Matheson I cull an anecdote which is much to the point: "In a certain place where evangelistic meetings were being held, the lay preachers, among whom was Mr. Matheson, were sumptuously entertained at the house of a Christian gentleman. After dinner they went to the meeting, not without some difference of opinion as to the best method of conducting the services of the evening. 'The Spirit is grieved; He is not here at all, I feel it,' said one of the younger, with a whine which somewhat contrasted with his previous unbounded enjoyment of the luxuries of the table. 'Nonsense,' replied Matheson, who hated all whining and morbid spirituality; 'Nothing of the sort. You have just eaten too much dinner, and you feel heavy.'" Duncan Matheson was right, and a little more of his common sense would be a great gain to some who are ultra spiritual, and attribute all their moods of feeling to some supernatural cause when the real reason lies far nearer to hand. Has it not often happened that dyspepsia has been mistaken for backsliding, and a bad digestion has been set down as a hard heart? I say no more—a word to the wise is enough.

Many physical and mental causes may operate to create apparent lethargy where there is at heart intense earnestness. Upon some of us a disturbed night, a change in the weather, or an unkind remark, will produce the most lamentable effect. But those who complain of lack of zeal are often the most zealous people in the world, and a confession of lack of life is itself an argument that life exists, and is not without vigor. Do not spare yourselves and become self-satisfied; but, on the other hand, do not slander yourselves and sink into despondency. Your own opinion of your state is not worth much: ask the Lord to search you.

Long continued labor without visible success is another frequent damp upon zeal, though if rightly viewed it ought to be an incentive to sevenfold diligence. If non-success humbles us it is well, but if it discourages us, and especially if it leads us to think bitterly of more prosperous brethren, we ought to look about us with grave concern. It is possible that we have been faithful and have adopted wise methods, and are in our right place, and yet we have not struck the mark; we shall probably be heavily bowed down and feel

scarcely able to continue the work; but if we pluck up courage and increase our earnestness we shall one day reap a rich harvest, which will more than repay us for all our waiting. "The gardener waits for the precious fruits of the earth"; and with a holy patience begotten of zeal we must wait on, and never doubt that the time to favor Zion will yet come.

Nor must it ever be forgotten that the flesh is weak and naturally inclined to slumber. We need a constant renewal of the divine impulse which first started us in the way of service. We are not as arrows, which find their way to the target by the sole agency of the force with which they started from the bow; nor as birds, which bear within themselves their own motive power: we must be borne onward, like ships at sea, by the constant power of the heavenly wind, or we shall make no headway. Preachers sent from God are not musical boxes which, being once wound up, will play through their set tunes, but they are trumpets which are utterly mute until the living breath causes them to give forth a certain sound.

We read of some who are dumb dogs, given to slumber, and such would be the character of us all if the grace of God did not prevent it. We have need to watch against a careless, indifferent spirit, and if we do not so we shall soon be as lukewarm as Laodicea itself.

Remembering then, dear brethren, that we must be in earnest, and that we cannot counterfeit earnestness, or find a substitute for it, and that it is very easy for us to lose it, let us consider for a while the ways and means for retaining all our fervor and gaining more.

If it is to continue, our earnestness must be kindled at an immortal flame, and I know of but one—the flame of the love of Christ, which many waters cannot quench. A spark from that celestial sun will be as undying as the source from whence it came. If we can get it, yes, if we have it, we shall still be full of enthusiasm, however long we may live, however greatly we may be tried, and however much for many reasons we may be discouraged.

To continue fervent for life we must possess the fervor of heavenly life to begin with. Have we this fire? We must have the truth burnt into our souls, or it will not burn upon our lips. Do we understand this? The doctrines of grace must be part and parcel of ourselves, interwoven with the warp and woof of our being, and this can only be effected by the same hand which originally made the fabric. We shall never lose our love to Christ and our love to souls if the Lord has given them to us. The Holy Spirit makes zeal for God to be a permanent principle of life rather than a passion—does the Holy Spirit rest upon us, or is our present fervor a mere human feeling? We ought upon this point to be seriously inquisitorial with our hearts, pressing home the question, Have we the holy fire which springs from a true call to the ministry? If not, why are we here? If a man can live without preaching, let him live without preaching. If a man can be content without being a soul-winner—I had almost said he had better not attempt the work, but I had rather say—let him seek to have the stone taken out of his heart, that he may feel for perishing men. Until then, as a minister, he may do positive mischief by occupying the place of one who might have succeeded in the blessed work in which he must be a failure.

The fire of our earnestness must burn upon the hearth of faith in the truths which we preach, and faith in their power to bless mankind when the Spirit applies them to the heart. He who declares what may or what may not be true, and what he considers upon the whole to be as good as any other form of teaching, will of necessity make a very feeble preacher. How can he be zealous about that which he is not sure of? If he knows nothing of the inward power of the truth within his own heart, if he has never tasted and handled of the good word of life, how can he be enthusiastic? But if the Holy Spirit has taught us in secret places, and made our soul to understand within itself the doctrine which we are to proclaim—then shall we speak evermore with the tongue of fire!

Brother, do not begin to teach others until the Lord has taught you. It must be dreary work to parrot forth dogmas which have no interest for your heart, and carry no conviction to your understanding. I would prefer to pick oakum or turn a crank for my breakfast, like the paupers in the casual ward, rather than be the slave of a congregation and bring them spiritual meat of which I never taste myself. And then how dreadful the end of such a course must be! How fearful the account to be rendered at the last by one who publicly taught what he did not heartily believe, and perpetrated this detestable hypocrisy in the name of God!

Brethren, if the fire is brought from the right place to the right place, we have a good beginning; and the main elements of a glorious ending. Kindled by a live coal, borne to our lips from off the altar by the winged cherub, the fire has begun to feed upon our inmost spirit, and there it will burn though Satan himself should labor to stamp it out.

Yet the best flame in the word needs renewing. I know not whether immortal spirits, like the angels, drink on the wing, and feed on some superior manna prepared in Heaven for them; but the probability is that no created being, though immortal, is quite free from the necessity to receive from without sustenance for its strength. Certainly the flame of zeal in the renewed heart, however divine, must be continually fed with fresh fuel. Even the lamps of the sanctuary needed oil. Feed the flame, my brother, feed it frequently; feed it with holy thought and contemplation, especially with thought about your work, your motives in pursuing it, the design of it, the helps that are waiting for you, and the grand results of it if the Lord be with you. Dwell much upon the love of God to sinners, and the death of Christ on their behalf, and the work of the Spirit upon men's hearts. Think of what must be wrought in men's hearts before they can be saved. Remember, you are not sent to whiten tombs, but to open them, and this is a work which no man can

perform unless, like the Lord Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, he groans in spirit; and even then he is powerless apart from the Holy Spirit.

Meditate with deep solemnity upon the fate of the lost sinner, and, like Abraham, when you get up early to go to the place where you commune with God, cast an eye towards Sodom and see the smoke thereof going up like the smoke of a furnace. Shun all views of future punishment which would make it appear less terrible, and so take off the edge of your anxiety to save immortals from the quenchless flame. If men are indeed only a nobler kind of ape, and expire as the beasts, you may well enough let them die unpitied; but if their creation in the image of God involves immortality, and there is any fear that through their unbelief they will bring upon themselves endless woe, arouse yourselves to the agonies of the occasion, and be ashamed at the bare suspicion of unconcern.

Think much also of the bliss of the sinner saved, and like holy Baxter derive rich arguments for earnestness from "The Saints' Everlasting Rest." Go to the heavenly hills and gather fuel there; pile on the glorious logs of the wood of Lebanon, and the fire will burn freely and yield a sweet perfume as each piece of choice cedar glows in the flame. There will be no fear of your being lethargic if you are continually familiar with eternal realities.

Above all, feed the flame with intimate fellowship with Christ. No man was ever cold in heart, who lived with Jesus on such terms as John and Mary did of old, for he makes men's hearts burn within them. I never met with a half-hearted preacher who was much in communion with the Lord Jesus. The zeal of God's house ate up our Lord, and when we come into contact with him it begins to consume us also, and we feel that we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard in his company, nor can we help speaking of them with the fervor which comes out of actual acquaintance with them.

Those of us who have been preaching for these five-and-twenty years sometimes feel that the same work, the same subject, the same people, and the same pulpit, are together apt to beget a feeling of monotony, and monotony may soon lead on to weariness. But then we call to mind another sameness, which becomes our complete deliverance; there is the same Savior, and we may go to him in the same way as we did at the first, since he is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." In his presence we drink in the new wine and renew our youth. He is the fountain, forever flowing with the cool, refreshing water of life, and in fellowship with him we find our souls quickened into perpetual energy. Beneath his smile our long-accustomed work is always delightful, and wears a brighter charm than novelty could have conferred. We gather new manna for our people every morning, and as we go to distribute it we feel an anointing of fresh oil distilling upon us. "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Newly come from the presence of him that walks among the golden candlesticks, we are ready to write or speak unto the churches in the power which he alone can give. Soldiers of Christ, you can only be worthy of your Captain by abiding in fellowship with him, and listening to his voice as Joshua did when he stood by Jordan, and inquired, "What says my Lord unto his servant?"

Fan the flame as well as feed it. Fan it with much supplication. We cannot be too urgent with one another upon this point: no language can be too vehement with which to implore ministers to pray. There is for our brethren and ourselves an absolute necessity for prayer.

Necessity!—I hardly like to talk of that, let me rather speak of the deliciousness of prayer—the wondrous sweetness and divine felicity which come to the soul that lives in the atmosphere of prayer. John Fox said, "The time we spend with God in secret is the sweetest time, and the best improved. Therefore, if you love your life, be in love with prayer." The devout Mr. Hervey resolved on the bed of sickness, "If God shall spare my life, I will read less and pray more." John Cooke, of Maidenhead, wrote, "The business, the pleasure, the honor, and advantage of prayer press on my spirit with increasing force every day." A deceased pastor when drawing near his end, exclaimed, "I wish I had prayed more"; that wish many of us might utter.

There should be special seasons for devotion, and it is well to maintain them with regularity; but the spirit of prayer is even better than the habit of prayer: to pray without ceasing is better than praying at intervals. It will be a happy circumstance if we can frequently bow the knee with devout brethren, and I think it ought to be a rule with us ministers never to separate without a word of prayer. Much more intercession would rise to Heaven if we made a point of this, especially those of us who have been fellow-students. If it be possible, let prayer and praise sanctify each meeting of friend with friend.

It is a refreshing practice to have a minute or two of supplication in the vestry before preaching if you can call in three or four warm-hearted deacons or other brethren. It always nerves me for the fight. But, for all that, to fan your earnestness to a vehement flame you should seek the spirit of continual prayer, so as to pray in the Holy Spirit, everywhere and always; in the study, in the vestry, and in the pulpit.

It is well to be pleading evermore with God, when sitting down in the pulpit, when rising to give out the hymn, when reading the chapter, and while delivering the sermon; holding up one hand to God empty, in order to receive, and with the other hand dispensing to the people what the Lord bestows. Be in preaching like a conduit pipe between the everlasting and infinite supplies of Heaven and the all but boundless needs of men, and to do this you must reach Heaven, and keep up the communication without a

break. Pray for the people while you preach to them; speak with God for them while you are speaking with them for God. Only so can you expect to be continually in earnest.

A man does not often rise from his knees unearnest; or, if he does, he had better return to prayer until the sacred flame descends upon his soul. Adam Clarke once said, "Study yourself to death, and then pray yourself alive again": it was a wise sentence. Do not attempt the first without the second; neither dream that the second can be honestly accomplished without the first. Work and pray, as well as watch and pray; but pray always.

Stir the fire also by frequent attempts at fresh service. Shake yourself out of routine by breaking away from the familiar fields of service and reclaiming virgin soil. I suggest to you, as a subordinate but very useful means of keeping the heart fresh, the frequent addition of new work to your usual engagements. I would say to brethren who are soon going away from the College, to settle in spheres where they will come into contact with but few superior minds, and perhaps will be almost alone in the higher walks of spirituality—look well to yourselves that you do not become flat, stale, and unprofitable, and keep yourselves sweet by maintaining an enterprising spirit. You will have a good share of work to do, and few to help you in it, and the years will grind along heavily; watch against this, and use all means to prevent your becoming dull and sleepy, and among them use that which experience leads me to press upon you.

I find it good for myself to have some new work always on hand. The old and usual enterprises must be kept up, but somewhat must be added to them. It should be with us as with the squatters upon our commons, the fence of our garden must roll outward a foot or two, and enclose a little more of the common every year. Never say "it is enough," nor accept the policy of "rest and be thankful." Do all you possibly can, and then do a little more. I do not know by what process the gentleman who advertises that he can make short people taller attempts the task, but I should imagine that if any result could be produced in the direction of adding a cubit to one's stature it would be by every morning reaching up as high as you possibly can on tiptoe, and, having done that, trying day by day to reach a little higher. This is certainly the way to grow mentally and spiritually, "reaching forth to that which is before."

If the old should become just a little stale, add fresh endeavors to it, and the whole mass will be leavened anew. Try it and you will soon discover the virtue of breaking up fresh ground, invading new provinces of the enemy, and scaling fresh heights to set the banner of the Lord thereon. This is, of course, a secondary expedient to those of which we have already spoken, but still it is a very useful one, and may greatly benefit you.

In a country town, say of two thousand inhabitants, you will, after a time, feel, "Well, now, I have done about all I can in this place." What then? There is a hamlet some four miles off—set about opening a room there. If one hamlet is occupied, make an excursion to another, and spy out the land, and set the relief of its spiritual destitution before you as an ambition. When the first place is supplied, think of a second. It is your duty, it will also be your safeguard.

Everybody knows what interest there is in fresh work. A gardener will become weary of his toil unless he is allowed to introduce new flowers into the hothouse, or to cut the beds upon the lawn in a novel shape; all monotonous work is unnatural and wearying to the mind, therefore it is wisdom to give variety to your labor.

Far more weighty is the advice: keep close to God, and keep close to your fellow men whom you are seeking to bless. Abide under the shadow of the Almighty, dwell where Jesus manifests himself, and live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Your very life lies in this. Whitefield mentions a lad who was so vividly conscious of the presence of God that he would generally walk the roads with his hat off. How I wish we were always in such a mood. It would be no trouble to maintain earnestness then.

Take care, also, to be on most familiar terms with those whose souls are committed to your care. Stand in the stream and fish. Many preachers are utterly ignorant as to how the bulk of the people are living; they are at home among books, but quite at sea among men. What would you think of a botanist who seldom saw real flowers, or an astronomer who never spent a night with the stars? Would they be worthy of the name of men of science? Neither can a minister of the gospel be anything but a mere empiric unless he mingles with men, and studies character for himself. "Studies from the life!" Gentlemen, we must have plenty of these if we are to paint to the life in our sermons. Read men as well as books, and love men rather than opinions, or you will be inanimate preachers.

Get into close quarters with those who are in an anxious state. Watch their difficulties, their throes and pangs of conscience. It will help to make you earnest when you see their eagerness to find peace. On the other hand, when you see how little earnest the bulk of men remain, it may help to make you more zealous for their arousing. Rejoice with those who are finding the Savior—this is a grand means of revival for your own soul. When you are enabled to bring a mourner to Jesus you will feel quite young again. It will be as oil to your bones to hear a weeping penitent exclaim, "I see it all now! I believe, and my burden is gone: I am saved." Sometimes the rapture of newborn souls will electrify you into apostolic intensity. Who could not preach after having seen souls converted? Be on the spot when grace at last captures the lost sheep, that by sharing in the Great Shepherd's rejoicings you may renew your youth. Be in at the death with sinners, and you will be repaid for the weary chase after them which it may be you have followed for months and years. Grasp them with firm hold of love, and say, "Yes, by the grace of God, I have really won these souls;"

and your enthusiasm will flame forth.

If you have to labor in a large town I should recommend you to familiarize yourself, wherever your place of worship may be, with the poverty, ignorance, and drunkenness of the place. Go if you can with a City missionary into the poorest quarter, and you will see that which will astonish you, and the actual sight of the disease will make you eager to reveal the remedy. There is enough of evil to be seen even in the best streets of our great cities, but there is an unutterable depth of horror in the condition of the slums. As a doctor walks the hospitals, so ought you to traverse the lanes and courts to behold the mischief which sin has wrought. It is enough to make a man weep tears of blood to gaze upon the desolation which sin has made in the earth. One day with a devoted missionary would be a fine termination to your College course, and a fit preparation for work in your own sphere. See the masses living in their sins, defiled with drinking and Sabbath-breaking, rioting and blaspheming; and see them dying sullen and hardened, or terrified and despairing—surely this will rekindle expiring zeal if anything can do it. The world is full of grinding poverty, and crushing sorrow; shame and death are the portion of thousands, and it needs a great gospel to meet the dire necessities of men's souls. Truly it is so. Do you doubt it? Go and see for yourselves. Thus will you learn to preach a great salvation, and magnify the great Savior, not with your mouth only, but with your heart; and thus will you be married to your work beyond all possibility of deserting it.

Death-beds are grand schools for us. They are intended to act as tonics to brace us to our work. I have come down from the bedchambers of the dying, and thought that everybody was mad, and myself most of all. I have grudged the earnestness which men devoted to earthly things, and half said to myself—Why was that man driving along so hastily? Why was that woman walking out in such finery? Since they were all to die so soon, I thought nothing worth their doing but preparing to meet their God. To be often where men die will help us to teach them both to die and to live. M'Cheyne was accustomed to visit his sick or dying hearers on the Saturday afternoon, for, as he told Dr. James Hamilton, "Before preaching he liked to look over the verge."

I pray you, moreover, measure your work in the light of God. Are you God's servant or not? If you are, how can your heart be cold? Are you sent by a dying Savior to proclaim his love and win the reward of his wounds, or are you not? If you are, how can you flag? Is the Spirit of God upon you? Has the Lord anointed you to preach glad tidings to the poor? If he has not, do not pretend to it. If he has, go in this your might, and the Lord shall be your strength. Yours is not a trade, or a profession. Assuredly if you measure it by the tradesman's measure it is the poorest business on the face of the earth. Consider it as a profession—who would not prefer any other, so far as golden gains or worldly honors are concerned? But if it be a divine calling, and you a miracle-worker, dwelling in the supernatural, and working not for time but for eternity, then you belong to a nobler guild, and to a higher fraternity than any that spring of earth and deal with time. Look at it aright, and you will own that it is a grand thing to be as poor as your Lord, if, like him, you may make many rich. You will feel that it is a glorious thing to be as unknown and despised as were your Lord's first followers, because you are making him known, whom to know is life eternal. You will be satisfied to be anything or to be nothing, and the thought of self will not enter your mind, or only cross it to be scouted as a baseness not to be tolerated by a consecrated man. There is the point. Measure your work as it should be measured, and I am not afraid that your earnestness will be diminished. Gaze upon it by the light of the judgment day, and in view of the eternal rewards of faithfulness.

Oh, brethren, the present joy of having saved a soul is overwhelmingly delightful; you have felt it, I trust, and know it now. To save a soul from going down to perdition brings to us a little Heaven below, but what must it be at the day of judgment to meet spirits redeemed by Christ, who learned the news of their redemption from our lips! We look forward to a blissful Heaven in communion with our Master, but we shall also know the added joy of meeting those loved ones whom we led to Jesus by our ministry. Let us endure every cross, and despise all shame, for the joy which Jesus sets before us of winning men for him.

One more thought may help to keep up our earnestness. Consider the great evil which will certainly come upon us and upon our hearers if we be negligent in our work. "They shall perish"—is not that a dreadful sentence? It is to me quite as awful as that which follows it, "but their blood will I require at the watchman's hand!" How shall we describe the doom of an unfaithful minister? And every unearnest minister is unfaithful. I would infinitely prefer to be consigned to Tophet as a murderer of men's bodies, than as a destroyer of men's souls; neither do I know of any condition in which a man can perish so fatally, so infinitely, as in that of the man who preaches a gospel which he does not believe, and assumes the office of pastor over a people whose good he does not intensely desire. Let us pray to be found faithful always, and ever. God grant that the Holy Spirit may make and keep us so.

Lecture 22. The Blind Eye and the Deaf Ear

Having often said in this room that a minister ought to have one blind eye and one deaf ear, I have excited the curiosity of several brethren, who have requested an explanation; for it appears to them, as it does also to me, that the keener eyes and ears we have the better. Well, gentlemen, since the text is somewhat mysterious, you shall have the exegesis of it.

A part of my meaning is expressed in plain language by Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes (7:21): "Also take no heed unto all

words that are spoken; lest you hear your servant curse you." The margin says, "Give not your heart to all words that are spoken"—do not take them to heart or let them weigh with you, do not notice them, or act as if you heard them. You cannot stop people's tongues, and therefore the best thing is to stop your own ears and never mind what is spoken. There is a world of idle chit-chat abroad, and he who takes note of it will have enough to do. He will find that even those who live with him are not always singing his praises, and that when he has displeased his most faithful servants they have, in the heat of the moment, spoken fierce words which it would be better for him not to have heard. Who has not, under temporary irritation, said that of another which he has afterwards regretted? It is the part of the generous to treat passionate words as if they had never been uttered. When a man is in an angry mood it is wise to walk away from him, and leave off strife before it be meddled with; and if we are compelled to hear hasty language, we must endeavor to obliterate it from the memory, and say with David, "But I, as a deaf man, heard not. I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."

Tacitus describes a wise man as saying to one that railed at him, "You are lord of your tongue, but I am also master of my ears"—you may say what you please, but I will only hear what I choose. We cannot shut our ears as we do our eyes, for we have no ear-lids, and yet, as we read of him that "stops his ears from hearing of blood," it is, no doubt, possible to seal the portal of the ear so that nothing contraband shall enter. We would say of the general gossip of the village, and of the unadvised words of angry friends—do not hear them, or if you must hear them, do not lay them to heart, for you also have talked idly and angrily in your day, and would even now be in an awkward position if you were called to account for every word that you have spoken, even about your dearest friend.

Thus Solomon argued as he closed the passage which we have quoted, "For oftentimes also your own heart knows that you yourself likewise have cursed others."

In enlarging upon my text, let me say first—when you commence your ministry make up your mind to begin with a clean sheet; be deaf and blind to the longstanding differences which may survive in the church. As soon as you enter upon your pastorate you may be waited upon by people who are anxious to secure your adhesion to their side in a family quarrel or church dispute; be deaf and blind to these people, and assure them that bygones must be bygones with you, and that as you have not inherited your predecessor's cupboard, you do not mean to eat his cold meat. If any flagrant injustice has been done, be diligent to set it right; but if it be a mere feud, bid the quarrelsome party cease from it, and tell him once for all that you will have nothing to do with it.

The answer of Gallio will almost suit you: "But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things." Acts 18:15.

When I came to New Park Street Chapel as a young man from the country, and was chosen pastor, I was speedily interviewed by a good man who had left the church, having, as he said, been "treated shamefully." He mentioned the names of half-a-dozen people, all prominent members of the church, who had behaved in a very unchristian manner to him—he, poor innocent sufferer, having been a model of patience and holiness. I learned his character at once from what he said about others (a mode of judging which has never misled me), and I made up my mind how to act. I told him that the church had been in a sadly unsettled state, and that the only way out of the snarl was for everyone to forget the past and begin again. He said that the lapse of years did not alter facts, and I replied that it would alter a man's view of them if in that time he had become a wiser and a better man. However, I added, that all the past had gone away with my predecessors, that he must follow them to their new spheres, and settle matters with them, for I would not touch the affair with a pair of tongs.

He waxed somewhat warm, but I allowed him to radiate until he was cool again, and we shook hands and parted. He was a good man, but constructed upon an uncomfortable principle, so that he came across the path of others in a very awkward manner at times, and if I had gone into his narrative and examined his case, there would have been no end to the strife. I am quite certain that, for my own success, and for the prosperity of the church, I took the wisest course by applying my blind eye to all disputes which dated previously to my advent.

It is the extreme of unwisdom for a young man fresh from college, or from another charge, to allow himself to be earwigged by a clique, and to be bribed by kindness and flattery to become a partisan, and so to ruin himself with one-half of his people. Know nothing of parties and cliques, but be the pastor of all the flock, and care for all alike. Blessed are the peacemakers, and one sure way of peacemaking is to let the fire of contention alone. Neither fan it, nor stir it, nor add fuel to it—but let it go out by itself. Begin your ministry with one blind eye and one deaf ear.

I should recommend the use of the same faculty, or lack of faculty, with regard to finance in the matter of your own salary. There are some occasions, especially in raising a new church, when you may have no deacon who is qualified to manage that department, and, therefore, you may feel called upon to undertake it yourselves. In such a case you are not to be censured, you ought even to be commended. Many a time also the work would come to an end altogether if the preacher did not act as his own deacon, and find supplies both temporal and spiritual by his own exertions. To these exceptional cases I have nothing to say but that I admire the struggling worker and deeply sympathize with him, for he is over-weighted, and is apt to be a less successful soldier for his Lord

because he is entangled with the affairs of this life.

In churches which are well established, and afford a decent maintenance, the minister will do well to supervise all things, but interfere with nothing. If deacons cannot be trusted they ought not to be deacons at all, but if they are worthy of their office they are worthy of our confidence. I know that instances occur in which they are sadly incompetent and yet must be borne with, and in such a state of things the pastor must open the eye which otherwise would have remained blind. Rather than the management of church funds should become a scandal we must resolutely interfere, but if there is no urgent call for us to do so we had better believe in the division of labor, and let deacons do their own work. We have the same right as other officers to deal with financial matters if we please, but it will be our wisdom as much as possible to let them alone, if others will manage them for us.

When the purse is bare, the wife sickly, and the children numerous, the preacher must speak if the church does not properly provide for him; but to be constantly bringing before the people requests for an increase of income is not wise. When a minister is poorly remunerated, and he feels that he is worth more, and that the church could give him more—he ought kindly, boldly, and firmly to communicate with the deacons first, and if they do not take it up he should then mention it to the brethren in a sensible, business-like way, not as craving a charity, but as putting it to their sense of honor, that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." Let him say outright what he thinks, for there is nothing to be ashamed of, but there would be much more cause for shame if he dishonored himself and the cause of God by plunging into debt. Let him therefore speak to the point in a proper spirit to the proper people, and there end the matter, and not resort to secret complaining.

Faith in God should tone down our concern about temporalities, and enable us to practice what we preach, namely, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink; or, how shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." Some who have pretended to live by faith have had a very shrewd way of drawing out donations by turns of the indirect corkscrew. But you should either ask plainly, like men, or you will leave it to the Christian feeling of your people, and turn to the items and modes of church finance a blind eye and a deaf ear.

The blind eye and the deaf ear will come in exceedingly well in connection with the gossips of the place. Every church, and, for the matter of that, every village and family, is plagued with certain Mrs. Grundys, who drink tea and talk vitriol. They are never quiet, but buzz around to the great annoyance of those who are devout and practical. No one needs to look far for perpetual motion, he has only to watch their tongues. At tea-meetings, Dorcas meetings, and other gatherings, they practice vivisection upon the characters of their neighbors, and of course they are eager to try their knives upon the minister, the minister's wife, the minister's children, the minister's wife's bonnet, the dress of the minister's daughter, and how many new ribbons she has worn for the last six months, and so on ad infinitum.

There are also certain people who are never so happy as when they are "grieved to the heart" to have to tell the minister that Mr. A. is a snake in the grass, that he is quite mistaken in thinking so well of Messrs. B. and C., and that they have heard innocently overheard that Mr. D. and his wife are badly matched. Then follows a long string about Mrs. E., who says that she and Mrs. F. overheard Mrs. G. say to Mrs. H. that Mrs. J. should say that Mr. K. and Miss L. were going to move from the chapel and hear Mr. M., and all because of what old N. said to young O. about that Miss P.

Never listen to such people. Do as Nelson did when he put his blind eye to the telescope and declared that he did not see the signal, and therefore would go on with the battle. Let the creatures buzz, and do not even hear them, unless indeed they buzz so much concerning one person that the matter threatens to be serious; then it will be well to talk in sober earnestness to them. Assure them that you are obliged to have facts definitely before you, that your memory is not very tenacious, that you have many things to think of, that you are always afraid of making any mistake in such matters, and that if they would be good enough to write down what they have to say the case would be more fully before you, and you could give more time to its consideration. Mrs. Grundy will not do that; she has a great objection to making clear and definite statements; she prefers talking at random.

I heartily wish that by any process we could put down gossip, but I suppose that it will never be done so long as the human race continues what it is, for James tells us that "every kind of beast, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by mankind—but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." What can't be cured must be endured, and the best way of enduring it is not to listen to it.

Thin-skinned people should learn this motto by heart. The talk of the village is never worthy of notice, and you should never take any interest in it except to mourn over the malice and heartlessness of which it is too often the indicator.

Mayow in his Plain Preaching very forcibly says, "If you were to see a woman killing a farmer's ducks and geese, for the sake of having one of the feathers, you would see a person acting as we do when we speak evil of anyone, for the sake of the pleasure we feel in evil speaking. For the pleasure we feel is not worth a single feather, and the pain we give is often greater than a man feels at the loss of his property." Insert a remark of this kind now and then in a sermon, when there is no special gossip abroad, and it may be of some benefit to the more sensible—I quite despair of the rest.

Above all, never join in tale-bearing yourself, and beg your wife to abstain from it also. Some men are too talkative by half, and remind me of the young man who was sent to Socrates to learn oratory. On being introduced to the philosopher he talked so incessantly that Socrates asked for double fees. "Why charge me double?" said the young fellow. "Because," said the orator, "I must teach you two sciences: the one how to hold your tongue and the other how to speak." The first science is the more difficult, but aim at proficiency in it, or you will suffer greatly, and create trouble without end.

Avoid with your whole soul that spirit of SUSPICION which sours some men's lives, and to all things from which you might harshly draw an unkind inference turn a blind eye and a deaf ear. Suspicion makes a man a torment to himself and a spy towards others. Once begin to suspect, and causes for distrust will multiply around you, and your very suspiciousness will create the major part of them. Many a friend has been transformed into an enemy by being suspected. Do not, therefore, look about you with the eyes of mistrust, nor listen as an eavesdropper with the quick ear of fear. To go about the congregation ferreting out disaffection, like a gamekeeper after rabbits, is a mean employment, and is generally rewarded most sorrowfully.

When nothing is to be discovered which will help us to love others, we had better cease from the inquiry, for we may drag to light that which may be the commencement of years of contention. I am not, of course, referring to cases requiring discipline which must be thoroughly investigated and boldly dealt with, but I have upon my mind mere personal matters where the main sufferer is yourself; here it is always best not to know, nor to wish to know, what is being said about you, either by friends or foes. Those who praise us are probably as much mistaken as those who abuse us, and the one may be regarded as a set off to the other, if indeed it be worth while taking any account at all of man's judgment. If we have the approbation of our God, certified by a peaceful conscience, we can afford to be indifferent to the opinions of our fellow men, whether they commend or condemn us. If we cannot reach this point we are babes and not men.

Some are childishly anxious to know their friend's opinion of them, and if it contain the smallest element of dissent or censure, they regard him as an enemy forthwith. Surely we are not popes, and do not wish our hearers to regard us as infallible! We have known men become quite enraged at a perfectly fair and reasonable remark, and regard an honest friend as an opponent who delighted to find fault; this misrepresentation on the one side has soon produced heat on the other, and strife has ensued. How much better is gentle forbearance! You must be able to bear criticism, or you are not fit to be at the head of a congregation; and you must let the critic go without reckoning him among your deadly foes, or you will prove yourself a mere weakling. It is wisest always to show double kindness where you have been severely handled by one who thought it his duty to do so, for he is probably an honest man and worth winning. He who in your early days hardly thinks you fit for the pastorate, may yet become your firmest defender if he sees that you grow in grace, and advance in qualification for the work; do not, therefore, regard him as a foe for truthfully expressing his doubts; does not your own heart confess that his fears were not altogether groundless? Turn your deaf ear to what you judge to be his harsh criticism, and endeavor to preach better.

People from love of change, from pique, from advance in their tastes, and other causes, may become uneasy under our ministry, and it is well for us to know nothing about it. Perceiving the danger, we must not betray our discovery, but bestir ourselves to improve our sermons, hoping that the good people will be better fed and forget their dissatisfaction. If they are truly gracious people, the incipient evil will pass away, and no real discontent will arise, or if it does you must not provoke it by suspecting it.

Where I have known that there existed a measure of disaffection to myself, I have not recognized it, unless it has been forced upon me, but have, on the contrary, acted towards the opposing person with all the more courtesy and friendliness, and I have never heard any more of the matter. If I had treated the good man as an opponent, he would have done his best to take the part assigned him, and carry it out to his own credit; but I felt that he was a Christian man, and had a right to dislike me if he thought fit, and that if he did so I ought not to think unkindly of him; and therefore I treated him as one who was a friend to my Lord, if not to me, gave him some work to do which implied confidence in him, made him feel at home, and by degrees won him to be an attached friend as well as a fellow-worker.

The best of people are sometimes out at elbows and say unkind things; we would be glad if our friends could quite forget what we said when we were peevish and irritable, and it will be Christlike to act towards others in this matter as we would wish them to do towards us. Never make a brother remember that he once uttered a hard speech in reference to yourself. If you see him in a happier mood, do not mention the former painful occasion: if he is a man of right spirit he will in future be unwilling to vex a pastor who has treated him so generously, and if he be a mere boor it is a pity to hold any argument with him, and therefore the past had better go by default.

It would be better to be deceived a hundred times, than to live a life of suspicion. It is intolerable. The miser who traverses his chamber at midnight and hears a burglar in every falling leaf is not more wretched than the minister who believes that plots are hatching against him, and that reports to his disadvantage are being spread.

I remember a brother who believed that he was being poisoned, and was persuaded that even the seat he sat upon and the clothes he wore had by some subtle chemistry become saturated with death; his life was a perpetual scare, and such is the existence of a

minister when he mistrusts all around him.

Nor is suspicion merely a source of disquietude, it is a moral evil, and injures the character of the man who harbors it. Suspicion in kings creates tyranny, in husbands jealousy, and in ministers bitterness; such bitterness as in spirit dissolves all the ties of the pastoral relation, eating like a corrosive acid into the very soul of the office and making it a curse rather than a blessing. When once this terrible evil has curdled all the milk of human kindness in a man's bosom, he becomes more fit for the detective police force than for the ministry; like a spider, he begins to cast out his lines, and fashions a web of tremulous threads, all of which lead up to himself and warn him of the least touch of even the tiniest midge.

There he sits in the center, a mass of sensation, all nerves and raw wounds, excitable and excited, a self-immolated martyr drawing the blazing faggots about him, and apparently anxious to be burned. The most faithful friend is unsafe under such conditions. The most careful avoidance of offence will not secure immunity from mistrust, but will probably be construed into cunning and cowardice. Society is almost as much in danger from a suspecting man as from a mad dog, for he snaps on all sides without reason, and scatters right and left the foam of his madness. It is vain to reason with the victim of this folly, for with perverse ingenuity he turns every argument the wrong way, and makes your plea for confidence another reason for mistrust. It is sad that he cannot see the iniquity of his groundless censure of others, especially of those who have been his best friends and the firmest upholders of the cause of Christ.

No one ought to be made an offender for a word; but, when suspicion rules, even silence becomes a crime. Brethren, shun this vice by renouncing the love of self. Judge it to be a small matter what men think or say of you, and care only for their treatment of your Lord. If you are naturally sensitive do not indulge the weakness, nor allow others to play upon it. Would it not be a great degradation of your office if you were to keep an army of spies to collect information as to all that your people said of you? And yet it amounts to this if you allow certain busybodies to bring you all the gossip of the place. Drive the creatures away! Abhor those mischief-making, tattling handmaidens to strife. Those who will fetch will carry, and no doubt the gossips go from your house and report every observation which falls from your lips, with plenty of garnishing of their own. Remember that, as the receiver is as bad as the thief, so the hearer of scandal is a sharer in the guilt of it. If there were no listening ears, there would be no talebearing tongues. While you are a buyer of ill wares the demand will create the supply, and the factories of falsehood will be working full time. No one wishes to become a creator of lies, and yet he who hears slanders with pleasure and believes them with readiness, will hatch many a brood into active life.

Solomon says "a whisper separates chief friends" (Proverbs 16:28). Insinuations are thrown out, and jealousies aroused, until "mutual coolness ensues, and neither can understand why; each wonders what can possibly be the cause. Thus the firmest, the longest, the warmest, and most confiding attachments, the sources of life's sweetest joys, are broken up perhaps forever." This is work worthy of the arch-fiend himself, but it could never be done if men lived out of the atmosphere of suspicion. As it is, the world is full of sorrow through this cause, a sorrow as sharp as it is superfluous. This is grievous indeed!

Campbell eloquently remarks, "The ruins of old friendships are a more melancholy spectacle to me than those of desolated palaces. They exhibit the heart which was once lighted up with joy all damp and deserted, and haunted by those birds of ill omen that nestle in ruins." O suspicion, what desolations you have made in the earth!

Learn to disbelieve those who have no faith in their brethren. Suspect those who would lead you to suspect others. A resolute unbelief in all the scandalmongers will do much to repress their mischievous energies. Matthew Poole in his Cripplegate Chapter says, "Common fame has lost its reputation long since, and I do not know anything which it has done in our day to regain it; therefore it ought not to be credited. How few reports there are of any kind which, when they come to be examined, we do not find to be false! For my part, I reckon, if I believe one report in twenty, I make a very liberal allowance. Especially distrust reproaches and evil reports, because these spread fastest, as being grateful to most people, who suppose their own reputation to be never so well grounded as when it is built upon the ruins of other men's." Because the people who would render you mistrustful of your friends are a sorry set, and because suspicion is in itself a wretched and tormenting vice—resolve to turn towards the whole business your blind eye and your deaf ear.

Need I say a word or two about the wisdom of never hearing what was not meant for you. The eavesdropper is a base person, very little if anything better than the common informer; and he who says he overheard may be considered to have heard over and above what he should have done.

Jeremy Taylor wisely and justly observes, "Never listen at the door or window, for besides that it contains in it a danger and a snare, it is also invading my neighbor's privacy, and a-laying that open, which he therefore encloses that it might not be open." It is a well-worn proverb that listeners seldom hear any good of themselves. Listening is a sort of larceny, but the goods stolen are never a pleasure to the thief. Information obtained by clandestine means must, in all but extreme cases, be more injury than benefit to a cause. The magistrate may judge it expedient to obtain evidence by such means, but I cannot imagine a case in which a minister should do so. Ours is a mission of grace and peace; we are not prosecutors who search out condemnatory evidence, but friends

whose love would cover a multitude of offences. The peeping eyes of Canaan, the son of Ham, shall never be in our employ; we prefer the pious delicacy of Shem and Japhet, who went backward and covered the shame which the child of evil had published with glee.

To opinions and remarks about yourself, turn also as a general rule the blind eye and the deaf ear. Public men must expect public criticism, and as the public cannot be regarded as infallible, public men may expect to be criticized in a way which is neither fair nor pleasant. To all honest and just remarks we are bound to give due measure of heed, but to the bitter verdict of prejudice, the frivolous faultfinding of men of fashion, the stupid utterances of the ignorant, and the fierce denunciations of opponents—we may very safely turn a deaf ear.

We cannot expect those to approve of us whom we condemn by our testimony against their favorite sins; their commendation would show that we had missed our mark. We naturally look to be approved by our own people, the members of our churches, and the adherents of our congregations, and when they make observations which show that they are not very great admirers, we may be tempted to discouragement if not to anger: herein lies a snare.

When I was about to leave my village charge for London, one of the old men prayed that I might be "delivered from the bleating of the sheep." For the life of me I could not imagine what he meant, but the riddle is plain now, and I have learned to offer the prayer myself. Too much consideration of what is said by our people, whether it be in praise or in depreciation, is not good for us. If we dwell on high with "that great Shepherd of the sheep" we shall care little for all the confused bleatings around us; but if we become "carnal, and walk as men," we shall have little rest if we listen to this, that, and the other which every poor sheep may bleat about us.

Perhaps it is quite true that you were uncommonly dull last Sabbath morning, but there was no need that Mrs. Clack should come and tell you that Deacon Jones thought so. It is more than probable that having been out in the country all the previous week, your preaching was very like milk and water, but there can be no necessity for your going round among the people to discover whether they noticed it or not. Is it not enough that your conscience is uneasy upon the point? Endeavor to improve for the future, but do not want to hear all that every Jack, Tom, and Mary may have to say about it.

On the other hand, you were on the high horse in your last sermon, and finished with quite a flourish of trumpets, and you feel considerable anxiety to know what impression you produced. Repress your curiosity! It will do you no good to inquire. If the people should happen to agree with your verdict, it will only feed your pitiful vanity, and if they think otherwise your fishing for their praise will injure you in their esteem. In any case it is all about yourself, and this is a poor theme to be anxious about; play the man, and do not demean yourself by seeking compliments like little children when dressed in new clothes, who say, "See my pretty frock."

Have you not by this time discovered that flattery is as injurious as it is pleasant? It softens the mind and makes you more sensitive to slander. In proportion as praise pleases you, censure will pain you. Besides, it is a crime to be taken off from your great object of glorifying the Lord Jesus by petty considerations as to your little self, and, if there were no other reason, this ought to weigh much with you. Pride is a deadly sin, and will grow without your borrowing the parish water-cart to quicken it. Forget expressions which feed your vanity, and if you find yourself relishing the unwholesome morsels, then confess the sin with deep humiliation.

Payson showed that he was strong in the Lord when he wrote to his mother, "You must not, certainly, my dear mother, say one word which even looks like an intimation that you think me advancing in grace. I cannot bear it. All the people here, whether friends or enemies, conspire to ruin me. Satan and my own heart, of course, will lend a hand; and if you join too, I fear all the cold water which Christ can throw upon my pride will not prevent its breaking out into a destructive flame. As certainly as anybody flatters and caresses me, my heavenly Father has to whip me: and an unspeakable mercy it is that he condescends to do it. I can, it is true, easily muster a hundred reasons why I should not be proud, but pride will not mind reason, nor anything else but a good drubbing. Even at this moment I feel it tingling in my fingers' ends, and seeking to guide my pen."

Knowing something myself of those secret whippings which our good Father administers to his servants when he sees them unduly exalted, I heartily add my own solemn warnings against your pampering the flesh by listening to the praises of the kindest friends you have. They are injudicious, and you must beware of them.

A sensible friend who will unsparingly criticize you from week to week will be a far greater blessing to you than a thousand indiscriminating admirers—if you have sense enough to bear his treatment, and grace enough to be thankful for it. When I was preaching at the Surrey Gardens, an unknown censor of great ability used to send me a weekly list of my mispronunciations and other slips of speech. He never signed his name, and that was my only cause of complaint against him, for he left me in a debt which I could not acknowledge. I take this opportunity of confessing my obligations to him, for with genial temper, and an evident desire to benefit me—he marked down most relentlessly everything which he supposed me to have said incorrectly. Concerning some of these corrections he was in error himself, but for the most part he was right, and his remarks enabled me to perceive and avoid many mistakes. I looked for his weekly memoranda with much interest, and I trust I am all the better for them. If I had repeated a sentence two or three Sundays before, he would say, "See same expression in such a sermon," mentioning number and page. He

remarked on one occasion that I too often quoted the line

"Nothing in my hands I bring," and, he added, "we are sufficiently informed of the vacuity of your hands." He demanded my authority for calling a man covechus; and so on.

Possibly some young men might have been discouraged, if not irritated, by such severe criticisms, but they would have been very foolish, for in resenting such correction they would have been throwing away a valuable aid to progress. No money can purchase outspoken honest judgment, and when we can get it for nothing let us utilize it to the fullest extent. The worst of it is that of those who offer their judgments, few are qualified to form them, and we shall be pestered with foolish, impertinent remarks, unless we turn to them all the blind eye and the deaf ear.

In the case of false reports against yourself, for the most part use the deaf ear. Unfortunately liars are not yet extinct, and, like Richard Baxter and John Bunyan, you may be accused of crimes which your soul abhors. Be not staggered thereby, for this trial has befallen the very best of men, and even your Lord did not escape the envenomed tongue of falsehood. In almost all cases it is the wisest course to let such things die a natural death. A great lie, if unnoticed, is like a big fish out of water, it dashes and plunges and beats itself to death in a short time. To answer it is to supply it with its element, and help it to a longer life.

Falsehoods usually carry their own refutation somewhere about them, and sting themselves to death. Some lies especially have a peculiar smell, which betrays their rottenness to every honest nose. If you are disturbed by them the object of their invention is partly answered, but your silent endurance disappoints malice and gives you a partial victory, which God in his care of you will soon turn into a complete deliverance. Your blameless life will be your best defense, and those who have seen it will not allow you to be condemned so readily as your slanderers expect. Only abstain from fighting your own battles, and in nine cases out of ten your accusers will gain nothing by their malevolence but chagrin for themselves and contempt from others.

To prosecute the slanderer is very seldom wise. I remember a beloved servant of Christ who in his youth was very sensitive, and, being falsely accused, proceeded against the person at law. An apology was offered, it withdrew every iota of the charge, and was most ample, but the good man insisted upon its being printed in the newspapers, and the result convinced him of his own unwisdom. Multitudes, who would otherwise have never heard of the libel, asked what it meant, and made comments thereon, generally concluding with the sage remark that he must have done something imprudent to provoke such an accusation. He was heard to say that so long as he lived he would never resort to such a method again, for he felt that the public apology had done him more harm than the slander itself.

Standing as we do in a position which makes us choice targets for the devil and his allies, our best course is to defend our innocence by our silence and leave our reputation with God. Yet there are exceptions to this general rule. When distinct, definite, public charges are made against a man he is bound to answer them, and answer them in the clearest and most open manner. To decline all investigation is in such a case practically to plead guilty, and whatever may be the mode of putting it, the general public ordinarily regard a refusal to reply as a proof of guilt. Under mere worry and annoyance it is by far the best to be altogether passive, but when the matter assumes more serious proportions, and our accuser defies us to a defense, we are bound to meet his charges with honest statements of fact. In every instance counsel should be sought of the Lord as to how to deal with slanderous tongues, and in the outcome innocence will be vindicated and falsehood convicted.

Some ministers have been broken in spirit, driven from their position, and even injured in character by taking notice of village scandal. I know a fine young man, for whom I predicted a career of usefulness, who fell into great trouble because he at first allowed it to be a trouble and then worked hard to make it so. He came to me and complained that he had a great grievance; and so it was a grievance, but from beginning to end it was all about what some half-dozen women had said about his procedure after the death of his wife. It was originally too small a thing to deal with—a Mrs. Q. had said that she should not wonder if the minister married the servant then living in his house; another represented her as saying that he ought to marry her, and then a third, with a malicious ingenuity, found a deeper meaning in the words, and construed them into a charge. Worst of all, the dear sensitive preacher must needs trace the matter out and accuse a score or two of people of spreading libels against him, and even threaten some of them with legal proceedings. If he could have prayed over it in secret, or even have whistled over it, no harm would have come of the tittle-tattle; but this dear brother could not treat the slander wisely, for he had not what I earnestly recommend to you, namely, a blind eye and a deaf ear.

Once more, my brethren, the blind eye and the deaf ear will be useful to you in relation to other churches and their pastors. I am always delighted when a brother in meddling with other people's business burns his fingers. Why did he not attend to his own concerns and not episcopize in another's diocese? I am frequently requested by members of churches to meddle in their home disputes; but unless they come to me with authority, officially appointing me to be umpire, I decline. Alexander Cruden gave himself the name of "the Corrector," and I have never envied him the title. It would need a peculiar inspiration to enable a man to settle all the controversies of our churches, and as a rule those who are least qualified are the most eager to attempt it. For the most part interference, however well intentioned, is a failure. Internal dissensions in our churches are very like quarrels between man and wife:

when the case comes to such a pass that they must fight it out, the interposing party will be the victim of their common fury. No one but Mr. Verdant Green will interfere in a domestic battle, for the man of course resents it, and the lady, though suffering from many a blow, will say, "You leave my husband alone; he has a right to beat me if he likes." However great the mutual animosity of conjugal combatants, it seems to be forgotten in resentment against intruders; and so, among the very independent denomination of Baptists, the person outside the church who interferes in any manner is sure to get the worst of it.

Do not consider yourself to be the bishop of all the neighboring churches, but be satisfied with looking after Lystra, or Derbe, or Thessalonica, or whichever church may have been allotted to your care, and leave Philippi and Ephesus in the hands of their own pastors. Do not encourage disaffected people in finding fault with their minister, or in bringing you news of evils in other congregations. When you meet your brother ministers do not be in a hurry to advise them; they know their duty quite as well as you know yours, and your judgment upon their course of action is probably founded upon partial information supplied from prejudiced sources. Do not grieve your neighbors by your meddlesomeness. We have all enough to do at home, and it is prudent to keep out of all disputes which do not belong to us.

We are recommended by one of the world's proverbs to wash our dirty linen at home. I will add another line to it, and advise that we do not call on our neighbors while their linen is in the suds. This is due to our friends, and will best promote peace. "He who passes by and meddles with strife belonging not to him, is like one that takes a dog by the ears"—he is very apt to be bitten, and few will pity him.

Bridges wisely observes that "Our blessed Master has read us a lesson of godly wisdom. He healed the contentions in his own family, but when called to meddle with strife belonging not to him, he gave answer, 'Who made me a judge or a divider over you?'" Self-constituted judges win but little respect; if they were more fit to censure they would be less inclined to do so.

Many a trifling difference within a church has been fanned into a great flame by ministers outside who had no idea of the mischief they were causing: they gave verdicts upon ex parte statements, and so egged on opposing people who felt safe when they could say that the neighboring ministers quite agreed with them. My counsel is that we join the "Know-nothings," and never say a word upon a matter until we have heard both sides; and, moreover, that we do our best to avoid hearing either one side or the other if the matter does not concern us.

Is not this a sufficient explanation of my declaration that I have one blind eye and one deaf ear—and that they are the best eye and ear I have?

Lecture 23. On Conversion as Our Aim

The grand object of the Christian ministry is the glory of God. Whether souls are converted or not, if Jesus Christ is faithfully preached, the minister has not labored in vain, for he is a sweet savor unto God as well in those who perish as in those who are saved. Yet, as a rule, God has sent us to preach in order that through the gospel of Jesus Christ, men may be reconciled to Him. Here and there a preacher of righteousness, like Noah, may labor on and bring none beyond his own family circle into the ark of salvation; and another, like Jeremiah, may weep in vain over an impenitent nation; but, for the most part, the work of preaching is intended to save the hearers. It is ours to sow even in stony places, where no fruit rewards our toil; but still we are bound to look for a harvest, and mourn if it does not appear in due time.

The glory of God being our chief object, we aim at it by seeking the edification of saints and the salvation of sinners. It is a noble work to instruct the people of God, and to build them up in their most holy faith: we may by no means neglect this duty. To this end we must give clear statements of gospel doctrine, of vital experience, and of Christian duty, and never shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God. In too many cases sublime truths are held in abeyance under the pretense that they are not practical; whereas the very fact that they are revealed proves that the Lord thinks them to be of value, and woe unto us if we pretend to be wiser than He. We may say of any and every doctrine of Scripture, "To give it then a tongue is wise in man."

If any one note is dropped from the divine harmony of truth the music may be sadly marred. Your people may fall into grave spiritual diseases through the lack of a certain form of spiritual nutriment, which can only be supplied by the doctrines which you withhold. In the food which we eat there are ingredients which do not at first appear to be necessary to life; but experience shows that they are requisite to health and strength. Phosphorus will not make flesh, but it is wanted for bone; many minerals come under the same description—they are necessary in due proportion to the human economy. Even thus certain truths which appear to be little adapted for spiritual nutriment are, nevertheless, very beneficial in furnishing believers with backbone and muscle, and in repairing the varied organs of Christian manhood. We must preach "the whole truth," that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Our great object of glorifying God is, however, to be mainly achieved by the winning of souls. We must see souls born unto God. If we do not, our cry should be that of Rachel "Give me children, or I die." If we do not win souls, we should mourn as the gardener who sees no harvest, as the fisherman who returns to his cottage with an empty net, or as the huntsman who has in vain roamed over hill and dale. Ours should be Isaiah's language uttered with many a sigh and groan, "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The ambassadors of peace should not cease to weep bitterly until sinners weep for their sins.

If we intensely desire to see our hearers believe on the Lord Jesus, how shall we act in order to be used of God for producing such a result? This is the theme of the present lecture.

Since conversion is a divine work, we must take care that we depend entirely upon the Spirit of God, and look to Him for power over men's minds. Often as this remark is repeated, I fear we too little feel its force; for if we were more truly sensible of our need of the Spirit of God, would we not study more in dependence upon His teaching? Would we not pray more importunately to be anointed with His sacred unction? would we not in preaching give more scope for His operation? Do we not fail in many of our efforts, because we practically, though not doctrinally, ignore the Holy Spirit? His place as God is on the throne, and in all our enterprises He must be first, midst, and end: we are instruments in His hand, and nothing more.

This being fully admitted, what else should be done if we hope to see conversions? Assuredly we should be careful to preach most prominently those truths which are likely to lead to this end. What truths are those? I answer, we should first and foremost preach Christ, and Him crucified. Where Jesus is exalted souls are attracted, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The preaching of the cross is to them that are saved the wisdom of God and the power of God. The Christian minister should preach all the truths which cluster around the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and hence he must declare very earnestly and pointedly the evil of sin, which created the need of a Savior. Let him show that sin is a breach of the law, that it necessitates punishment, and that the wrath of God is revealed against it. Let him never treat sin as though it were a trifle, or a misfortune, but let him set it forth as exceeding sinful. Let him go into particulars, not superficially glancing at evil in the gross, but mentioning various sins in detail, especially those most current at the time: such as that all-devouring hydra of drunkenness, which devastates our land; lying, which in the form of slander abounds on all sides; and licentiousness, which must be mentioned with holy delicacy, and yet needs to be denounced unsparingly.

We must especially reprove those evils into which our hearers have fallen, or are likely to fall. Explain the ten commandments and obey the divine injunction: "show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Open up the spirituality of the law as our Lord did, and show how it is broken by evil thoughts, intents, and imaginations. By this means many sinners will be pricked in their hearts.

Old Robbie Flockhart used to say, "It is of no use trying to sew with the silken thread of the gospel unless we pierce a way for it with the sharp needle of the law." The law goes first, like the needle, and draws the gospel thread after it: therefore preach concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Let such language as that of the fifty-first Psalm be often explained: show that God requires truth in the inward parts, and that purging with sacrificial blood is absolutely needful.

Aim at the heart! Probe the wound and touch the very quick of the soul.

Spare not the sterner themes, for men must be wounded before they can be healed, and slain before they can be made alive. No man will ever put on the robe of Christ's righteousness until he is stripped of his fig leaves, nor will he wash in the fountain of mercy until he perceives his filthiness. Therefore, my brethren, we must not cease to declare the law, its demands, its threatenings, and the sinner's multiplied breaches of it.

Teach the depravity of human nature. Show men that sin is not an accident, but the genuine outcome of their corrupt hearts. Preach the doctrine of the natural depravity of man. It is an unfashionable truth; for nowadays ministers are to be found who are very fine upon "the dignity of human nature." The "lapsed state of man"—that is the phrase—is sometimes alluded to, but the corruption of our nature, and kindred themes are carefully avoided. Ethiopians are informed that they may whiten their skins, and it is hoped that leopards will remove their spots. Brethren, you will not fall into this delusion, or, if you do, you may expect few conversions. To prophesy smooth things, and to extenuate the evil of our lost estate, is not the way to lead men to Jesus.

Brethren, the necessity for the Holy Spirit's divine operations will follow as a matter of course upon the former teaching, for dire necessity demands divine interposition. Men must be told that they are dead, and that only the Holy Spirit can quicken them; that the Spirit works according to His own good pleasure, and that no man can claim his visitations or deserve his aid. This is thought to be very discouraging teaching, and so it is, but men need to be discouraged when they are seeking salvation in a wrong manner. To put them out of conceit of their own abilities is a great help toward bringing them to look out of self to another, even the Lord Jesus. The doctrine of election and other great truths which declare salvation to be all of grace, and to be, not the right of the creature, but the gift of the Sovereign Lord, are all calculated to hide pride from man, and so to prepare him to receive the mercy of God.

We must also set before our hearers the justice of God and the certainty that every transgression will be punished. Often must we

"Before them place in dread array,
The pomp of that tremendous day
When Christ with clouds shall come."

Sound in their ears the doctrine of the second advent, not as a curiosity of prophecy, but as a solemn practical fact. It is idle to set forth our Lord in all the tinkling bravery of an earthly kingdom, after the manner of brethren who believe in a revived Judaism; we need to preach the Lord as coming to judge the world in righteousness, to summon the nations to His bar, and to separate them as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. Paul preached of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and made Felix tremble: these themes are equally powerful now.

We rob the gospel of its power if we leave out its threatenings of punishment. It is to be feared that the novel opinions upon annihilation and restoration which have afflicted the Church in these last days have caused many ministers to be slow to speak concerning the last judgment and its outcomes, and consequently the terrors of the Lord have had small influence upon either preachers or hearers. If this be so it cannot be too much regretted, for one great means of conversion is thus left unused.

Beloved brethren, we must be most of all clear upon the great soul-saving doctrine of the atonement; we must preach a real bona fide substitutionary sacrifice, and proclaim pardon as its result. Cloudy views as to atoning blood are mischievous to the last degree; souls are held in unnecessary bondage, and saints are robbed of the calm confidence of faith, because they are not definitely told that "God has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

We must preach substitution straightforwardly and unmistakably, for if any doctrine be plainly taught in Scripture it is this, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." "He, His own self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree." This truth gives rest to the conscience by showing how God can be just, and the justifier of him that believes. This is the great net of gospel fishermen: the fish are drawn or driven in the right direction by other truths, but this is the net itself.

If men are to be saved, we must in plainest terms preach justification by faith, as the method by which the atonement becomes effectual in the soul's experience. If we are saved by the substitutionary work of Christ, no merit of ours is needed, and all men have to do is by a simple faith to accept what Christ has already done. It is delightful to dwell on the grand truth that "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." O glorious sight—the Christ sitting down in the place of honor because His work is done. Well may the soul rest in a work so evidently complete.

Justification by faith must never be obscured, and yet all are not clear upon it. I once heard a sermon upon "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," of which the English was, "Be good, very good, and though you will have to suffer in consequence, God will reward you in the end." The preacher, no doubt, believed in justification by faith, but he very distinctly preached the opposite doctrine. Many do this when addressing children, and I notice that they generally speak to the little ones about loving Jesus, and not upon believing in Him. This must leave a mischievous impression upon youthful minds and take them off from the true way of peace.

Preach earnestly the love of God in Christ Jesus, and magnify the abounding mercy of the Lord; but always preach it in connection with His justice. Do not extol the single attribute of love in the method too generally followed, but regard love in the high theological sense, in which, like a golden circle, it holds within itself all the divine attributes: for God would not be love if He were not just, and did not hate every unholy thing. Never exalt one attribute at the expense of another. Let boundless mercy be seen in calm consistency with stern justice and unlimited sovereignty. The true character of God is fitted to awe, impress, and humble the sinner: be careful not to misrepresent your Lord.

All these truths and others which complete the evangelical system are calculated to lead men to faith; therefore make them the staple of your teaching.

Secondly, if we are intensely anxious to have souls saved we must not only preach the truths which are likely to lead up to this end, but we must use modes of handling those truths which are likely to conduce thereto. Do you inquire, what are they?

First, you must do a great deal by way of INSTRUCTION. Sinners are not saved in darkness but from it; "that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." Men must be taught concerning themselves, their sin, and their fall; their Savior, redemption, regeneration, and so on. Many awakened souls would gladly accept God's way of salvation if they did but know it; they are akin to those of whom the apostle said, "And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it." If you will instruct them God will save them: is it not written, "the entrance of your word gives light"?

If the Holy Spirit blesses your teaching, they will see how wrong they have been, and they will be led to repentance and faith. I do not believe in that preaching which lies mainly in shouting, "Believe! believe! believe!" In common justice you are bound to tell the

poor people what they are to believe. There must be instruction, otherwise the exhortation to believe is manifestly ridiculous, and must in practice be abortive. I fear that some of our orthodox brethren have been prejudiced against the free invitations of the gospel by hearing the raw, undigested harangues of revivalist speakers whose heads are loosely put together. The best way to preach sinners to Christ, is to preach Christ to sinners. Exhortations, entreaties, and beseechings, if not accompanied with sound instruction, are like firing off powder without shot. You may shout, and weep, and plead, but you cannot lead men to believe what they have not heard, nor to receive a truth which has never been set before them. "Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge."

While giving instructions it is wise to appeal to the understanding. True religion is as logical as if it were not emotional. I am not an admirer of the peculiar views of Mr. Finney, but I have no doubt that he was useful to many; and his power lay in his use of clear arguments. Many who knew his fame were greatly disappointed at first hearing him, because he used few beauties of speech and was as calm and dry as a book of Euclid; but he was exactly adapted to a certain order of minds, and they were convinced and convicted by his forcible reasoning. Should not people of an argumentative cast of mind be provided for? We are to be all things to all men, and to these men we must become argumentative and push them into a corner with plain deductions and necessary inferences. Of carnal reasoning we would have none, but of fair, honest pondering, considering, judging, and arguing—the more the better.

The class requiring logical argument is small compared with the number of those who need to be pleaded with by way of emotional persuasion. They require not so much reasoning as heart-argument—which is logic set on fire. You must argue with them as a mother pleads with her boy that he will not grieve her, or as a fond sister entreats a brother to return to their father's home and seek reconciliation. Argument must be quickened into persuasion by the living warmth of love. Cold logic has its force, but when made red hot with affection the power of tender argument is inconceivable. The power which one mind can gain over others is enormous, but it is often best developed when the leading mind has ceased to have power over itself. When passionate zeal has carried the man himself away his speech becomes an irresistible torrent, sweeping all before it.

A man known to be godly and devout, and felt to be large-hearted and self-sacrificing, has a power in his very person, and his advice and recommendation carry weight because of his character; but when he comes to plead and to persuade, even to tears, his influence is wonderful, and God the Holy Spirit yokes it into His service. Brethren, we must plead. Entreaties and beseechings must blend with our instructions. Any and every appeal which will reach the conscience and move men to fly to Jesus, we must perpetually employ, if by any means we may save some.

I have sometimes heard ministers blamed for speaking of themselves when they are pleading, but the censure need not be much regarded while we have such a precedent as the example of Paul. To a congregation who love you it is quite allowable to mention your grief that many of them are unsaved, and your vehement desire, and incessant prayer for their conversion. You are doing right when you mention your own experience of the goodness of God in Christ Jesus, and plead with men to come and taste the same. We must not be abstractions or mere officials to our people; but we must plead with them as real flesh and blood, if we would see them converted. When you can quote yourself as a living instance of what grace has done, the plea is too powerful to be withheld through fear of being charged with egotism.

Sometimes, too, we must change our tone. Instead of instructing, reasoning and persuading, we must come to threatening, and declare the wrath of God upon impenitent souls. We must lift the curtain and let them see the future. Show them their danger, and warn them to escape from the wrath to come!

This done, we must return to invitation, and set before the awakened mind the rich provisions of infinite grace which are freely presented to the sons of men. In our Master's name we must give the invitation, crying, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely!" Do not be deterred from this, my brethren, by those ultra-Calvinistic theologians who say, "You may instruct and warn the ungodly, but you must not invite or entreat them." And why not? "Because they are dead sinners, and it is therefore absurd to invite them, since they cannot come." Why then may we warn or instruct them? The argument is so strong, if it be strong at all, that it sweeps away all modes of appeal to sinners, and they alone are logical who, after they have preached to the saints, sit down and say, "The elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

On what ground are we to address the ungodly at all? If we are only to bid them do such things as they are capable of doing without the Spirit of God, we are reduced to mere moralists. If it be absurd to bid the dead sinner believe and live, it is equally vain to bid him consider his state, and reflect upon his future doom. Indeed, it would be idle altogether were it not that true preaching is an act of faith, and is owned by the Holy Spirit as the means of working spiritual miracles. If we were by ourselves, and did not expect divine interpositions, we would be wise to keep within the bounds of reason, and persuade men to do only what we see in them the ability to do. We would then bid the living live, urge the seeing to see, and persuade the willing to will. The task would be so easy that it might even seem to be superfluous; certainly no special call of the Holy Spirit would be needed for so very simple an undertaking.

But, brethren, where is the mighty power and the victory of faith if our ministry is this and nothing more? Who among the sons of

men would think it a great vocation to be sent into a synagogue to say to a perfectly vigorous man, "Rise up and walk," or to the possessor of sound limbs, "Stretch out your hand." He is a poor Ezekiel whose greatest achievement is to cry, "You living souls, live."

Let the two methods be set side by side as to practical result, and it will be seen that those who never exhort sinners are seldom winners of souls to any great extent, but they maintain their churches by converts from other systems. I have even heard them say, "Oh, yes, the Methodists and Revivalists are beating the hedges, but we shall catch many of the birds." If I harbored such a base thought I should be ashamed to express it. A system which cannot touch the outside world, but must leave arousing and converting work to others, whom it judges to be unsound, writes its own condemnation.

Again, brethren, if we wish to see souls saved, we must be wise as to the times when we address the unconverted. Very little common sense is spent over this matter. Under certain ministries there is a set time for speaking to sinners, and this comes as regularly as the hour of noon. A few crumbs of the feast are thrown to the dogs under the table at the close of the discourse, and they treat your crumbs as you treat them, namely, with courteous indifference. Why should the warning word be always at the hinder end of the discourse when hearers are most likely to be weary? Why give men notice to buckle on their harness so as to be prepared to repel our attack? When their interest is excited, and they are least upon the defensive, then let fly a shaft at the careless, and it will frequently be more effectual than a whole flight of arrows shot against them at a time when they are thoroughly encased in armor of proof. Surprise is a great element in gaining attention and fixing a remark upon the memory, and times for addressing the careless should be chosen with an eye to that fact. It may be very well as a rule to seek the edification of the saints in the morning discourse, but it would be wise to vary it, and let the unconverted sometimes have the chief labor of your preparation and the best service of the day.

Do not close a single sermon without addressing the ungodly, but at the same time set yourself seasons for a determined and continuous assault upon them, and proceed with all your soul to the conflict. On such occasions aim distinctly at immediate conversions; labor to remove prejudices, to resolve doubts, to conquer objections, and to drive the sinner out of his hiding-places at once. Summon the church-members to special prayer, beseech them to speak personally both with the concerned and the unconcerned, and be yourself doubly upon the watch to address individuals. We have found that our February meetings at the Tabernacle have yielded remarkable results: the whole month being dedicated to special effort. Winter is usually the preacher's harvest, because the people can come together better in the long evenings, and are debarred from out-of-door exercises and amusements. Be well prepared for the appropriate season when "kings go forth to battle."

Among the important elements in the promotion of conversion are your own tone, temper, and spirit in preaching. If you preach the truth in a dull, monotonous style, God may bless it, but in all probability he will not; at any rate the tendency of such a style is not to promote attention, but to hinder it. It is not often that sinners are awakened by ministers who are themselves asleep. A hard, unfeeling mode of speech is also to be avoided; lack of tenderness is a sad lack, and repels rather than attracts. The spirit of Elijah may startle, and where it is exceedingly intense it may go far to prepare for the reception of the gospel; but for actual conversion more of John is needed—love is the winning force. We must love men to Jesus. Great hearts are the main qualifications for great preachers, and we must cultivate our affections to that end. At the same time our manner must not degenerate into the soft and saccharine cant which some men affect who are forever clearing everybody, and fawning upon people as if they hoped to soft-sawder them into godliness. Manly people are disgusted, and suspect hypocrisy when they hear a preacher talking molasses. Let us be bold and outspoken, and never address our hearers as if we were asking a favor of them, or as if they would oblige the Redeemer by allowing Him to save them. We are bound to be lowly, but our office as ambassadors should prevent our being servile.

Happy shall we be if we preach believingly, always expecting the Lord to bless his own word. This will give us a quiet confidence which will forbid petulance, rashness, and weariness. If we ourselves doubt the power of the gospel, how can we preach it with authority? Feel that you are a favored man in being allowed to proclaim the good news, and rejoice that your mission is fraught with eternal benefit to those before you. Let the people see how glad and confident the gospel has made you, and it will go far to make them long to partake in its blessed influences.

Preach very solemnly, for it is a weighty business, but let your matter be lively and pleasing, for this will prevent solemnity from souring into dreariness. Be so thoroughly solemn that all your faculties are aroused and consecrated, and then a dash of humor will only add intenser gravity to the discourse, even as a flash of lightning makes midnight darkness all the more impressive. Preach to one point, concentrating all your energies upon the object aimed at. There must be no riding of hobby-horses, no introduction of elegancies of speech, no suspicion of personal display, or you will fail. Sinners are quick-witted people, and soon detect even the smallest effort to glorify self. Forgo everything for the sake of those you long to save. Be a fool for Christ's sake if this will win them; or be a scholar, if that will be more likely to impress them. Spare neither labor in the study, prayer in the closet, nor zeal in the pulpit. If men do not judge their souls to be worth a thought, compel them to see that their minister is of a very different opinion.

Mean conversions, expect them, and prepare for them. Resolve that your hearers shall either yield to your Lord or be without excuse, and that this shall be the immediate result of the sermon now in hand. Do not let the Christians around you wonder when

souls are saved, but urge them to believe in the undiminished power of the glad tidings, and teach them to marvel if no saving result follows the delivery of the testimony of Jesus. Do not permit sinners to hear sermons as a matter of course, or allow them to play with the edged tools of Scripture as if they were mere toys; but again and again remind them that every true gospel sermon leaves them worse if it does not make them better. Their unbelief is a daily, hourly sin; never let them infer from your teaching that they are to be pitied for continuing to make God a liar by rejecting His Son.

Impressed with a sense of their danger, give the ungodly no rest in their sins; knock again and again at the door of their hearts, and knock as for life and death. Your solicitude, your earnestness, your anxiety, your travelling in birth for them—God will bless to their arousing. God works mightily by this instrumentality. But our agony for souls must be real and not feigned, and therefore our hearts must be wrought into true sympathy with God. Low piety means little spiritual power. Extremely pointed addresses may be delivered by men whose hearts are out of order with the Lord, but their result must be small. There is something in the very tone of the man who has been with Jesus which has more power to touch the heart than the most perfect oratory. Remember this and maintain an unbroken walk with God. You will need much night-work in secret if you are to gather many of your Lord's lost sheep. Only by prayer and fasting can you gain power to cast out the worst of devils. Let men say what they will about sovereignty, God connects special success with special states of heart, and if these are lacking he will not do many mighty works.

In addition to earnest preaching it will be wise to use other means. If you wish to see results from your sermons you must be accessible to enquirers. A meeting after every service may not be desirable, but frequent opportunities for coming into direct contact with your people should be sought after, and by some means created. It is shocking to think that there are ministers who have no method whatever for meeting the anxious, and if they do see here and there one, it is because of the courage of the seeker, and not because of the earnestness of the pastor. From the very first you should appoint frequent and regular seasons for seeing all who are seeking after Christ, and you should continually invite such to come and speak with you. In addition to this, hold numerous enquirers' meetings, at which the addresses shall be all intended to assist the troubled and guide the perplexed, and with these intermingle fervent prayers for the individuals present, and short testimonials from recent converts and others.

As an open confession of Christ is continually mentioned in connection with saving faith, it is your wisdom to make it easy for believers who are as yet following Jesus by night to come forward and avow their allegiance to him. There must be no persuading to make a profession, but there should be every opportunity for so doing, and no stumbling-block placed in the way of hopeful minds. As for those who are not so far advanced as to warrant any thought of baptism, you may be of the utmost benefit to them by personal fellowship, and therefore you should seek it. Doubts may be cleared away, errors rectified, and terrors dispelled by a few moments' conversation. I have known instances in which a life-long misery has been ended by a simple explanation which might have been given years before. Seek out the wandering sheep one by one, and when you find all your thoughts needed for a single individual, do not grudge your labor, for your Lord in His parable represents the good shepherd as bringing home His lost sheep, not in a flock, but one at a time upon His shoulders, and rejoicing so to do.

With all that you can do your desires will not be fulfilled, for soul-winning is a pursuit which grows upon a man; the more he is rewarded with conversions the more eager he becomes to see greater numbers born unto God. Hence you will soon discover that you need help if many are to be brought in. The net soon becomes too heavy for one pair of hands to drag ashore when it is filled with fish; and your fellow-helpers must be beckoned to your assistance. Great things are done by the Holy Spirit when a whole church is aroused to sacred energy: then there are hundreds of testimonies instead of one, and these strengthen each other; then advocates for Christ succeed each other and work into each other's hands, while supplication ascends to Heaven with the force of united importunity. Thus sinners are encompassed with a cordon of earnest entreaties, and Heaven itself is called into the field.

It would seem hard in some congregations for a sinner to be saved, for whatever good he may receive from the pulpit is frozen out of him by the arctic atmosphere with which he is surrounded: and on the other hand some churches make it hard for men to remain unconverted, for with holy zeal they persecute the careless into concern for their eternal souls. It should be our ambition, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to work the entire church into a fine missionary condition, to make it like a Leyden jar charged to the full with divine electricity, so that whatever comes into contact with it shall feel its power.

What can one man do alone? What can he not do with an army of enthusiasts around him? Contemplate at the outset the possibility of having a church of soul-winners. Do not succumb to the usual idea that we can only gather a few useful workers, and that the rest of the community must inevitably be a dead weight: it may possibly so happen, but do not set out with that notion or it will be verified. The usual need not be the universal; better things are possible than anything yet attained; set your aim high and spare no effort to reach it. Labor to gather a church alive for Jesus, every member energetic to the full, and the whole in incessant activity for the salvation of men. To this end there must be the best of preaching to feed the host into strength, continual prayer to bring down the power from on high, and the most heroic example on your own part to fire their zeal. Then under the divine blessing a common-sense management of the entire force cannot fail to produce the most desirable outcomes. Who among you can grasp this idea and embody it in actual fact?

To call in another brother every now and then to take the lead in evangelistic services will be found very wise and useful; for there are some fish that never will be taken in your net, but will surely fall to the lot of another fisherman. Fresh voices penetrate where the accustomed sound has lost effect, and they tend also to beget a deeper interest in those already attentive. Sound and prudent evangelists may lend help even to the most efficient pastor, and gather in fruit which he has failed to reach. At any rate it makes a break in the continuity of ordinary services, and renders them less likely to become monotonous. Never allow jealousy to hinder you in this. Suppose another lamp should outshine yours, what will it matter so long as it brings light to those whose welfare you are seeking? Say with Moses, "Would God that all the Lord's servants were prophets." He who is free from selfish jealousy will find that no occasion will suggest it; his people may be well aware that their pastor is excelled by others in talent, but they will be ready to assert that he is surpassed by none in love to their souls.

It is not needful for a loving son to believe that his father is the most learned man in the parish; he loves him for his own sake, and not because he is superior to others. Call in every now and then a warm-hearted neighbor, utilize the talent in the church itself, and procure the services of some eminent soul-winner, and this may, in God's hands, break up the hard soil for you, and bring you brighter days.

In summary, beloved brethren, by any means, by all means, labor to glorify God by conversions, and rest not until your heart's desire is fulfilled.

24. Illustrations in Preaching

The topic now before us is the use of illustrations in our sermons. Perhaps we shall best subserve our purpose by working out an illustration in the present address; for there is no better way of teaching the art of pottery than by making a pot. Quaint Thomas Fuller says, "reasons are the pillars of the fabric of a sermon; but similitudes are the windows which give the best lights." The comparison is happy and suggestive, and we will build up our discourse under its direction.

The chief reason for the construction of windows in a house is, as Fuller says, to let in light. Parables, similes, and metaphors have that effect; and hence we use them to illustrate our subject, or, in other words, to "brighten it with light," for that is Dr. Johnson's literal rendering of the word illustrate.

Often when didactic speech fails to enlighten our hearers, we may make them see our meaning by opening a window and letting in the pleasant light of analogy. Our Savior, who is the light of the world, took care to fill his speech with similitudes, so that the common people heard him gladly. His example stamps with high authority the practice of illuminating heavenly instruction with comparisons and similes. To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, "A window shall you make in the ark." You may build up laborious definitions and explanations, and yet leave your hearers in the dark as to your meaning; but a thoroughly suitable metaphor will wonderfully clear the sense. The pictures in *The Illustrated London News* give us a far better idea of the scenery which they represent than could be conveyed to us by the best descriptive letter-press. It is much the same with Scriptural teaching: abstract truth comes before us so much more vividly when a concrete example is given, or the doctrine itself is clothed in figurative language. There should, if possible, be at least one good metaphor in the shortest address; as Ezekiel, in his vision of the temple, saw that even to the little chambers there were windows suitable to their size. If we are faithful to the spirit of the gospel, we labor to make things plain. It is our study to be simple and to be understood by the most illiterate of our hearers; let us, then, set forth many a metaphor and parable before the people.

He wrote wisely who said, "The world below me is a glass in which I may see the world above. The works of God are the shepherd's calendar and the ploughman's alphabet." Having nothing to conceal, we have no ambition to be obscure. Lycophron declared that he would hang himself upon a tree if he found a person who could understand his poem entitled "The Prophecy of Cassandra." Happily no one arose to drive him to such a misuse of timber. We think we could find brethren in the ministry who might safely run the same risk in connection with their sermons. Still have we among us those who are like Heraclitus, who was called "the Dark Doctor" because his language was beyond all comprehension. Certain mystical discourses are so dense that if light were admitted into them it would be extinguished like a torch in the Grotta del Cane. They are made up of the palpably obscure and the inexplicably involved, and all hope of understanding them may be abandoned. This style of oratory we do not cultivate. We are of the same mind as Joshua Shute, who said: "That sermon has most learning in it that has most plainness. Hence it is that a great scholar was accustomed to say, 'Lord, give me learning enough, that I may preach plain enough.'"

Windows greatly add to the pleasure and agreeableness of a habitation, and so do illustrations make a sermon pleasurable and interesting. A building without windows would be a prison rather than a house, for it would be quite dark, and no one would care to take it upon lease; and, in the same way, a discourse without a parable is prosy and dull, and involves a grievous weariness of the flesh.

The preacher in Solomon's Ecclesiastes "sought to find out acceptable words," or, as the Hebrew has it, "words of delight": surely, figures and comparisons are delectable to our hearers. Let us not deny them the salt of parable with the meat of doctrine. Our congregations hear us with pleasure when we give them a fair measure of imagery: when an anecdote is being told they rest, take breath, and give play to their imaginations, and thus prepare themselves for the sterner work which lies before them in listening to our profounder expositions.

Riding in a third-class carriage some years ago in the eastern counties, we had been for a long time without a lamp; and when a traveler lighted a candle, it was pleasant to see how all eyes turned that way, and rejoiced in the light. Such is frequently the effect of an apt simile in the midst of a sermon, it lights up the whole matter, and gladdens every heart. Even the little children open their eyes and ears, and a smile brightens up their faces as we tell a story; for they, too, rejoice in the light which streams in through our windows. We dare say they often wish that the sermon were all illustrations, even as the boy desired to have a cake made all of plums; but that must not be: there is a happy medium, and we must keep to it by making our discourse pleasant hearing, but not a mere pastime. No reason exists why the preaching of the gospel should be a miserable operation either to the speaker or to the hearer. Pleasantly profitable let all our sermons be.

A house must not have thick walls without openings, neither must a discourse be all made up of solid slabs of doctrine without a window of comparison or a lattice of poetry; if so, our hearers will gradually forsake us, and prefer to stay at home and read their favorite authors whose lively tropes and vivid images afford more pleasure to their minds.

Every architect will tell you that he looks upon his windows as an opportunity for introducing ornament into his design. A house may be massive, but it cannot be pleasing if it is not broken up with windows and other details. The palace of the popes at Avignon is an immense structure; but the external windows are so few that it has all the aspect of a colossal prison, and suggests nothing of what a palace should be. Sermons need to be broken up, varied, decorated, and enlivened; and nothing can do this so well as the introduction of types, emblems, and instances. Of course, ornament is not the main point to be considered; but still, many little excellencies go to make up perfection, and this is one of the many, and therefore it should not be overlooked. When wisdom built her house she hewed out her seven pillars, for glory and for beauty, as well as for the support of the structure; and shall we think that any rough hovel is good enough for the beauty of holiness to dwell in? Certainly a gracious discourse is none the better for being bereft of every grace of language. Audacious ornament we deprecate, but an appropriate beauty of speech we cultivate. Truth is a king's daughter, and her clothing should be of wrought gold; her house is a palace, and it should be adorned with "windows of agate and gates of carbuncle."

Illustrations tend to enliven an audience and quicken attention. Windows, when they will open, which, alas, is not often the case in our places of worship, are a great blessing by refreshing and reviving the audience with a little pure air, and arousing the poor mortals who are rendered sleepy by the stagnant atmosphere. A window should, according to its name, be a wind-door, through which a breath of air may visit the audience; even so, an original figure, a noble image, a quaint comparison, a rich allegory, should open upon our hearers a breeze of happy thought, which will pass over them like life-giving breath, arousing them from their apathy, and quickening their faculties to receive the truth.

Those who are accustomed to the soporific sermonizings of certain dignified divines would marvel greatly if they could see the enthusiasm and lively delight with which congregations listen to speech through which there flows a quiet current of happy, natural illustration. Arid as a desert are many volumes of discourses which are to be met with upon the booksellers' dust-covered shelves; but if in the course of a thousand paragraphs they contain a single simile, it is as an oasis in the Sahara desert, and serves to keep the reader's soul alive. In fashioning a discourse think little of the bookworm, which will be sure of its portion of meat however dry your doctrine, but have pity upon those hungering ones immediately around you who must find life through your sermon or they will never find it at all. If some of your hearers sleep on they will of necessity wake up in eternal perdition, for they hear no other helpful voice.

While we thus commend illustrations for necessary uses, it must be remembered that they are not the strength of a sermon any more than a window is the strength of a house; and for this reason, among others, they should not be too numerous. Too many openings for light may seriously detract from the stability of a building. We have known sermons so full of metaphors that they became weak, and we had almost said crazy, structures. Sermons must not be bouquets of flowers, but sheaves of wheat. Very beautiful sermons are generally very useless ones. To aim at elegance is to court failure. It is possible to have too much of a good thing: a glass house is not the most comfortable of abodes, and besides other objectionable qualities it has the great fault of being sadly tempting to stone-throwers. When a critical adversary attacks our metaphors he generally makes short work of them. To friendly minds images are arguments, but to opponents they are opportunities for attack; the enemy climbs up by the window. Comparisons are swords with two edges which cut both ways; and frequently what seems a sharp and telling illustration may be wittily turned against you, so as to cause a laugh at your expense: therefore do not rely upon your metaphors and parables. Even a second-rate man may defend himself from a superior mind if he can dexterously turn his assailant's gun upon himself.

Here is an instance which concerns myself, and I give it for that reason, since these lectures have all along been autobiographical. I give a cutting from one of our religious papers. "Mr. Beecher has been neatly tripped up in *The Sword and the Trowel*. In his *Lectures on Preaching* he asserts that Mr. Spurgeon has succeeded 'in spite of his Calvinism'; adding the remark that 'the camel does not travel any better, nor is it any more useful, because of the hump on its back.' The illustration is not a felicitous one, for Mr. Spurgeon thus retorts: 'Naturalists assure us the camel's hump is of great importance in the eyes of the Arabs, who judge of the condition of their beasts by the size, shape, and firmness of their humps. The camel feeds upon his hump when he traverses the wilderness, so that in proportion as the animal travels over the sandy wastes, and suffers from privation and fatigue, the mass diminishes; and he is not fit for a long journey until the hump has regained its proportions. Calvinism, then, is the spiritual meat which enables a man to labor on in the ways of Christian service; and, though ridiculed as a hump by those who are only lookers-on, those who traverse the weary paths of a wilderness experience know too well its value to be willing to part with it, even if Beecher's splendid talents could be given in exchange.'"

Illustrate, by all means, but do not let the sermon be all illustrations, or it will be only suitable for an assembly of simpletons. A volume is all the better for engravings, but a scrap-book which is all woodcuts is usually intended for the use of little children.

Our house should be built up with the substantial masonry of doctrine, upon the deep foundation of inspiration; its pillars should be of solid Scriptural argument, and every stone of truth should be carefully laid in its place; and then the windows should be ranged in due order. But a house is not erected for the sake of the windows, nor may a sermon be arranged with the view of fitting in a favorite apologue. A window is merely a convenience subordinate to the entire design, and so is the best illustration. We shall be foolish indeed if we compose a discourse to display a metaphor; as foolish as if an architect should build a cathedral with the view of exhibiting a stained glass window. We are not sent into the world to build a Crystal Palace in which to set out works of art and elegancies of fashion; but as wise master-builders we are to edify, spiritual house for the divine inhabiting. Our building is intended to last, and is meant for everyday use, and hence it must not be all crystal and color. We miss our way altogether, as gospel ministers, if we aim at flash and finery.

It is impossible to lay down a rule as to how much adornment shall be found in each discourse: every man must judge for himself in that matter. True taste in dress could not be readily defined—yet everyone knows what it is; and there is a literary and spiritual taste which should be displayed in the measuring out of tropes and figures in every public speech. Do not be too eager to garnish and adorn. Some men seem never to have enough of metaphors: each one of their sentences must be a flower. They compass sea and land to find a fresh piece of colored glass for their windows, and they break down the walls of their discourses to let in superfluous ornaments, until their productions rather resemble a fantastic grotto than a house to dwell in. They are grievously in error if they think that thus they manifest their own wisdom, or benefit their hearers. I could almost wish for a return of the window-tax if it would check these poetical brethren.

The law, I believe, allowed eight windows free from tax, and we might also exempt "a few, that is eight" metaphors from criticism; but more than that ought to pay heavily. Flowers upon the table at a banquet are well enough; but as nobody can live upon bouquets, they will become objects of contempt if they are set before us in lieu of substantial viands. The difference between a little salt with your meat and being compelled to empty the salt-cellar is clear to all; and we could wish that those who pour out so many symbols, emblems, figures, and devices would remember that nausea in oratory is not mote agreeable than in food. Enough is as good as a feast; and too many pretty things may be a greater evil than none at all.

It is a suggestive fact that the tendency to abound in metaphor and illustration becomes weaker as men grow older and wiser. Perhaps this may, in a measure, be ascribed to the decay of their imagination; but it also occurs at the same time as the ripening of their understanding. Some may have to use fewer figures of necessity, because they do not come to them as aforetime; but this is not always the case. I know that men who still possess great facility in imagery find it less needful to employ that faculty now than in their earlier days, for they have the ear of the people, and they are solemnly resolved to fill that ear with instruction as condensed as they can make it.

When you begin with a people who have not heard the gospel, and whose attention you have to win, you can hardly go too far in the use of figure and metaphor. Our Lord Jesus Christ used very much of it; indeed, "He did not speak to them without a parable"; because they were not educated up to the point at which they could profitably hear pure didactic truth. It is noticeable that after the Holy Spirit had been given, fewer parables were used, and the saints were more plainly taught of God. When Paul spoke or wrote to the churches in his epistles he employed few parables, because he addressed those who were advanced in grace and willing to learn. As Christian minds made progress the style of their teachers became less figurative, and more plainly doctrinal. We seldom see pictures in the classics of the college; these are reserved for the spelling-books of the grammar-school. This should teach us wisdom, and suggest that we are to be bound by no hard and fast rules, but should use more or less of any mode of teaching according to our own condition and that of our people.

Illustrations should really cast light upon the subject in hand, otherwise they are sham windows, and all shams are an abomination.

When the window-tax was still in force many people in country houses closed half their lights by plastering them up, and then they had the plaster painted to look like panes; so that there was still the appearance of a window, though no sunlight could enter. Well do I remember the dark rooms in my grandfather's parsonage, and my wonder that men should have to pay for the light of the sun. Blind windows are fit emblems of illustrations which illustrate nothing, and need themselves to be explained. Bombastic speaking is never more characteristic than in its figures; there it disports itself in a very carnival of bombast.

The object of language of this kind is not to instruct the hearer, but to dazzle him, and if possible to impress him with the idea that his minister is a wonderful orator. He who condescends to use clap-trap of any kind deserves to be debarred the pulpit for the term of his natural life. Let your figures of speech really represent and explain your meaning, or else they are dumb idols, which ought not to be set up in the house of the Lord.

It may be well to note that illustrations should not be too prominent, or, to pursue our figure, they should not be painted windows, attracting attention to themselves rather than letting in the clear light of day. I am not pronouncing any judgment upon windows adorned with "glass of various colors which shine like meadows decked in the flowers of spring"; I am looking only to my illustration. Our figures are meant not so much to be seen as to be seen through. If you take the hearer's mind away from the subject by exciting his admiration of your own skill in imagery, you are doing evil rather than good.

I saw in one of our exhibitions a portrait of a king; but the artist had surrounded his majesty with a bower of flowers so exquisitely painted that everyone's eye was taken away from the royal figure. All the resources of the painter's art had been lavished upon the accessories, and the result was that the portrait, which should have been all in all, had fallen into a secondary place. This was surely an error in portrait-painting, even though it might be a success in art.

We have to set forth Christ before the people, "evidently crucified among them," and the loveliest emblem or the most charming image which calls the mind away from our divine subject is to be conscientiously foresworn. Jesus must be all in all! His gospel must be the beginning and end of all our discoursing. Parable and poesy must be under His feet, and eloquence must wait upon Him as His servant. Never by any possibility must the minister's speech become a rival to his subject; that were to dishonor Christ, and not to glorify Him. Hence the caution that the illustrations be not too conspicuous.

Out of this last observation comes the further remark that illustrations are best when they are natural, and grow out of the subject. They should be like those well-arranged windows which are evidently part of the plan of a structure, and not inserted as an afterthought, or for mere adornment. The cathedral of Milan inspires my mind with extreme admiration; it always appears to me as if it must have grown out of the earth like a colossal tree or rather like a forest of marble. From its base to its loftiest pinnacle every detail is a natural outgrowth, a portion of a well developed whole, essential to the main idea; indeed, part and parcel of it.

Such should a sermon be; its exordium, divisions, arguments, appeals, and metaphors should all spring out of itself; nothing should be out of living relation to the rest; it should seem as if nothing could be added without being an excrescence, and nothing taken away without inflicting damage. There should be flowers in a sermon, but the bulk of them should be the flowers of the soil; not dainty exotics, evidently imported with much care from a distant land, but the natural upspringing of a life natural to the holy ground on which the preacher stands.

Figures of speech should be congruous with the matter of the discourse; a rose upon an oak would be out of place, a lily springing from a poplar would be unnatural. Everything should be of a piece and have a manifest relationship to the rest.

No illustrations are half so telling as those which are taken from familiar objects. Many fair flowers grow in foreign lands; but those are dearest to the heart which bloom at our own cottage door.

Elaboration into minute points is not commendable when we are using figures. The best light comes in through the clearest glass: too much paint keeps out the sun. God's altar of old was to be made of earth, or of unhewn stone, "for," said the word, "if you lift up your tool upon it, you have polluted it" (Exodus 20:25). A labored, artificial style, upon which the graver's tool has left abundant marks, is more consistent with human pleadings in courts of law, or in the forum, or in the senate, than with prophetic utterances delivered in the name of God and for the promotion of His glory.

Our Lord's parables were as simple as tales for children, and as naturally beautiful as the lilies which sprang up in the valleys where he taught the people. He borrowed no legend from the Talmud, nor fairy tale from Persia, neither fetched he his emblems from beyond the sea; but he dwelt among his own people, and talked of common things in homely style, as never man spoke before, and yet as any observant man should speak. His parables were like himself and his surroundings; and were never strained, fantastic, pedantic, or artificial. Let us imitate Him, for we shall never find a model more complete, or more suitable for the present age. Opening our eyes, we shall discover abundant imagery all around.

There will be little need to borrow from the recondite mysteries of human art, nor to go deep into the theories of science; for in nature golden illustrations lie upon the surface, and the purest is that which is uppermost and most readily discerned. Of natural

history in all its branches we may well say, "the gold of that land is good". The illustrations furnished by everyday phenomena seen by the ploughman and the wagoner are the very best which earth can yield. An illustration is not like a prophet, for it has most honor in its own country; and those who have oftenest seen the object are those who are most gratified by the figure drawn from it.

I trust that it is scarcely necessary to add that illustrations must never be base. They may not be high-flown, but they should always be in good taste. They may be homely, and yet chastely beautiful; but rough and coarse they should never be. A house is dishonored by having dirty windows, cobwebbed and begrimed, patched with brown paper, or stuffed up with rags: such windows are the insignia of a hovel rather than a house. About our illustrations there must never be even the slightest trace of anything that would shock the most delicate modesty. We like not that window out of which Jezebel is looking. Like the bells upon the horses, our lightest expressions must be holiness unto the Lord. Of that which suggests the groveling and the base we may say with the apostle, "Let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints."

All our windows should open towards Jerusalem, and none towards Sodom. We will gather our flowers always and only from Emmanuel's land; and Jesus Himself shall be their savor and sweetness, so that when He lingers at the lattice to hear us speak of Himself He may say "Your lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under your tongue."

That which grows beyond the border of purity and good repute must never be bound up in our garlands, nor placed among the decorations of our discourses. That which would be exceedingly clever and telling in a stump orator's speech, or in a cheap-jack's harangue, would be disgusting from a minister of the gospel. Time was when we could have found far too many specimens of censurable coarseness, but it would be ungenerous to mention them now that such things are on all hands condemned.

Gentlemen, take care that your windows are not broken, or even cracked: in other words, guard against confused metaphors and limping illustrations. Sir Boyle Roche is generally credited with some of the finest specimens of metaphorical conglomerate. We should imagine that the passage is mythical in which he is represented as saying, "I smell a rat! I see it floating in the air! I'll nip it in the bud." Minor blunderings are frequent enough in the speech of our own countrymen. An excellent temperance advocate exclaimed, "Comrades, let us be up and doing! Let us take our axes on our shoulders, and plough the waste places until the good ship Temperance sails gaily over the land."

The other evening a brother expressed his desire that we might "all be winners of souls, and bring the Lord's blood-bought jewels to cast their crowns at His feet." The words had such a pious ring about them that the audience did not observe the fractured state of the expression. One of your own number hoped "that every student might be enabled to sound the gospel trumpet with such a clear and certain sound that the blind might see." Perhaps he meant that they should open their eyes with astonishment at the terrific blast; but the figure would have been more congruous if he had said "that the deaf should hear." A Scotch writer, in referring to a proposal to use an organ in divine service, says: "Nothing will stem this avalanche of will-worship and gross sin but the falling back on the Word of God."

These blunders are to be quoted by the page. I have given enough to let you see how readily the pitchers of metaphor may be cracked, and rendered unfit to carry our meaning. The ablest speaker may occasionally err in this direction; it is not a very serious matter, and yet like a dead fly it may spoil sweet ointment. A few brethren of my acquaintance are always off the lines; they muddle up every figure they touch, and as soon as they approach a metaphor we look for an accident. It might be wisdom on their part to shun all figures of speech until they know how to use them; for it is a great pity when illustrations are so confused as both to darken the sense and create diversion. Muddled metaphors are muddles indeed; let us give the people good illustrations or none at all.