

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE  
OF A  
NATURAL RHETORIC:

An Address,

DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION

OF HIS

INAUGURATION TO THE CHAIR OF

SACRED RHETORIC AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY,

IN THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT AUBURN,

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THERE is no greater or more striking contrast, than exists between a thing that is alive, and a thing that is dead; between a product of nature, and a product of mechanism; between a thing which has a principle within it, and a "thing of shreds and patches." The human mind notices this contrast between the various objects that come before it, the quicker and the more sharply, because it is itself a living thing, and because its own operations are unifying, organizing, and vivifying, in their nature. We sometimes speak of the mechanism of the human understanding, and of a mechanizing process as going on within it. But this language is metaphorical, and employed to denote the uniformity and certainty of intellectual processes, rather than their real nature. Man is a living soul, and there is no action anywhere, or in any thing, that is more truly and purely vital, more entirely diverse from and hostile to the mechanical and the dead, than the genuine action of the human mind. Hence it is, that the mind notices this contrary quality and characteristic in an object, with the rapidity of instinct, and starts back from it with a sort of organic recoil. Life detects death, and shrinks from death instantaneously. Nature abhors Art and artifice, as decidedly as, according to the old philosophy, it abhors a vacuum.

This distinction between the natural and the artificial, furnishes a clue to the difference which runs through all the productions of man, and reveals the secret of their excellence or their defects. How often and how spontaneously do we

sum up our whole admiration of a work by saying, "it is natural," and our whole dislike by the words, "it is artificial?" The naturalness and life-likeness in the one case, are the spring of all that has pleased us; the formality and artifice in the other, are the source of all that has repelled or disgusted us. Even when we go no further in our criticism, this general statement of conformity or oppugnancy to Nature, seems to be a sufficient criticism. And with good reason. For, if a production has nature, has life in it, it has real and permanent excellence. It has the germ and root of all excellencies. And if it has not nature or life in it—if it is a mechanical, or artificial, or a formal thing—it has the elements of all defects and all faults in it.

It will be noticed here, that we have used the term Art in its more common and bad sense of contrariety to Nature, and not in that technical and best signification of the word, which implies the oneness and unison of the two. For, true Art—Fine Art—has Nature in it, and the genuine artist, be he painter, or poet, or orator, is one who paints, or sings, or speaks, with a natural freedom and freshness. Hence it is, that we are impressed by the great productions of Fine Art, in the same way that we are by the works of Nature. A painting, warm from the easel of Claude Lorraine, appeals to what is alive in us, in the same genial way that a vernal landscape does. An oration from a clear brain, a beating heart, and a glowing lip, produces effects analogous to those of light, and fire, and the electric currents. In this way, a mysterious union is found to exist between outward nature and that inward nature in the soul of man, which we call genius; and in this way we see that there is no essential difference between Nature and Art.

But in the other and more common sense of the term Art—and the sense in which we shall employ it at this time—there is no such mystic union and unison between it and Nature.

It is its very contrary ; so much so, that the one kills and expels the other ; so much so, that, as we have said, the one affords a universal test of the faultiness, and the other of the excellence of the productions of the human mind, in all departments of effort. For the Natural is the true, while the Artificial is the false. Truth is the inmost essence of that principle by which a production of the human mind is so organized and vitalized, as to make a fresh and powerful impression. Whenever, in any department of effort, the human mind has reached the truth, and is able to give a simple and sincere expression to it, we find the product full of nature, full of life, full of freshness, full of impression. This, and this ultimately, is the plain secret of the charm in every work of genius and of power. In every instance, the influence which sways the observer, or the hearer, or the reader, is the influence of the veritable reality—of the real and the simple truth. The Artificial, on the contrary, is the false. Examine any formal production whatever, and we shall be brought back in the end to a pretence—to a falsehood. The mind of the author is not filled with the truth, and yet he pretends to an utterance of the truth. Its working is not genial and spontaneous like that of nature, and yet he must give out that it is. From the beginning to the end of the process, therefore, an artificial production is essentially untrue, unreal, and hence unnatural.

We have thus briefly directed attention to this very common distinction between the Natural and the Artificial, and to the ground of it, for the purpose of introducing the general topic upon which we propose to speak on this occasion : which is,

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF A NATURAL RHETORIC, WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF THE PREACHER.

There is no branch of knowledge so liable to an artificial method, as that of Rhetoric. Strictly defined, it is, indeed,

as Milton calls it, an instrumental art, and hence, from its very nature, its appropriate subject-matter is the form of a discourse. While Philosophy, and History, and Theology, are properly occupied with the substance of human composition—with truth itself and thought itself—to Rhetoric is left the humbler task of putting this material into a form suited to it. Hence, it is evident, that by the very nature and definition of Rhetoric, this department of knowledge and of discipline is liable to formalism and artificiality. While the mind is carried by the solid, material branches of education, further and further into the very substance of truth itself—while History, and Philosophy, and Theology, by their very structure and contents, tend to deepen and strengthen the mental processes, Rhetoric, in common with the whole department of Fine Art, seems to induce superficiality and formality. And when a bad tendency seems to receive aid from a legitimate department of human knowledge, it is no wonder that it should gain ground until it convert the whole department into its own nature. Hence, as matter of fact, there is no branch of knowledge—no part of a general system of education—so much infected, in all ages, with the merely formal, the merely hollow, the merely artificial, and the totally lifeless, as Rhetoric. The epigram which Ausonius wrote under the portrait of the Rhetorician, Rufus, might, with too much truth, be applied to the Rhetorician generally :

Ipse rhetor, est imago imaginis.\*

The need, therefore, of a Rhetoric that educates like nature, and not artificially—a Rhetoric that *organizes* and *vitalizes* the material that is made over to it for purposes of form—is apparent at first glance. Without such a method of expression, the influence of the solid branches of educa-

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\* Ausonii Epig. LI.

tion themselves, is neutralized. However full of fresh and original thought the mind may be, if it has been trained up in a mode of presenting it, that is in its own nature artificial and destructive of life, the freshness and originality will all disappear in the process of imparting it to another mind. A Rhetoric that is conformed to nature and to truth, is needed, therefore, in order that the department itself, may be co-ordinate with those higher departments of knowledge in which the foundation of mental education is laid. Without such a concurrence with the material branches of education, such a merely formal and instrumental branch as that of Rhetoric, is useless, and worse than useless. For it only diverts the mind from the thought to the expression, without any gain to the latter, and to the positive detriment of the former.

Rhetoric, therefore, can be a truly educating and influential department, only in proportion as it is organizing in its fundamental character. In order to this, it must be grounded first of all in logic, or the laws of thinking, and so become not a mere collection of rules for the structure and decoration of single sentences, but a habit and process of the human mind. The Rhetorician must make his first sacrifice to the austere muses. In an emblematic series by one of the early Florentine engravers, Rhetoric is represented by a female figure of dignified and commanding deportment, with a helmet surmounted by a regal crown on her head, and a naked sword in her right hand. And so it should be. Softness and grace, and beauty, must be supported by strength and prowess; the golden and jewelled crown must be defended by the iron helmet and the steel sword. A rhetorical mind, therefore, in the best and proper sense of the term, is at bottom a constructive mind—a mind capable of methodizing and organizing its acquisitions and reflections into forms of symmetry and strength, and in a greater or less degree of beauty. It

is a mind which, in the effort to express itself, begins from within and works outward, and whose product is, for this reason, characterized by the unity and thorough organization of a product of Nature. Such an example, was the mind of Demosthenes, and such a product is the Oration for the Crown. The oratorical power of this great master is primarily a constructive ability—an ability to arrange and methodize. Take away this deeply-running and vigorous force by which the various parts of the discourse—the whole *materiel* of the plan and division—are compelled and compacted together, and this orator falls into the same class with the Gorgiases and the false Rhetoricians of all ages. Take away the *organization* of the Oration for the Crown, and a style and diction a hundred fold more brilliant and gorgeous than that which now clothes it, would not save it from the fate of the false Rhetoric of all ages.

Such again, for example, was the mind of the Apostle Paul, and such the character of his Rhetoric. Those short epistles, which like godliness are profitable for all things, and ought to be as closely studied by the sermonizer as they are by the theologian—are as jointed and linked in their parts as the human frame itself, and as continuous in the flow of their trains of thought, as the current of a river. The mind of this great first preacher to the Gentiles—this great first sermonizer to cultivated and sceptical Paganism—was also an organizing mind. How naturally does Christian doctrine, as it comes forth from this intellect, whose native characteristics were not destroyed, but only heightened and purified by inspiration—how naturally and inevitably does Christian truth take on forms that are fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, statements that are at once logic and Rhetoric—and satisfy both the reason and the feelings. For does not the profoundest theologian study the Epistle to the Romans to find ultimate and absolute

statements in sacred science, and does not the most unlettered Christian read and pray over this same epistle, that his devotions may be kindled and his heart made better? Does not, to use the illustration of the Christian Father—does not the lamb find a fording place and the elephant a swimming place in this mighty unremitting stream?

This thoroughness in the elaboration of the principal ideas of a discourse, and this closeness in compacting them into the unity of a plan, is, therefore, a prime power in eloquence, and it is that which connects Rhetoric with all the other departments of human knowledge, or rather makes it the organ by and through which these find a full and noble expression. For, contemplated from this point of view, what is the orator but a man of culture, who is able to *tell* in round and full tones what he knows; and what is oratory but the art whereby the acquisitions and reflections of the general human mind are *communicated* to the present and the future. We cannot, therefore, taking this view of the nature of Rhetoric, as essentially organizing in its character, separate it from the higher departments of History, or Philosophy, or Theology, but must regard it as co-ordinate and concurrent with them. The rhetorical process is to go on in education, along with these other processes of acquisition and information and reflection, so that the final result shall be a mind not only disciplined inwardly, but manifested outwardly to other minds—so that there shall be not only an intellect full of thought, and a heart beating with feeling, and an imagination glowing with imagery, but a living expression of them all, in forms of unity and simplicity, and beauty and grandeur. In this way, Rhetoric really becomes what it was once claimed to be, the very crown and completion of all culture, and the rhetorical discipline, the last accomplishment in the process of education, when the man becomes prepared to take the stand on the orator's bema—before his



fellow men, and dares to attempt a transfer of his consciousness into them.

A *second* characteristic of a natural Rhetoric is the *amplifying* power. If Rhetoric should stop with the mere organizing of thought, it might be difficult to distinguish it from logic. But this organizing power in the Rhetorician, is accompanied by another ability which is more purely oratorical. We mean the ability to dwell amply upon an idea until it has unfolded all its folds, and lays off richly in broad, full view. We mean the ability to melt the hard solid ore with so thorough and glowing a heat, that it will run and spread like water. We mean the ability to enlarge and illustrate upon a condensed and cubic idea, until its contents spread out into a wide expanse for the career of the imagination and the play of the feelings.

This union of an organizing with an amplifying power, may be said to be the whole of Rhetoric. He who should combine both in perfect proportions, would be the ideal orator of Cicero. For while the former power presents truth in its clear and connected form for the understanding, the latter transmutes it into its imaginative and impassioned forms, and the product of these two powers, when they are blended into one living energy, is Eloquence. For Eloquence, among the many definitions that have been given, is the union of Philosophy and Poetry, in order to a practical end. When, therefore, the logical organization is clothed upon with the imaginative and impassioned amplification, there arises "a combination and a form indeed"—a mental product adapted more than all others, to move and influence the human mind.

But we shall see still more clearly into the essential characteristics of a Natural Rhetoric, by passing, as we now do, after this brief analysis, to the *second part* of our discourse, which proposes to treat of the worth and importance of such a Rhetoric to the preacher.

I. And in the first place, a natural as distinguished from an artificial Rhetoric, is of the highest worth to the preacher, because it is *fruitful*.

The preacher is one who, from the nature of his calling, is obliged to originate a certain amount of thought within a limited period of time, which is constantly and uniformly recurring. One day in every seven, as regularly as the motion of the globe brings it around, he is compelled to address his fellow men upon the very highest themes, in a manner and to an extent that will secure their attention and interest. No profession, consequently makes such a steady and unintermittent draught upon the resources of the mind as the clerical, and no man so much needs the aid of a fertile and fruitful method of discoursing as the Christian preacher. Besides this great amount of thinking and composition that is required of him, he is moreover shut up to a comparatively small number of topics, and cannot derive that assistance from variety of subjects, and novelty in circumstances, which the secular orator avails himself of so readily. The truths of Christianity are few and simple, and though they are richer and more inexhaustible than all others; they furnish little that is novel or striking. The power that is in them to interest and move men, must be educed from their simple and solid substance, and not from their great number or variety. The preacher may, it is true, be able to maintain a sort of interest in his hearers by the biographical, or geographical, or archaeological or historical, or literary accompaniments of the Scriptures, but his permanent influence and power over them as a preacher, must come from his ability to develop clearly, profoundly and freshly, a few simple and unadorned doctrines. Far be it from me to undervalue the importance of that training and study by which we are introduced into that elder and oriental world, in which the Bible had its origin, and with whose scenery, manners and customs, and modes of living and

thinking, it will be connected to the end of time. No student of the Scriptures, and especially no sacred orator, can make himself too much at home in the gorgeous East; too familiar with that Hebrew spirit which colors like blood the whole Bible—New Testament as well as Old Testament—but at the same time he should remember that all this knowledge is but a means to an end—that he cannot as a preacher of the Word, rely upon this as the last source whence he is to derive subject matter for his thinking and discourse year after year, but must by it all be carried down to deeper and more perennial fountains—to the few infinite facts and the few infinite truths of Christianity.

The need, therefore, of a Rhetorical method, that is in its own nature fertile and fruitful, is plain. And what other ability can succeed but that organizing and amplifying power which we have seen to be the substance of the Rhetoric of Nature as the contrary of Art. Through the former of these, the preacher's mind is led into the inmost structure and fabric of the individual doctrine, and so of the whole Christian system; and through the latter he is enabled to unroll and display the endless richness of the contents. It is safe to say that a mind which has once acquired this natural method of developing and presenting Christian truth, cannot be exhausted. No matter how much drain may be made upon it—no matter how often it may be called upon to preach the “things new and old”—it cannot be made dry. The more it is drawn from, the more salient and bulging is the fullness with which it wells up and pours over. For this *organic* method is the key and the clue. He who is master of it—he with whom it has become a mental habit and process—will find the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the Scriptures, opening readily and richly to him. He will find his mind habitually in the vein.

II. And this brings us to a second characteristic of a Natural Rhetoric, whereby it is of the greatest worth to the preacher, viz, that it is a *genial* and *invigorating* method. All the discipline of the human mind ought to minister to its enjoyment and its strength. That is a false method of discipline, by which the human mind is made to work by an ungenial effort, much more by spasms and convulsively. It was made to work like nature itself, calmly, cautiously, strongly, and happily. When, therefore, we find a system of training, resulting in a labored, anxious, intermittent and irksome activity, we may be sure that something is wrong in it. The fruits of all methods of discipline that conform to the nature of the human mind and the nature of truth, are freedom, boldness, continuety, and pleasure of execution. In this connection weakness and tedium are faults—sickness is sin.

But the mental method for which we are pleading, while making the most severe and constant draft upon the mental faculties, at the same time braces them and inspires them with power. The mind of the orator, in this slow organization and continuous amplification of the materials with which it is laboring, is itself affected by a reflex action. That truth—that divine truth—which the preacher is endeavoring to throw out, that it may renovate and edify the soul of a fellow being at the same time strikes in and invigorates his own mind, and swells his own heart with joy.

This feature—this genial vigor—in what we have styled a Natural Rhetoric, acquires additional importance, when we recur to the fact that has already been mentioned, viz, that inasmuch as Rhetoric is a formal or instrumental department, its influence is liable to become and too often has become, debilitating to the human mind. When this branch of discipline becomes artificial and mechanical in its character, by being severed too much from those profounder and more solid departments of human knowledge from whose root and fatness

it must derive all its nourishment and circulating juices—when Rhetoric degenerates into a mere collection of rules for the structure of sentences and the finish of expression—no studies or training will do more to diminish the resources of the mind, and to benumb and kill the vitality of the soul, than the Rhetorical. The eye is kept upon the form merely, and no mind individual or national, was ever made strong or fertile by the contemplation of mere form. The mind under such a tutorage works by rote instead of from an inward influence and an organic law. In reality, its action is a surface-action, which only irritates and tires out its powers. Perhaps the strongest objections that have been advanced against a Rhetorical course of instruction, find their support and force here. Men complain of the dryness and the want of geniality of a professed Rhetorician. The common mind is not satisfied with his studious artifice and his measured movements, but craves something more—it craves a robust and hearty utterance, a hale and lifesome method. Notice that it is not positively displeased with this precision and finish of the Rhetorician, but only with the lack of a genial impulse under it. It is its sins of omission that have brought Rhetoric into disrepute.

But when the training, under consideration, results in a genial and invigorating process, by which the profoundest thinking and the best feeling of the soul are discharged to the utmost, and yet the mind feels the more buoyant for it, and the stronger for it, all such objections vanish. There is, we are confident—there is a method of disciplining the mind in the direction of Rhetoric, and for the purposes of form and style, that does not in the least diminish the vigor and the healthiness of its natural processes. If there is not, then the department should be annihilated. If there can be no Rhetorical training in the schools, but such as is destructive of the freshness, and originality, and geniality of native impul-

ses and native utterances, then it were far better to leave the mind to its unpruned and tangled luxuriance—to let it wander at its own sweet will, and bear with its tedious windings and its endless eddies. Here and there, at least, there would be an onward movement, and the inspiration of a forward motion. But it is not so. For says Shakspeare:—

There is an Art which \* \* \* shares  
With great creating Nature.

There is a close and elaborate discipline which is in harmony with the poetry and the feeling and the eloquence of the human soul, and which, therefore, may be employed to evoke and express it. There is a Rhetoric which, when it has been wrought into the mind, and has become a spontaneous method and an instinctive habit with it, does not in the least impair the elasticity and vigor of nature, because in the phrase of the same great poet and master of form, from whom we have just quoted, “It is an Art that Nature makes, or rather an Art which itself is Nature.” Such a Rhetoric may, indeed, be defined to be an Art, or discipline, which enables man to be natural—an Art that simply develops the genuine and hearty qualities of the man himself—of the mind itself. For the purpose of all discipline in this direction is not to impose upon the mind a style of thought and expression unnatural and alien to it, but simply to aid the mind to be itself, and to show itself out in the most genuine and sincere manner. The Rhetorical Art is to join on upon the nature and constitution of the individual man, so that what is given by creation, and what is acquired by culture shall be homogeneous, mutually aiding and aided, reciprocally influencing and influenced. And let not this mental veracity—this truthfulness to a man’s individuality and mental structure—be thought to be an easy acquisition. It is really the last and highest accomplishment. It is a very difficult thing for a discourses to be himself, genuinely and without affectation.

It is a still more difficult thing for an orator—a man who has come out before a listening and criticising auditory—to be himself, genuinely, fearlessly and without mannerism communicating himself to his auditors precisely as he really is. A simple and natural style, says Pascal, always strikes us with a sort of surprise—for while we are on the lookout for an *author*, we find a *man*—while we are expecting a formal *art*, we find a throbbing *heart*. This is really the highest grade of culture, and the point toward which it should always aim to bring Nature out, by means of art; and Rhetorical discipline, instead of leaving the pupil ten fold more formal and artificial than it found him, ought to send him out among men, the most artless, the most hearty, and the most genuine man of them all.

Now of what untold worth is such a mental method and habit to the preacher of the Word! On this method, literally and without a metaphor, the more he works the stronger he becomes; the more he toils the happier he is. He finds the invention and composition of discourse a means of self-culture and of self-enjoyment. He finds that that labor to which he has devoted his life, and to which, perhaps, in the outset, he went with something of a hireling's feeling, is no irksome task, but the source of the noblest and most buoyant happiness. That steady unintermittent drain upon his thought and his feeling, which he feared would soon exsicate his brain and leave his heart dry as powder, he finds is only an outlet for the ever accumulating waters!

This invigorating and genial influence of the Rhetorical method, now under consideration, furthermore, is of special worth in the present state of the world. There never was a time when the general mind was so impatient of dullness as now. He who addresses audiences at the present day must be vigorous and invigorating, or he is nothing. Hence the temptation, which is too often yielded to by the sacred orator

to leave the legitimate field of Christian discourse and to range in that border land which skirts it, or perhaps to pass into a region of thought that is really profane and secular. The preacher feels the need of saying something fresh, vigorous and genial, and not being able to discourse in this style upon the old and standing themes of the Bible, he endeavors to christianize those secular and temporal themes with which the general mind is already too intensely occupied, that he may find in them subjects for entertaining and, as he thinks, original discourse. But this course, on the part of the Christian minister, must always end in the decline of spiritual religion, both in his own heart, and in that of the Church. Nothing, in the long run, is truly edifying to the Christian man or the Christian Church, that is not really religious. Nothing can renovate and sanctify the earthly mind, but that which is in its own nature spiritual and religious. Not that which resembles Christian truth, or which may be modified or affected by Christian truth, can convict of sin and convert to God, but only the substantial and real Christian truth itself. Nothing but material fire can be relied upon as a central sun—as a radiating centre.

The Christian preacher is thus shut up to the old and uniform system of Christianity in an age when, more than in any other, men are seeking for some new thing—when they are seeking and demanding stimulation, invigoration, animation, and impression. His only true course, therefore, is to find the new in the old—to become so penetrated with the spirit of Christianity, that he shall breathe it out from his own mind and heart, upon his congregation, in as fresh and fiery a tongue of flame as that which rested upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost—to enter so thoroughly into the genius and spirit of the Christian system, that it shall exhibit itself through him, with an originality and newness kindred to that of its first inspired preachers, and precisely like that which



characterizes the sermonizing of the Augustines and the Bernards, the Luthers and the Calvins, the Leightons, the Howes and the Edwardses, of the Church. What renders the sermons of these men so vivific and so invigorating to those who study them, and to the audiences who heard them? Not the variety or striking character of the topics, but the thoroughness with which the truth was conceived and elaborated in their minds—not an artificial Rhetoric, polishing and garnishing the outside of a subject in which the mind has no interest, and into the interior of which it has not penetrated—but an organizing Rhetoric, whereby the sermon shot up out of the great Christian system, like a bud out of the side of a great trunk, or a great limb; part and particle of the great whole—an amplifying Rhetoric whereby the sermon was the mere evolution of an involution—the swelling, bursting, leafing out, blossoming and fructuation of this bud.

III. And this brings us, in the third place, to the worth of this Rhetorical method to the preacher, because it is so closely connected with his *theological training and discipline*.

It is plain, from what has been said, that eloquent preaching cannot originate without profound theological knowledge. The eloquent preacher is simply the thorough theologian who has now gone out of his study, and up into the pulpit. In other words, eloquence in this, as well as in every other instance, is founded in knowledge. Cicero says that Socrates was wont to say that all men are eloquent enough on subjects whereon they have knowledge: a saying which re-appears in the common and homely rule for eloquence, "*Have* something to say, and then say it."

Hence a Rhetorical training which does not sustain intimate relations to the general training and discipline of the pupil is worthless. At no point does an artificial Rhetoric betray itself so quickly and so certainly as here. We feel

that it has no intercommunication with the character and acquisitions of the individual. It is a foreign method, which he has adopted by a volition, and not a spontaneous one which has sprung up out of his character and culture and is in perfect sympathy with it. But the Rhetoric of nature has all the theological training of the preacher back of it as its support—beneath it, as its soil and nutriment. All that he has become by long years of study and reflection, goes to maintain him as a Rhetorician, so that his oratory is really the full and powerful display of what he is and has become by vigorous professional study. The Rhetoric is the man himself.

In this way, a showy and tawdry manner is inevitably avoided, as it always should be, by the preacher. It cannot be said of him, as it can of too many, “He is a *mere* Rhetorician.” For this professional study—this lofty and calm theological discipline, this solemn care of human souls, this sacred professional character—will all show themselves in his general style and manner, and preclude every thing ostentatious or gaudy, much more, every thing scenic or theatrical. The form will correspond to the matter. The matter being the most solemn and most weighty truth of God, the form will be the most chastened, the most symmetrical, and the most commanding manner of man.

And in this way, again, the rhetorical training of the preacher will exert a reflex influence upon his theological training. A true sacred Rhetoric is a sort of practical theology, and is so styled in some nomenclatures. It is a practical expansion and exhibition of a scientific system for the purpose of influencing the popular mind. When, therefore, it is well conceived and well handled, it exerts a reflex influence upon theological science itself, that is beneficial in the highest degree. It cannot, it is true, change the character and substance of the truth, but it can bring it out into dis-

inct consciousness. The effort to popularize scientific knowledge—the endeavor to put logic into the form of Rhetoric—imparts a clearness to conceptions, and a determination to opinions, that cannot be attained in the closet of the mere speculatist. Not until a man has endeavored to transfer his conceptions—not until he has pushed his way through the confusion and misunderstandings of another man's mind, and has tried to lodge his views in it—does he know the full significance and scope of even his own knowledge.

But especially is this action and re-action between theology and sacred Rhetoric of the highest worth to the preacher, because it results in a due mingling of the theoretic and the practical in his preaching. The desideratum in a sermon is such an exact proportion between doctrine and practice—such thorough fusion of these two elements—that the discourse at once instructs and impels; and he who supplies this desideratum in his sermonizing, is a powerful, influential and eloquent preacher. He may lack many other minor things, but he has the main thing; and in time these other minor things shall all be added unto him. In employing a Rhetoric that is at once organizing and amplifying in its nature and influence, the theological discipline and culture of the preacher are kept constantly growing and vigorous. Every sermon that is composed on this method, sets the whole body of his acquisitions into motion, and, like a bucket continually plunged down into a well and continually drawn up full and dripping, aerates a mass that would otherwise grow stagnant and putrid.

IV. Fourthly and finally, the worth of a Natural, as distinguished from an Artificial Rhetoric, is seen in the fact that it is connected, most intimately, *with the vital religion of the man and the preacher*. For no Rhetoric can be organizing and vivifying, that is not itself organic and alive. Only that

which has itself a living principle, can communicate life. Only that which is itself vigorous, can invigorate. The inmost essential principle, therefore, of a Rhetoric that is to be employed in the service of religion, must be this very religion itself: deep, vital piety in the soul of the sacred orator. Even the pagan Cato, and the pagan Quinctilian after him, made goodness, integrity and uprightness of character the foundation of eloquence in a secular sphere, and for secular purposes. The orator, they said, is an upright man—first of all an *upright man*—who understands speaking. How much more true then is it, that Christian character is the font and origin of all Christian eloquence: that the sacred orator is a holy man—first of all a *holy man*—who understands speaking.

We shall not, surely, be suspected of wishing to undervalue or disparage a department to which we propose to consecrate our whole time and attention, and, therefore, we may with the more boldness say, that we have always cherished a proper respect for that theory which has been more in vogue in some other denominations than in our own—that the preacher is to speak as the spirit moves him. There is a great and solid truth at the bottom of it, and though the theory unquestionably does not need to be held up very particularly before an uneducated ministry, we think there is comparatively little danger in reminding the educated man—the man who has been trained by the rules and maxims of a formal and systematic culture—that the spring of all his power, as a Christian preacher, is a *living spring*. It is well for the sacred orator, who has passed through a long collegiate and professional training, and has been taught sermonizing as an art, to be reminded that the living principle which is to render all this culture of use for purposes of practical impression is vital godliness—that he will be able to assimilate all this material of Christian eloquence only in proportion as

he is a devout and holy man. Without this interior religious life in his soul, all his resources of intellect, of memory, and of imagination, will be unimpressive and ineffectual—the mere iron shields and gold ornaments that crush the powerless Tarpeia.

For the first and indispensable thing in every instance is *power*. Given an inward and a living power, and a basis for motion, action and impression is given. In every instance we come back to this ultimate point. There is a theory among philosophers, that this hard, material world, over which we stumble, and against which we strike, is at bottom two forces or powers, held in equilibrium; that when we get back to the reality of the hard and dull clod, upon which “the swain treads with clouted shoon,” we find it to be just as immaterial, just as mobile, and just as nimble, just as much a living energy, as the soul of man itself. Whether this be truth or not, within the sphere of matter, one thing is certain, that within the sphere of mind, we are brought back to forces—to fresh and living energies—in every instance in which the human soul makes an eloquent impression, or receives one. Examine an oration, secular or sacred, that actually moved the minds of men—a speech that obtained votes, or a sermon that, as we say, saved souls, and you find the ultimate cause of this eloquence, so far as man is concerned, to be a vital power in the orator. The same amount of instruction might have been imparted—the same general style and diction might have been employed in both cases—but if that eloquent *power* in the man had been wanting, there would have been no actuation of the hearer, and consequently, no eloquence.

It is, therefore, a great and crowning excellence of the Rhetorical method which we have been describing, that its lowest and longest roots strike down into the Christian character itself. It does not propose or expect to render the

preacher eloquent without personal religion. It tells him on the contrary, that although God is the creator and sovereign of the human soul, and can therefore render the truth preached by an unregenerate man, and in the most unfeeling irreligious manner, effectual to salvation, yet that *the preacher* must expect to see men moved by his discourses only in proportion as he is himself a spiritually-minded, solemn, and devout man. Here is the *power*, and here is its hiding place, so far as the finite agent is concerned. In that holy love of God and of the human soul, which Christianity enjoins and produces—in that religious affection of the soul, which takes its origin in the soul's regeneration—the preacher is to find the source of all his eloquence and impression as an orator, just as much as of his usefulness and happiness as a man and a Christian. Back to this last centre of all, do we trace all that is genuine, and powerful, and influential, in Pulpit Eloquence.

But by this is not meant merely that the preacher must be a man of zealous and fervid emotions. There is a species of eloquence, which springs out of easily excited sensibilities, and which oftentimes produces a great sensation in audiences of peculiar characteristics, and in some particular moods. But this eloquence of the flesh and the blood, without the brain—this eloquence of the animal, without the intellectual spirits—is very different from that deep-toned, that solemn, that commanding eloquence, which springs from the life of God in the soul of man. We feel the difference—all men feel the difference—between the impression made by an ardent but superficial emotion, and that made by a deep feeling; by the sustained, equable, and strong pulsation of religious affections, as distinguished from religious sensibilities. When a man of the latter stamp feels, we know that he feels upon good grounds and in reality—that this stir and movement of the affections is central and all-pervading in

him—that the eternal truth has taken hold of his emotive nature, moving the *whole* of it, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. It is this moral earnestness of a man who habitually feels that religion is the chief concern for mortals here below—it is this profound consciousness of the perfections of God and of the worth of the human soul, which is the inmost principle of sacred eloquence—the *vis vivida vitæ* of the sacred orator.

I have thus, as briefly as possible, exhibited the principal features of what is conceived to be a true method in rhetorical instruction and discipline; not because they are new, or different from the views of the best Rhetoricians of all ages, but merely to vindicate the general spirit in which I would hope, by the blessing of God, to conduct the department of instruction committed to my care by the guardians of this Seminary. The department of Sacred Rhetoric and Pastoral Theology, is one that from the nature of the case, is not called upon to impart very much positive information. Its function is rather to induce an intellectual method, to form a mental habit, to communicate a general spirit to the future clergyman. It is, therefore, a department of growing importance in this country, and in the present state of society and the Church. Perhaps the general tone and temper of the clerical profession was never a matter of more importance than now. The world, and this country especially, is guided more and more by the general tendencies of particular classes and professions. In politics, a party or class, that really *has* a tendency and maintains it persistently for a length of time, is sure in the end to draw large masses after it. In reforms, a class that is pervaded by a distinctive spirit which it sedulously preserves and maintains, is sure of a wide influence, finally. In literature, or philosophy, or theology, a school that has a marked and determined character of its own, and

keeps faith with it, will in the course of time be rewarded for its self-consistency by an increase in numbers and in power. In all these cases, and in all other cases, the steady continuous stream of a general tendency, sucks into its own volume all the float and drift, and carries it along with it. And the eye of the reflecting observer, as it ranges over the ocean of American society, can see these currents and tendencies, as plainly as the eye of the mariner sees the Gulf-stream.

How important then is any position which makes the occupant to contribute to the formation of a general spirit and temper, in so influential a class of men as the clerical! Well may such an one say—who is sufficient for this thing? For myself, I should shrink altogether from this toil, and this responsibility, did I not dare to hope that the providence of that Being, who is the sovereign controller of all tendencies and all movements in the universe, has led me hither. In his strength would I labor, and to Him would I reverently commend myself and this institution.



# CHARGE.

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BY REV. L. E. LATHROP, D. D.

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MY DEAR BROTHER:—

By your induction into the Professorship of Sacred Rhetoric and Pastoral Theology in the Auburn Theological Seminary, your position is, as doubtless you feel it to be, one of profound interest and of high responsibility. The occasion is certainly appropriate for the utterance of words of counsel and encouragement from those by whom you have been designated to sustain the responsibilities which this position involves.

The choice which has been made implies a full conviction on the part of those who made it of your competency for the place you are called to occupy.

In giving you a special charge in relation to the department of instruction which is assigned to you, we would not be understood as assuming the prerogative of prescribing the exact course of instruction, or mode of teaching, you shall pursue, but as solemnly inculcating a faithful discharge of the duties of the office with which you have just been invested. Its privileges, prerogatives and emoluments are henceforth yours. Its results will be seen in the future developments of character which the sacred ministry shall assume, as moulded and modified in this institution which is to be the scene of your future labors. We hesitate not to say that the character of the ministry is very much depending upon the ability and success with which this department of instruction is con-

ducted. It is one of great prominence and importance in the training of the Christian ministry. It demands high qualifications, and involves solemn responsibilities.

The appellation which is given to it, is that of Sacred Rhetoric and Pastoral Theology. This is the prescribed and definite sphere of action which you are called to pursue.

And definiteness of aim in relation to it, is of much importance. Theology as a science, Biblical Criticism, Ecclesiastical History and Church Polity, are here to be taught by others. Yet an acquaintance with the subjects which belong to each of these great departments of instruction is of unquestionable importance in subserviency to a high degree of usefulness and success in this. But it is not in those departments that you are to give instruction, and it is not expected that you will encroach upon the prerogatives of those who are called to occupy them, but that you will devote your time and your efforts to the specific objects of what is made by your appointment, and by this ceremony of induction, to be henceforth your own appropriate sphere of action. The composition and delivery of sermons, and the manner of discharging the duties of the pastoral office, and all that appertains to the practical accomplishment of the work of the ministry, will be the objects of your immediate supervision and care.

The *matériel* for the ministry may be gathered from the other departments of instruction, while the training for the actual execution of the work, to a large extent, belongs to this. The others make the theologian and the Biblical expositor and critic, while this makes the minister. Its object is to teach how to use the materials already gathered from the other departments, with the greatest usefulness and efficiency. It is to conduct the candidate for the ministry through a preparatory course of training and discipline in what the excellent Doddridge was pleased to call the *art of preaching*. Although this might seem to describe the work as partaking

too much of a *mechanical* aspect, yet it is nevertheless true that a work of such magnitude, demanding such high qualifications, and involving such solemn responsibilities as the Christian ministry, must necessarily require a careful and diligent training and preparation.

To prepare the ministry to make the most effectual presentation, or to give the most effective utterance to the truth, is the legitimate province of Sacred Rhetoric as a department of instruction. It involves the necessity of a right apprehension of the work to be accomplished by the ministry—of the truth to be proclaimed—and the manner in which it should be done.

The great end of the Christian ministry is to persuade men to become reconciled unto God; to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ and to glorify God by a life of devotion to his service. It is to increase the holiness and the consequent happiness of a race destined to immortality. The legitimate, paramount aim of the Christian pulpit is the glory of God in the salvation of men, whatever subordinate ends may be secured by it. "Never forget," says one of high renown in the sacred office, "that the end of a sermon is the salvation of the people." It was the first object of the ministry of the Apostles to make men Christians and so it should be now. It was with them an object of deep solicitude that men should become well informed, stable and useful Christians, and it should be equally so with the ministry of the present day.

The truth to be proclaimed is the truth of the Bible; given not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. "Give me," says one of the most gifted and experienced occupants of the pulpit in our country, "give me the power of illustrating and enforcing God's truth, and I care not who has the treasures of human learning." Great advances in science and the arts do indeed distinguish this age, and these advances may furnish matter for new and more varied illustrations of religious

truth, and erect new fortresses of defence against the attacks of infidelity, and put into the hands of the ministry new weapons of aggression and assault. The ministry should be able to make these advances available for the furtherance of their great work. Yet it should be remembered that such progress has not added and cannot add anything to the power of the Gospel itself. It has disclosed no new way of enforcing its truths—it has discovered no new way to the kingdom of God. It is *the Gospel* itself, which is in advance of all other advances, that is to be preached among all nations, and is to be the power of God unto salvation.

The manner in which this truth is to be proclaimed, and in which these duties of the pastoral office are to be performed, belongs to the sphere of instruction in the department which you are to fill. It may not be your province to make men eloquent, but you may teach them what eloquence is and what it is not. There is much of truth in the language of one who says, "True eloquence, indeed, does not consist in speech. It cannot be brought from far. Labor and learning may toil for it, but they will toil in vain. Words and phrases may be marshalled in every way, but they cannot compass it. It must exist in the man, in the subject and in the occasion. Affected passion, intense expression, the pomp of declamation, all may conspire after it, they cannot reach it. It comes, if it comes at all, like the outbursting of a fountain from the earth—or the bursting forth of volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force."

You may cultivate a graceful and effective elocution as greatly subservient to the high purposes of the ministry. This is one of the objects of your special regard, and ought not to be undervalued. We all know its importance, and we speak of it to indicate our conviction of its value, and our desire that all the attention should be given to it which its intrinsic and relative importance demands.

We do not dissuade from, but would rather inculcate æs-

thetic culture and an adaptation to the taste and spirit and progress of the times. The adornments of Rhetoric are not to be rejected; the play of the imagination is not to be discarded; the figures and the flowers of a chastened and disciplined fancy may be legitimately employed, if done in subserviency to a higher object. They may secure attention, and open the way for the play of a more potent enginery which is to assail the heart and to bring it into subjection to the Prince of Peace.

While it is generally supposed that other professions are in a state of progression, it has been thought and often intimated, that the pulpit declines—that while more *beautiful* things are uttered from it than were once uttered, it has been declining in *energy*—that it has more touches of the German artists, but less of tenderness and love—that it has more of transcendentalism and less of Christianity. If these things are so, and if it be true that while, in some respects, the pulpit has made great and rapid advances, its *strength* has been insensibly and gradually decaying, it is a state of things which truly demands sober reflection, and it is a state of things which may demand your careful investigation, and a timely and diligent effort in your particular sphere of instruction for the application of a remedy.

Much has been said about elevating the standard of preaching, and of rendering it accordant with the spirit of the age. The attempt to do this, should be sedulously guarded with reference to an attending liability to depression instead of elevation. For, under this head, there is too much reason to believe that popular harangues and philosophical disquisitions have taken the place of a sober and earnest exhibition of divine truth—and a lax theology has supplanted the old landmarks of sound doctrine, and discourses affording men intellectual entertainment have been substituted for earnest and fervid appeals to the conscience and the heart. And hence the preaching of the times, it is often remarked, is less

scriptural than it has been in times past. This we regard as a defect of no inconsiderable magnitude, and has a claim upon your particular attention and regard. This is not the adaptation to the spirit of the age which is demanded, and which is legitimate and right, but is a mere accommodation to public taste and popular predilections.

At the same time, you will keep in view the difference between the nineteenth century and the centuries which have preceded it. You will bear it in mind that there is an element in preaching which is permanent and universal, and another which is variable and national. The former is founded upon the unchangeableness of the Gospel, and requires the same precepts to be delivered in all times and in all places. The other requires an adaptation to the necessities of our own age and country. Opinions and dispositions, favorable or unfavorable to the reception of the Gospel, belong to every age and people. The Christian orator is bound to study the innumerable wants of men, varying with time, place and other circumstances, and to adapt his instructions accordingly.

Materials for the confirmation of Christianity, may accumulate in every generation. Events in the history of individuals and families and nations, illustrative of the truth of Christianity, may be known to us, which were unknown to those who lived in an earlier day. Our ministry should be taught to avail themselves of the benefit to be derived from them.

The vices and passions of men acquire a force and prominence in one age which they do not in another. In all times there may be observed too much of a spirit of insubordination, which admits no superiority, and disregards salutary and healthful restraint—a spirit of innovation which overthrows everything, and builds up nothing—and a turbulent spirit which makes man love constant and feverish excitement, because he cannot live peaceably with himself. These

and other topics may deserve the attention of those who are in training for the sacred ministry, and to be exhibited with a direct reference to the opinions and manners of the age.

I will not here expatiate farther upon topics which have either a direct or more remote bearing upon the duties which belong to the sphere of action, upon which you are now entering. I cannot well do so, without seeming to encroach upon that field and the time which more appropriately belong to yourself. Let it be your object and your aim, to train the ministry which shall be here educated for their great work, to be an evangelical, a scriptural and earnest ministry, thoroughly furnished by that Word which is given by the inspiration of God.

We welcome you to this field of labor with the utmost cordiality, and pray that your devotion to it may be attended with a large measure of success. We welcome you to our sanctuaries and our pulpits—and the ministers and churches here represented invite your effective co-operation in building up the Redeemer's kingdom.

In behalf of the Faculty, Commissioners and Trustees of the Seminary, and of the brethren in the ministry, I give to you an assurance of their friendly and firm support in all appropriate circumstances. From an experience of fifteen years, while ministering in the place in which I now stand, I do not hesitate to congratulate you on the prospect of being associated with a community of ministerial brethren and a body of christians of so much excellence and worth. Sustained and cheered by the sympathies and prayers of an honored Christian brotherhood, and looking up for guidance and strength to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, the results of your labors, we confidently trust, will be seen in the production of a useful and effective ministry, and in the edification of the Church of the living God.