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ART. 1.—EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING.

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THE discussion of the subject of Homiletics would be incomplete, if it did not include the topic of Extemporaneous Preaching.

This species of sacred eloquence has always existed in the church, and some of the best periods in the history of Christianity have been characterized by its wide prevalence and high excellence. The Apostolic age, the missionary periods in Patristic and Mediæval history, the age of the Reformation, the revival of evangelical religion in the English Church in the eighteenth century, in connection with the preaching of Wesley and Whitfield, and the "Great Awakening" in this country, were marked by the free utterance of the extemporaneous preacher. Being now too much neglected by the clergy of those denominations which both furnish and require the highest professional education,—a clergy, therefore, who have the best right to employ this species of sermonizing,—here is reason for directing attention to it. In discuss-

ing this subject, we shall first speak of the *nature* of extemporaneous preaching, and then of some of the requisites in order to its successful *practice*.

I. The term "extemporaneous" as commonly employed denotes something hurried, off-hand, and superficial, and general usage associates imperfection and inefficiency with this adjective. There is nothing, however, in the etymology of the word which necessarily requires that such a signification be put upon it. Extemporaneous preaching is preaching *ex tempore*, from the time. This may mean either of two things, according to the sense in which the word *tempus* is taken. It may denote that the sermon is the hasty and careless product of that one particular *instant* of time in which the person speaks; the rambling and prolix effort of that *punctum temporis* which is an infinitely small point, and which can produce only an infinitely small result. This is the meaning too commonly assigned to the word in question, and hence inferiority in all intellectual respects is too commonly associated with it, both in theory and in practice. For it is indisputable that the human mind will work very inefficiently if it works by the minute merely, and originates its products under the spur and impulse of the single instant alone.

But the phrase "extemporaneous preaching" may and should mean, preaching from *all* the time, past as well as present. Behind every extemporaneous sermon, as really as behind every written sermon, the whole duration of the preacher's life, with all the culture and learning it has brought with it, should lie. The genuine extemporaneous discourse, as really as the most carefully written discourse, should be the result of a sum-total,—the exponent of the whole past life, the whole past discipline, the whole past study and reflection of the man. Sir Joshua Reynolds was once asked by a person for whom he had painted a small cabinet picture, how he could demand so much for a work which had employed him only five days. He replied: "Five days! why, sir, I have expended the work of thirty-five years upon it." This was the truth.

Behind that little picture there lay the studies, the practice, and the toil of a great genius for more than three decades of years in the painter's studio. It is not the mere immediate effort that must be considered in estimating the nature and value of an intellectual product, but that far more important preparatory effort that went before it, and cost a life time of toil. The painter's reply holds good in respect to every properly constructed extemporaneous oration. It is not the product of the mere instant of time in which it is uttered, but involves, *equally with the written oration*, the whole life and entire culture of the orator.

Taking this view of the nature of extemporaneous preaching, it is plain that there is not such a heaven-wide difference between it and written preaching, as is often supposed. There is no *material* difference between the two. The extemporaneous sermon must be constructed upon the same general principles of rhetoric and homiletics with the written sermon, and must be the embodiment and result of the same literary, scientific and professional culture. The difference between the two species of discourses is merely *formal*. And even this statement is too strong. There is not even a strictly formal difference, for the very same style and diction, the very same *technically* formal properties, are required in the one as in the other. The difference does not respect the form as distinguished from the matter of eloquence, but merely the form of the form. In extemporaneous preaching, the form is oral, while in the other species it is written. There is, therefore, not only no material difference between the two, but there is not even a rigorously and strictly formal difference. Both are the results of the same study, the same reflection, the same experience. The same *man* is the author of both, and both alike will exhibit his learning or his ignorance, his mental power or his mental feebleness, his spirituality and his unspirituality. An ignorant, undisciplined and unspiritual man cannot write a good sermon ; neither *need* a learned, thoroughly disciplined

and holy man preach a bad extemporaneous sermon. For nothing but the want of *practice* would prevent a learned mind, a methodical mind, a holy mind, from doing itself justice and credit in extemporaneous oratory.

A moment's consideration of the nature and operations of the human mind, of its powers by nature and its attainments by study, is sufficient to show that the difference between written and unwritten discourse is merely formal, and less than strictly formal; is secondary, and highly secondary. The mind of man is full of living powers of various sorts, capable of an awakened and vigorous action which expresses and embodies itself in literary products, such as the essay, the oration, the poem. But is there anything in the nature of these powers which renders it necessary that they should manifest themselves in one, and only one, way? Is there anything in the constitution of the human mind that compels it to exhibit the issues of its subtle and mysterious agency uniformly, and in every instance, by means of the pen? Is there anything in the intrinsic nature of mental discipline which forbids its utterance, its clear, full and powerful utterance, by means of *spoken* words? Must the contents of the heart and intellect be, of necessity, discharged only by means of the written symbol of thought? Certainly not. If there only be a mind well disciplined, and well stored with the materials of discourse, the chief thing is secured. The manner, whether written or oral, in which it shall deliver itself, is a secondary matter, and can readily be secured by practice. If the habit of delivering thought without pen in hand were taken up *as early in life* by the educated clergy, and were as *uniform* and *fixed* as is the habit of delivering it with pen in hand, it would be just as easy a habit. If it be supposed that unwritten discourse is incompatible with accuracy and finish, the history of literature disproves it. Some of the most elaborate literary productions were orally delivered. The blind Homer extemporized the Iliad and Odyssey. Milton, in his blindness, dictated to his daughter the

Paradise Lost. Walter Scott often employed an amanuensis when weary of composing with the pen in hand. Cæsar, it is said, was able to keep several amanuenses busy, each upon a distinct subject ; thus carrying on several processes of composition without any aid from chirography. The private secretary of Webster remarks of him : "The amount of business which he sometimes transacted during a single morning may be guessed at, when it is mentioned that he not unfrequently kept two persons employed writing at his dictation at the same time ; for, as he usually walked the floor on such occasions, he would give his chief clerk a sentence in one room to be incorporated in a diplomatic paper, and marching to the room occupied by his private secretary give him the skeleton or perhaps the very language of a private letter."* A writer in the Quarterly Review remarks that "it was in the open air that Wordsworth found the materials for his poems, and it was in the open air, according to the poet himself, that nine-tenths of them were shaped. A stranger asked permission of the servant at Rydal to see the study. 'This,' said she, as she showed the room, 'is my master's library, where he keeps his books, but his study is out of doors.' The poor neighbors, on catching the sound of his humming in the act of verse making, after some prolonged absence from home, were wont to exclaim 'There he is, we are glad to hear him *booing* about again.' From the time of his settlement at Grasmere he had a physical infirmity which prevented his composing pen in hand. Before he had been five minutes at his desk, his chest became oppressed, and a perspiration started out over his whole body ; to which was added, in subsequent years, incessant liability to inflammation in his eyes. Thus when he had inwardly digested as many lines as his memory could carry, he usually had recourse to some of the inmates of his house to commit them to paper."†

There is, therefore, nothing in the *nature* of extemporaneous

* LANMAN : Private Life of Webster, p. 84.

† LONDON QUARTERLY REVIEW : Vol. XCII, p. 212.

preaching incompatible with thoroughness of insight, clearness of presentation, or power of expression. Whether an unwritten sermon shall be profound, lucid, and impressive, or not, depends upon the preacher. If, after the due amount of immediate labor upon it, it fails to possess the qualities of good discourse, it is because the author himself lacks either earning, discipline, or practice, and not because there is anything in the nature of the production in question to preclude depth, clearness, and effectiveness.

The truth of these remarks will be still more apparent, if we bear in mind that the extemporaneous sermon has not had the due amount of work expended upon it. It has too often been resorted to in idle and indolent moods, instead of being the object upon which the diligent and studious preacher has expended the best of his powers, and the choicest of his time. Again, the extemporaneous sermon has not been the product of persevering practice, and of the skill that comes from persevering practice. The preacher, in the tremor of his opening ministry, makes two or three attempts to preach extempore, and then desists. Remembering the defects of these first attempts, and comparing them with the more finished discourses which he has been in the *habit* and *practice* of writing, he draws the hasty and unfounded inference, that from the nature of the case oral discourse must be inferior to written discourse. But who can doubt that with an equal amount of practice, of patient persistent practice, this species of sermon might be made equal to the other in those solid qualities in which, it must be confessed, it is too generally inferior? Who can doubt that if the clergy would form the habit, and acquire the self-possession and skill of the lawyer, in respect to unwritten discourse, and then would expend the same amount of labor upon the unwritten that they do upon the written sermon, it would be as profound, as logical, as finished, and more effective? The fact is, that there is nothing in the oral, any more than in the written method of delivering thought, that is fitted to hamper the operations of the

human mind. If an educated man has truth and eloquence within him, it needs nothing but *constant practice* to bring it out in either form he pleases, in written or extemporaneous language. Habit and practice will, in either case, impart both ability and facility. Take away the skill which is acquired by the habitual practice of composing with the pen in hand, and it would be as difficult for one to deliver his thoughts in writing, as it is for one who has acquired no skill, by the practice of extemporaneous discourse, to deliver his thoughts orally. Nay, how often when the thoughts flow thick and fast is the slow pen found to impede the process of composition. In such a case, the mind yearns to give itself vent in unwritten language, and would do so, if it had only acquired the confidence before an audience, and the skill which are the result not of mere nature, but of habit and practice.

II. The truth of these assertions respecting the intrinsic nature of extemporaneous preaching will be still more evident by considering the chief requisites in order to the attainment of the gift. It will be found, that provided these exist, the unwritten sermon affords an opportunity for the display of all those substantial qualities which are commonly supposed to belong to written sermons alone, and, in addition, of all those qualities which co-exist only with the burning words and free delivery of the orator untrammelled by a manuscript and the effort to read it.

1. The first requisite in order to extemporaneous preaching is *a heart glowing and beating with evangelical affections*. The heart is the seat of life, the source of vigor, the spring of power. From this centre, vitality, energy and impulse go out and pervade the whole system. To the heart, whether in physiology or psychology, we must look for the central force. If profound feeling, the feeling that is grounded in reason and truth, pervade discourse, it will surely attain the end of eloquence, and produce deep movement in the hearer. That peculiar energy, issuing from the heart, which we designate by

the word emotion, must mix and mingle with the energy issuing from the intellect, in order to the highest power of speech. It was because, as Macaulay says, "his reason was penetrated and made red-hot by his passion," that Fox was one of the most effective and overwhelming of orators. And the same truth will be evident, if, instead of looking at the discourse itself we contemplate the action of the discourses's mind. In order that the human faculties may work with the greatest energy and harmony, the heart must be in the head and the head in the heart. Never does the mind operate so powerfully, and with such truth and beauty of result, as when the faculty of cognition co-works with the faculty of feeling. If these two faculties become one and indivisible in action, the result is not merely truth, but *living* truth; truth fused and glowing with all the feeling of the heart, and feeling mingled with and made substantial by all the truth of the head. The light is heat, and the heat is light.

These remarks respecting the function and agency of the heart are true in every province, but especially in that of religion. The inmost essence of religion itself has been placed by Schleiermacher, one of the profoundest of the German theologians, solely in feeling. It is probably an error to make either knowledge or feeling, *by itself and apart from the other*, the ultimate essence of religion. Religion is neither knowledge in isolation, nor feeling in isolation, but a most original and intimate synthesis of both. If either element by itself be regarded as the sole and single constituent, theology becomes either rationalistic and speculative, or else mystical and vague. And yet, even those theologians whose scientific spirit has led them to emphasize creeds, and made them shy of sentimental religion, have always acknowledged that the heart is not only the seat of piety, but one important source of theological science itself.

If this is true in reference to the theologian, it is still more so in reference to the preacher. He needs the strong stir and impulse of holy affections, in order to succeed in his vocation ;

and especially when he has not the written discourse upon which to rely. A heart replete and swelling with the grand emotions of christianity is a well of water springing up into everlasting life and power, for it is fed from infinite fountains. With what force, vividness, and natural method also, does the Christian, destitute it may be of mental discipline and culture, sometimes speak upon the subject of religion out of a full heart. What wonderful insight does he oftentimes display into the very depths of religion and theology, thus proving the truth of the saying, "the heart sees further than the head." Or, to take another instance, with what power and fresh originality does the convicted sinner utter himself upon the doctrine of human guilt, when he is full of the awful feeling itself. Given a heart filled with intelligent rational feeling respecting any subject, and the primal power by which effective discourse upon it is to be originated is given also.

Now, so far as this first requisite in order to the practice of extemporaneous preaching is concerned, it can most certainly be secured by every preacher. Nay, he is presumed to possess it, as that which in a great degree justifies him in entering the ministry. Let him by prayer and meditation first purify the feeling of his heart and then render it more deep and intense by the same means, and he will be prepared to speak freely and forcibly to the human heart. Let him take heed that his feeling be *spiritual*, an affection in distinction from a passion,* the product of God's word and spirit, and not the mere excitement of the sensibilities, and he will preach with the demonstration of the spirit and with power, as did Paul "without notes," though it may be in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling, and not with enticing words.

2. In the second place, a *methodising intellect* is requisite in order to successful extemporaneous preaching. By a methodizing intellect is meant, one which *spontaneously* works in a logi-

* See the account of this important distinction, by THEREMIN: *Rhetoric*, p. 131, sq.

cal manner, and to which consecutive reasoning has become *natural*. All truth is logical. It is logically connected and related, and that mind is methodical which detects this relation and connection as it were, by instinct. This natural logic, this spontaneous method, is one great source of mental power. How readily do we listen to one who unfolds truth with a facile and effortless precision, and how easily does his discourse win its way into us.

We have said that truth is logical in its essential nature. But is equally true that the human mind is logical in its essential nature. For the truth and the mind are correlatives. One is set over against the other. The truth is the object to be known, and the mind is the subject or agent to know it ; and subject and object are antitheses like hunger and food, like thirst and water. Consequently, in its idea, or in other words, by its creation, the human intellect is as logical in its structure as the truth is in its nature. By its constitution, the mind is designed to be methodical and consecutive in its working, and to apprehend logical truth logically.

Now, by reason of discipline and practice the human intellect works towards this true end of its creation, and acquires an instinctive ability to think methodically, and to unfold consecutively any subject presented to it. The exhibition of truth by a methodizing intellect is *exhaustive* (to use a term of Macintosh), and the whole truth is thus unfolded, in its substance, its connections and relations. This methodizing talent *develops* a subject, unrolling it to the centre and showing the whole of it. Kant has a chapter upon the architectonic nature of the pure reason,—by which he means that innate system of laws which reason follows in building up architecturally its conclusions,—and shows that when these laws are followed, a logical whole is as certainly and *naturally* produced, as is the honeycomb with its hexagonal cells, when the bee follows the architectonic laws of instinct.* Now, a methodizing mind is one

* Kant : Kritik der reinen Vernunft, p. 641 sq. (Die Architectonik der reinen Vernunft.)

which by discipline and practice has reached that degree of philosophic culture in which these systematizing laws work *spontaneously*, by *their own exceeding lawfulness*, and instinctively develope in a systematic and consecutive manner the whole truth of a subject. The results of the operation of such a mind may well be called architecture ; for they are built up according to eternal law, in order and beauty. There is no grander fabric, no fairer architectural structure than a rational, logical system of truth. It is fairer and more majestic than St. Peter's. A great system of thought rises like that cathedral with a

“ Vastness which grows ; but grows to harmonize,
All musical in its immensities.”

In speaking of the heart as the seat of feeling, we had occasion to allude to its influence in modifying the operations of the mind considered as a whole. It was seen that it imparts vitality to the total mental action, and infuses vigor through all the products of this action. A methodizing intellect exerts a very important influence in the same reference. Feeling, though vivific and energizing, is not precise and clear in its own nature. The man of all feeling has a vague and mystic tendency. Hence the need of logic, in order that the energy issuing from the head may be prevented from diffusing itself over too wide a surface, and may be guided into channels and flow along in them. When a beating heart is allied with a methodizing mind, there is at once vigor and life with clearness and precision. The warm emotions are kept from exhaling and becoming vapory and obscure, by the systematizing tendency of the logical faculty, and the hard, dry forms of logic are softened and enlivened by the vernal breath of the emotions.

It is evident, that if the sacred orator possesses such a discipline of head and heart as has been described, it will be easy for him to apply it to any theme he chooses, and to speak upon it in any manner he may elect. The human mind when highly train-

ed can labor with success in almost every direction. Education is, in truth, not a dead mass of accumulations, but the power to work with the brain. If this power be acquired, it is a matter of secondary consequence, what be the special topic upon which the work is expended, or the particular manner, oral or written, in which the result is embodied. In the ancient gymnasium, the first purpose was to produce a muscular man, an athlete. When this was accomplished, it mattered little whether he entered the lists of the wrestler, or of the boxer, or of the racer. Nay, if he were thorough-bred, he might attempt the *pancratium* itself, and carry off all the laurels. Assuming the existence of such a salient heart, and such a methodical head, nothing but habitual practice is needed to permit their employment before any audience whatsoever, and without the aid of a manuscript. If the preacher has attained this facility of methodizing, and is under the impulse of ebullient, swelling affections, awakened by the clear vision of divine truths and realities, he will be able to speak powerfully, in any presence and *extempore*. The furnace is full, and the moulds are ready. Nothing is needed but to draw off; and when this is done, a solid and symmetrical product is the result.

3. A third requisite in order to the practice of extemporaneous preaching is the *power of amplification*.* By this is meant, the ability to dwell upon an important point or principle, until the hearer shall feel the whole force of it. It is the tendency of a thoughtful, and especially of a methodizing mind, to be satisfied with the great leading principles of a theme, and not to tarry long upon any one idea, however capital it may be. Such a mind is able to pass over a subject with great rapidity, by touching only the prominent parts of it, as the fabled Titans stepped from mountain to mountain, without going up and down the intervening vallies. But the common hearer, the popular audience, cannot follow, and hence the methodical and full mind must learn to enlarge and illustrate, until the prin-

* Compare the author's DISCOURSES AND ESSAYS, p. 96.

ciple is perceived in all its length and breadth, and the idea is contemplated in all its height and depth. Just in proportion as the methodizing mind acquires this amplifying talent, does it become oratorical ; without it, though there may be philosophy, there cannot be eloquence.

But this talent will be speedily acquired by careful pains and practice in regard to it. The speaker needs merely to stop his mind in its onward logical movement, and let its energy head back upon the idea or the principle which his feeling and his logic have brought out to view. Indeed, the tendency, after a little practice, will be to dwell too long, to amplify too much, when once the mind has directed its whole power to a single topic. As matter of fact, the preacher will find, altogether contrary to his expectations, that his oral discourse is more expanded and diffuse than his written, that his extemporaneous sermon is longer than his manuscript. An undue amplification is the principal fault in the eloquence of Burke, who was one of the most methodical and full minds in literary history. In the language of Goldsmith, he

. " went on refining,
And thought of convincing while they thought of dining."

Hence, although never unwelcome to his readers, his magnificent amplification was sometimes tedious to his hearers. Though the British House of Commons at the close of the last century was not a "fit audience" for Burke, because it had but small sympathy with that broad and high political philosophy out of which his masculine and thoughtful eloquence sprang like the British oak from the strong black mould of ages, though Burke would not be the "dinner bell" for the present British Parliament, still his excessive amplification, undoubtedly, somewhat impedes that rapid rush and Demosthenean vehemence of movement which distinguishes eloquence from all other species of discourse.

4. A fourth requisite in order to successful extemporaneous preaching is a *precise mode of expression*. A methodical mind

thinks clearly, and therefore the language should be select and exact, that it may suit the mental action. If the orator's thoughts are distinct and lucid, he needs carefully to reject any and every word that does not convey the precise meaning he would express. Indeed *rejection* is the chief work in clothing the thoughts of a highly disciplined mind. It is an error to suppose that the main difficulty in extemporaneous preaching lies in the want of words, just as it is an error to suppose that great natural fluency is an indispensable aid to it. Dr. Chalmers never acquired the ability to speak extempore in a manner at all satisfactory to himself, or to his auditors when they remembered his written discourses. And the cause of this, according to his own statement, was the unmastered and overmastering fluency of his mind. Thoughts and words came in on him like a flood. In extemporaneous utterance, they impeded each other, to use his own expression, like water attempted to be forced all at once out of a narrow-mouthed jug. A more entire mastery of his resources, a power to repress this fluency, to control the coming deluge, which might have been acquired by patient practice, would have rendered Chalmers a most wonderful extemporaneous preacher, at the same time that it would have improved his written sermons, by rendering them less plethoric and tumid in style, and more exact and precise in phraseology.

Uncontrolled fluency is equally a hindrance to excellent poetical composition. Byron speaks of the "fatal facility" of the octo-syllabic verse. It runs too easily to be favorable to the composition of thoughtful poetry. Some of Byron's own poetry, and a great deal of Scott's, betrays this fatal facility in a too abundant use of what Goldsmith humorously calls "the property of jinglimus." The melody is not subordinated to the harmony, the rhythm is monotonous, and the reader sighs after a more stirring and varied music.

Natural fluency is a fatal facility in the orator also, unless he guards against it by the cultivation of strict logic, and precise phraseology. Men generally, even those who are reputed to

be men of few words, are fluent when *roused*. When the feeling are awakened, and the intellect is working intensely, there are more thoughts and words than the *unpractised* speaker can take care of. What is needed is, coolness and entire self-mastery in the midst of this animation and inspiration, so that it may not interfere with itself, and impede its own movement. What is needed is, the ability in this glow of the heart, this tempest and whirlwind of feeling, to *reject* all thoughts that do not strictly belong to the subject, and all words that do not precisely convey the cool, clear thought of the cool, clear head. The orator must be able to check his thunder in mid volley. This is really the great art in extemporaneous discourse ; and it cannot be attained except by continual practice, and careful attention, with reference to it. The old and finished speaker always uses fewer and choicer words, than the young orator. The language of Webster during the last half of his public life was more select, and precise, than it was previously. He employed fewer words to convey the same amount of meaning, by growing more nice and careful in the rejection of those vague words which come thick and thronging when the mind is roused. Hence the language he did use is full of meaning ; as one said, " every word weighs a pound."

We have thus discussed the principal requisites in order to successful extemporaneous preaching. It will be evident that the subject has not been placed upon a weak foundation, or that but little has been demanded of the extemporaneous preacher. A heart full of devout and spiritual affections, a spontaneously methodizing intellect, the power of amplification, and a precise phraseology are not small attainments. A great preparation has been required, on the part of him who preaches unwritten sermons ; but only because it is precisely the same that is required, in order to the production of excellent written discourse. If this preparation has actually been made,—if his heart is full, and his intellect spontaneously methodical in its working ; if he can dwell sufficiently long upon particular points, and can express himself with precision

—then, with no more *immediate* preparation than is required to compose the written sermon, and NO LESS, the preacher may speak as logically as he does when he writes, and even more freshly and impressively. But, as was remarked in the beginning, the extemporaneous sermon will be the product, not of the particular instant but, of all the time of the speaker's life,—of all the knowledge and culture he has acquired by the sedulous discipline of his intellect, and the diligent keeping of his heart. Whether, then, all may preach unwritten sermons depends upon whether all may acquire the requisites that have been described; and to assert that the clergy generally cannot acquire them, would be a libel upon them. There have been instances of men so thorough in their learning, and so spontaneously methodical in their mental habits, that even with little or no immediate preparation, they could speak most logically and effectually. It is related of John Howe, that, "such were his stores of thought and so thoroughly were they digested, he could preach as methodically without preparation, as others after the closest study." Robert Hall composed his singularly finished and elegant discourses, lying at full length upon chairs placed side by side, a device to relieve acute pain. It is true that these were extraordinary men, but not a little of their power arose from the simple fact that they felt strongly, thought patiently, and practised constantly.

And this brings us to the last, but by no means least important point in the discussion of this subject; and this is the patient and persevering *practice* of extemporaneous preaching. These requisites to unwritten discourse that have been mentioned may all be attained, and as matter of fact are attained in a greater or less degree by every preacher who composes written sermons, and yet there be no extemporaneous discourse. Many a preacher is conscious of possessing these capabilities, and can and does exert them through the pen, who would be overwhelmed and struck dumb if he should suddenly be deprived of his manuscript, and be compelled to

address an audience extemporaneously. These requisites must, therefore, *actually be put into requisition*. The preacher must actually speak extemporaneously, and be in the habit of so doing. And there is one single rule, and but one, the observance of which will secure that uniform practice without which the finest capacities will lie dormant, and unused. At the very opening of his ministry the preacher must begin to deliver one extemporaneous sermon on the sabbath, and do so uniformly to the close of it. A resolute, patient, and faithful observance of this rule will secure all that is needed. The preacher must pay no regard to difficulties in the outset, must not be discouraged or chagrined by the bad logic or bad grammar of his earlier attempts, must not heed the remarks and still less the advice of fastidious hearers; but must prepare as carefully as possible for the task as it comes round to him, and perform it as earnestly, seriously and scrupulously as he does his daily devotions.* In course of time, he will find

*The following was the method of Dr. Blackburn, a distinguished Southern preacher, in making the *immediate* preparation for unwritten discourse, and we do not know of any better one. "In his studies and preparation for the pulpit, his plan was to fold a sheet of paper and lay it on his writing desk, and then commence walking backward and forward across the room, occasionally stopping to note down a head or leading subdivision of his thoughts, leaving considerable space under each note. Having thus arranged the plan of his discourse, which he called 'blazing his path,' borrowing a figure from back-woods life, he then proceeded to take up each head and subdivision separately, and amplify it in his mind, until he had thought his whole discourse through and through, stopping occasionally as before to jot down a word or thought, sometimes a sentence or an illustration, under each division, until he had finished. Then taking up the paper, he would usually con it over again and again, now blotting out, now adding something. Thus he continued, until every part of the discourse was satisfactorily arranged in his mind. The notes thus prepared he usually took with him into the pulpit, but he rarely had occasion even to glance at them. He used to remark 'I'll try to get the thoughts fully into my mind, and leave the language generally to the occasion.'"—PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY REVIEW, March, 1853.

The importance of an *early beginning*, as well as of a constant practice, in order to extemporaneous speaking, is illustrated by the following remark of Mr. Clay to the students of a law school. "I owe my success in life to one single fact, namely, that at the age of twenty-seven, I commenced, and continued for years, the practice of daily reading and speaking upon the con-

that it is becoming a pleasant process, and is exerting a most favorable influence upon his written sermons, and, indeed, upon his whole professional character. In each week, he should regularly preach one written sermon, and one unwritten sermon to "the great congregation." If the preacher must be confined to but one kind of discourse, then he should write. No man could meet the wants of an intelligent audience, year after year, who should always deliver unwritten discourses. But the clergy would be a more able and influential body of public teachers, if the two species of sermonizing were faithfully employed by them. The vigor and force of the unwritten sermon would pass over into the written, and render it more impressive and powerful than it now is, while the strict method and finished style of the written discourse would pass over into the unwritten. If the young clergyman lays down this rule in the outset, and proceeds upon it, it is safe to prophesy a successful career of extemporaneous preaching in his case. But if he does not lay it down *in the very outset*, if he delays until a more convenient season occurs for going up into the pulpit, and speaking without a manuscript, then it is almost absolutely certain that, like the majority of his associates in the ministry he will go through life never delivering a really excellent extemporaneous sermon.

We are confident that extemporaneous preaching should engage far more than it does, the labor and study of the clergy. The more we think of it, the more clearly shall we see that, as a species, it comes nearest to ideal perfection. It is a living utterance, out of a living heart and intellect, to living excited men, through no medium but the free air. It was the preaching of Christ and his apostles, of many of the early

tents of some historical or scientific book. These off-hand efforts were made sometimes in a cornfield, at others in the forest, and not unfrequently in some distant barn, with the horse and the ox for my auditors. It is to this early practice of the great art of all arts, that I am indebted for the primary and leading impulses that stimulated me forward, and have shaped my entire subsequent history."

Fathers, of Luther and the Reformers. And whenever any great movement has been produced, either in church or state, it has commonly taken its rise, so far as human agency is concerned, from the unwritten words of some man of sound knowledge, and thorough discipline, impelled to speak by strong feeling in his heart.

If the clergy would study the Bible with a closer and more penetrating exegesis,* and that theological system which has in it most of the solid substance of the Bible, with a more patient and scientific spirit; if they would habituate their intellects to long and connected trains of thought, and to a precise use of language; then, under the impulse of even no higher degree of piety than they now possess, greater results would follow from their preaching. When the clergy shall pursue theological studies, as Melancthon says he did, for personal spiritual benefit; when theological science shall be wrought into the very soul, inducing a theological mood; when thorough learning, and diligent self-discipline shall go hand in hand with deep love for God and souls; and when the clergy shall dare to *speak* to the people with extemporaneous boldness out of a full heart, full head, and clear mind, we may expect under the Divine blessing to see some of those great movements which characterized the ages of extempore preaching,—the age of the Apostles, the age of the Reformers, the age of John Knox in Scotland, the age of Wesley and Whitfield in England and America.

*The relation of exegetical study to sacred eloquence, and especially to extemporaneous preaching, deserves a separate discussion. There is no discipline so suggestive and fertilizing to the sermonizer, as the analytic examination of the revealed word. He who is accustomed to read a gospel, or an epistle, *over, and over, and over again*, in the original Greek, becomes so saturated with its revelations that he is as full of matter as Elihu the friend of Job, and must speak that he may be refreshed. A *single* philological perusal will not have this effect, but ten or twenty will.