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The Word. A Discourse, delivered at the  
opening of the Reformed Presbyterian  
Synod, in Allegheny, Pa, May 24th,  
1859, by J. R. W. Sloane.

# THE WORD :

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING

OF THE

Reformed Presbyterian Synod,

In Allegheny, Pa., on Tuesday Evening, May 24, 1859.

BY

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The author regrets that, owing to absence from home and other unavoidable hindrances, the following Discourse has been so long delayed.—“*Verum sat cito, si sat bene.*”

# DISCOURSE.

“Preach the Word.”—2 TIMOTHY iv. 2.

THE theme presented in this clause of the great Apostle's charge to Timothy, has suggested itself to my mind as eminently appropriate to the present occasion.

The Gospel ministry, whether viewed with reference to the Divine warrant upon which it rests ; the influence of the Holy Spirit upon which its efficiency depends ; the transcendent importance of those truths which comprise its subject-matter ; or the momentous issues suspended upon their reception or rejection,—rises in dignity and importance above all other functions exercised by man.

Any theory of preaching, which fails to assert its superiority to all other institutions, or which would subordinate it to any other agency whatever, we reject, as not only essentially defective, but impious and dishonoring to God, in its attempt to degrade that ordinance which Himself has instituted, for the accomplishment of His highest and holiest purposes among men. As we have seen some lofty mountain summit rising so far above its fellows that they seemed to have been

formed by the Creator merely to enhance, by the comparison, the grandeur of its ampler proportions, so does the preaching of the Word rise above all other instrumentalities of moral and spiritual power—shining among them not as the “Moon amid the lesser fires of the night,” but like the sun, in whose glory that of the stars is obscured—in the splendor of whose burning their feebler radiance is quenched.

Luther is said always to have trembled when entering the pulpit ; not, as we may well suppose, from any fear of man, but from a profound conviction of the greatness of the responsibilities involved in the work, and from an overpowering sense of the presence and glory of God in His temple. Similar impressions have rested upon the greatest spirits that have ever engaged in the work. “They have seen thy goings, O God ; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.”

That the office of the ministry has been sometimes degraded by the incompetency of those who have assumed its sacred functions ; sometimes by efforts, but too lamentably successful, in many instances in the past and in the present, either to curtail its proper sphere, or to prostitute it to other than its legitimate ends,—no one will assume to deny. At the same time it may be confidently asserted, that to no other instrumentality is the world indebted for so many and so beneficent results. Tyrants have heard its voice, and been compelled to listen, to tremble and obey ;

corrupt civil and ecclesiastical organizations have bent to its power, as the rush to the storm ; giant forms of oppression and wrong, smitten by its truth, have fallen to arise no more ; while, from the weltering seas of earthly tumults and commotions, forms of social, civil, and religious order have arisen, as the world from chaos at the command of the Creator.

We must not forget, however, that preaching derives its chief importance from this amazing fact, that it is the instrumentality employed by the Holy Spirit in the work of saving our fallen and ruined race. "When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Your attention and indulgence are solicited, while I present a few thoughts upon the two following topics :

I. WHAT IS THE WORD TO BE PREACHED ?

II. HOW IS THE WORK TO BE PERFORMED ?

I. The Word is the whole will of God, as it has been revealed to man, for his salvation, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

"All Scripture is given," says Paul, "by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." The Scriptures, as then revealed, and now completed, comprising that vast sys-

tem of all-comprehending and connected truth, which is the sum of God's revelation to our sinful and fallen race, is that Word which we are solemnly charged, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing, and His kingdom, to be instant in season and out of season in proclaiming to men. We have but one theme ; our sphere is not, however, therefore either narrow or limited. This Word is one as God is one : with no superior and no equal—His essence simple and undivided ; His perfections infinite in nature and number—perfectly inexhaustible by any finite intelligence, man or angel. “ Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ? ” One as the universe is *one* : in its Divine author ; in its harmony and beauty ; unity in the midst of endless variety and diversity ; in its manifestation of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God.

Of this Word, Christ is the sum and substance, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end—Christ in the adorable mystery of His Divine person in His mediatorial character, offices, and work ; in his supreme, universal, and eternal dominion and glory. To reveal Him, holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ; to foreshadow His incarnation, were the Tabernacle and the Temple erected ; to direct the eye of faith forward to the great sacrifice which, in the end of the world, would take away sin, while instructing the worshiper in

truth, bearing upon his present spiritual interests and necessities was that gorgeous and impressive, but burdensome sacrificial worship instituted and observed. To determine definitely and accurately the relation of His great work to the world in its various stages of progress—the connection between Providence and Redemption—has the stream of history been accurately traced and mapped in the Scriptures. To animate the souls of His followers with hope, and stimulate to energy and activity in His service, have rapt prophets written of the future triumphs and glories of His kingdom. The atonement which the Son of God made for the sins of an elect world, is the great central point around which all these connected and collateral ideas are arranged in the order of their importance and connection with it; hence, the great theme of the Gospel message is Christ and Him crucified—the glad tidings of great joy unto all people in the proclamation of which the silver trumpet is blown. That He might make reconciliation through the blood of His cross, Christ was set up from everlasting, divinely appointed, constituted, furnished, and in the fullness of time, sent into the world. “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

This was the message which He committed to the



Apostles and their successors until the end of time :  
 “ Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature ”—accompanying the proclamation with the most tremendous sanctions—“ he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; he that believeth not shall be damned.”

From these and many similar declarations of the Divine Word, it is manifest that the love of God revealed to man in the work of redemption by Christ, is the theme of the Gospel, and that all which does not bear upon, or is not in some manner connected with this, is excluded—“ For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” The Apostle, however, evidently did not design to separate this highest knowledge from all others, or to present it in a disconnected or isolated aspect, but merely to assert that this was the principal thing, and that as a minister of this truth, other knowledge would be esteemed valuable only as it assisted in its elucidation, and would be held tributary to this purpose. In this period, when knowledge is so greatly increased, it becomes an object of the utmost importance to determine what relations, if any, other departments of thought sustain to the Scriptures, and consequently to that office which has for its object the exposition and enforcement of their truths.

1. What is the relation which science—using this term in its technical sense for nature-science—sustains to the Bible? This question has occupied, of late,

much of the attention of thoughtful and earnest men, and is one which it is neither possible nor desirable to ignore. Nature and Revelation are both volumes from the hand of the same intelligent Author, both imparting—the one in a form more limited and obscure, the other in a manner definite and ample—much relating to His character and perfections. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work.” Further than this, we agree with McCosh, and others who have labored successfully in this department, that there is a *Typology* in Nature as in Revelation—that the great idea that struggled for the birth through the various periods and stages of existence, was realized in Christ—that Nature adds her tribute to the many crowns that adorn His brow, and that in Christ “creation and the Creator meet in reality and not in semblance.” There is also a profound harmony which the Scriptures recognize between the natural and the spiritual worlds, that “Nature which from her seat sighing through all her works, gave signs that all was lost,” when our first parent ate the forbidden fruit, only awaits an interpreter to proclaim “through all her works,” that the Tempter has been foiled and Paradise regained through Christ. The only confirmation which this requires is a reference to those lofty spiritual truths which in the days of His flesh He evoked from her simplest productions and processes—“the things on earth are only copies of the things in Heaven.”

If there are any unable to trace or unwilling to admit these more recondite relations between the two volumes, there is enough upon the surface, patent to the most simple, to place the matter beyond the region of doubt ; for the two records not only teach in many instances the same truths, but they touch each other in so many points that none can be so blind as not to perceive the connection. The visible universe furnished the inspired penmen with their most magnificent and sublime imagery, and conveyed to them, through the medium of the senses, their most lofty and animating conceptions of Jehovah. The first chapter of Genesis furnishes the only rational, not to say inspired Cosmogony that the world has ever possessed. Many of the declarations of Scripture can only be verified by a reference to the natural features of the "Land" in which the "Book" was written, involving its geography and geology. In the explanation of the one hundred and twenty-fifth Psalm to which we listened on yesterday morning—our brother must needs refer to the "Topography" of Jerusalem.

In addition to all this, and much more which might be adduced to the same purport, none are so ignorant as not to know that some of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such, for example, as "the unity of the human race," may be not merely illustrated, but abundantly confirmed by arguments drawn from the sciences.

Between these two great volumes, containing, as they

do, the entire sum of God's revelation to man, there can be neither contrariety nor contradiction. A complete understanding is only necessary to a complete harmony ; and while it is impious for the mere physicist to attempt to array the facts of science against revelation, it is weak for the Theologian to array his exegesis against well established scientific truths, or tremble for the ark of God before mere theories which stand like an inverted pyramid upon a very limited induction of facts, or, as is frequently the case, upon mere hypothesis ; or wage war against any branch of science merely because illegitimate inferences may have been drawn from its facts.

If Ethnology, following in the pathway of nations, can fill up the "*hiatus valde deflendus*" in all history, and confirm the account of the inspired record as to the time and manner in which the nations were divided in the earth after the flood, every one after his tongue, after their families in their nations ; if Geography with her line and measuring reed can corroborate the declarations of Scripture, as to the boundaries and divisions of Canaan ; if Astronomy can impart enlarged views of Him who has laid the deep foundations and set up the lofty pillars of the universe—who binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, and looses the bands of Orion, brings forth Mazzaroth in his season, guides Arcturus with his sons, and stretches out the star-spangled curtain of the heavens like a tent to dwell in ; if Geology, by " boring into the solid strata of the

earth," can throw any additional light upon the stupendous mystery and miracle of creation ; if Anatomy and Physiology can demonstrate that God has made of one blood all nations of men, by all means let their assistance be invoked, and this testimony added to the great mass which establishes the authority and divinity of the Scriptures.

The relation of science to the ministerial work is one of entire subordination. She must appear with veiled face, and as an outer-court worshiper, when summoned to the shrine of the God of Israel—"Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther." "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The higher knowledge always subordinates that which is inferior. Science is the handmaid, not the mistress of religion.

2. Between theology and philosophy there is a very close and intimate connection. Consequently it becomes a matter of much importance to determine what value is to be attached, in preaching, to those branches of knowledge which belong more especially to the department of speculative thought. Theology begins where philosophy ends,—that which is ultimate to the one is fundamental to the other ; of course this can refer only to that true philosophy which has always perfectly harmonized with Christianity, and proved in all ages a powerful auxiliary in the battle with untruth. There can be no doubt, however, that many of these speculations, esteemed eminently philosophical,

have proved barren of useful results ; and that the great system of Gospel truth exists wholly apart and independent of them.

The pulpit is a field from which Gospel hearers expect to gather the golden grain of living and eternal truth ; not an arena to which they resort in order to be delighted by a display of mental gymnastics, or the fierce combats of intellectual gladiators. To feed with the dry husks of metaphysical speculations, those who are hungering and thirsting for the bread and water of life, is to dispense stones instead of bread—to give a serpent instead of a fish. To persons of ardent piety and spirituality of mind, such discussions are cold, cheerless, tasteless, absolutely intolerable—broken cisterns, clouds without rain, pits without water. Attendance upon them is the mere “toil of dropping buckets into empty wells, and drawing nothing up.”

The preacher's views upon the origin of ideas, the limits of knowledge, the nature of virtue, the foundation of moral obligation, natural ability, freedom of the will, the existence and province of conscience, with many other similar and kindred questions, will necessarily exert a most important influence over his modes of thought and instruction. True it is, as some one has said, “tell me your view of the nature of virtue, and I will tell you to what school of theology you belong.” These topics force themselves upon our consideration. They are worthy of profound attention ; but they are seldom, and many of them never,

suitable themes for the pulpit. The scribe well instructed will not permit them to usurp the place of those grander and more momentous truths which constitute the burden of his message. We must, however, be careful to draw the distinction between the use and abuse of metaphysical power and knowledge in the preacher. All truly great preachers, we imagine, have been, to a great extent, metaphysicians; they betray profound acquaintance with the philosophical systems of the day, great knowledge of the human mind, and capacity to turn such knowledge to account in the detection and overthrow of error, and in the elucidation and establishment of truth. Of this Calvin, Howe, Edwards, Hall, Chalmers, are eminent examples.

In this age, when old errors are appearing in so many and varied forms—old, dead, and long-since buried philosophies raised from the grave, their bones scraped, re-washed, and presented anew to the world,—acquaintance with the great systems of speculative thought, both of belief and unbelief, appears an essential element of ministerial qualification.

He who knows little or nothing of Spinoza, Des Cartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hamilton, Comte Fichte, Hickok, &c., may be a very good practical preacher, perhaps—whatever that may mean; but can scarcely be esteemed a competent defender of the faith. Such knowledge, however, will always be held subservient to the one great end—the establishment of the truth, as

it is in Christ,—“ as the vessels of the Egyptians were dedicated to sacred purposes by the Israelites.”

Philosophy, like science, must wait at wisdom's gates. “ Stand thou here, while I go there and worship.”

3. Politics—politics and the pulpit; is there any connection or alliance between these? To this we must give a decided affirmative. The Bible is a great political work; it was given to man as a perfect rule of faith and manners; it deals largely with nations as such, and abounds in precepts for the regulation of national life and conduct. The function that deals with the Bible cannot be divorced from politics. If this blatant outcry against political preaching meant nothing more than that discussions upon the bank, tariff, internal improvements, &c., were unsuitable for the pulpit, and a profanation of sacred Sabbath time, few, we presume, would undertake to debate the point; although we might ask, where the necessity? By whom, when, and where, has the sacred desk been thus profaned? Only one such discourse, labeled a sermon, do we remember ever to have met,—that delivered by a Unitarian upon a New Year's day.

From whom do these fierce denunciations of political preaching issue? From the Buchanans, Toombses, Choates,—men steeped to the lips in all the moral corruptions and profligacies of “ Old Hunker ” politics; who wish to remain undisturbed in their iniquity, and



cry out to a faithful ministry, as the men possessed with the devils to Christ, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" From corrupt and time-serving ministers, men who are clear upon dancing, sitting in prayer, the use of tobacco, and other kindred evils; who pass acts of Assembly, write, print, and circulate tracts by the thousand upon them; but the great and prolific parent of all sins, the "sum of all villainies," "the most atrocious system," to use the language of R. J. Breckenridge, "upon which the sun ever shone," must be passed in silence, unrebuked and uncondemned, and its open apologists and propagators welcomed to platform, pulpit, and communion-table, as the most precious of God's saints, and the very salt of the earth.

From south-side Adamses, who esteem the interchange of slaves between the United States and Africa,—that is, their introduction, through all the horrors of "the middle passage," by thousands, to the *Christian* influences of the rice and sugar plantations of the South, and their return, by that *amiable* and eminently *pious* institution, the Colonization Society, by tens, or perhaps hundreds, of the more aged and infirm of those "held to service and labor," or the more troublesome and dangerous of those who are so unfortunate as to own themselves,—one of the grandest and noblest *missionary* ideas conceivable! From your Dr. Rices and Plummers—men who, taking their

position upon the narrow *pou sto* of that arrant falsehood, that slavery is not a "*malum in se*," are attempting to uphold a system destined, sooner or later, to fall beneath the judgments of an avenging God, and bury them, like the worshipers in Dagon's Temple, below the remembrance, aye, beneath the contempt of men! Do not say that we single out these men for the purposes of abuse; we mention them because they are representative men, and in many respects the best of their class. "Do you see that leader?" said the driver of a stage coach in England, to a gentleman who sat on the box at his side. "Yes, sir; what of him?" was the reply. "Well, when he comes to that gate, he always shies. I must give him something to think of;" and coming down with a sharp blow of the whip upon his flank, the spirited creature darts forward, forgetful of the object of his former alarm. These leaders must be made to feel that their fear of disastrous results to their particular ecclesiastical organizations, should they prove true to themselves, to the oppressed victims of an outrageous tyranny, and to God, is wholly groundless, or, at all events, far from the greatest misfortune that might befall the cause of truth and righteousness. Ministers must make up their minds that political preaching will be peculiarly distasteful to such hearers as Pierce Butler, whose moral and spiritual sensibilities were outraged, crashed through, and in fact crushed by the political preaching

of Dudley Tyng, while owning, working, whipping, selling hundreds of human beings, created in the image of God, on the cotton and sugar plantations of Carolina and Georgia.

When the celebrated Robert Hall was reproached with meddling in politics, he replied, "The plain state of the case is, the writer is offended, not at my meddling with politics, but that I have meddled *on the wrong side!*"

Political preaching, in this land, technically means rebuking great national and political sins. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ.* This kind of preaching is not only legitimate, but the very kind which, in this age—when national iniquity is coming in like a flood—is especially demanded; against unjust and aggressive wars, intemperance, Sabbath violation, slavery, and kindred evils, let the artillery of God's Word be directed from the forty thousand pulpits of this land, and they will fall at once like lightning from heaven, sink like lead beneath the tide of public scorn, and their place be found no more at all. Against these enormous evils the pulpit is bound to protest, and every one into whose hand is put the hammer of God's Word, must deal such blows upon them as the measure of his strength will admit; so corrupt, however, are all the political parties of the day, that no minister can advocate the claims of any one of them, without being guilty of a monstrous perversion of his office; to de-

scend into the arena of their strifes is merely to soil our sacred garments, without a rational hope of effecting any beneficial result whatever.

4. *Morals*—morality and the Gospel are yet more intimately connected—they are incapable of separation. The Scriptures contain the only true principles of morality, and the sanctions which alone can enforce them—their promises and threatenings are alone sufficient to allure men to the practice of virtue and deter from indulgence in vice—“the powers of the world to come.” The inculcation of moral truths and personal duties, is too often mistaken for preaching the Gospel. There is a kind of unevangelized system of ethics which is nothing more than semi-infidelity. To put the speculations of writers upon “Moral Science” in the place of evangelical truth, is a perversion and a mistake—one which, unfortunately, is but of too frequent occurrence. What is a modern fashionable sermon? A smooth, *perhaps* literary, disquisition upon some moral virtue, honesty, truthfulness, kindness, benevolence, etc., varying in length from ten to thirty minutes, read by one of those dainty and exquisite ministers, that Cowper so graphically describes—one of those men who never meddle with politics, but are “*all minister*,” from the most faultlessly neat of manuscripts or portfolios, the leaves all turned with the proper flourish, the sentences with the proper inflection, nothing to offend the most fastidious taste, or disturb the most sensitive of the congregation, “smooth as the

marble and much colder," a body without a soul, a sermon without a Christ or a Holy Spirit.

For twelve years, that prince of modern preachers, Dr. Chalmers, an unconverted man, attempted, but without satisfaction to himself or benefit to others, to enforce morality ; not until he received the unction of the Holy One, and his eyes were opened to behold the transcendent glory of the cross, did he find "himself in possession of an instrument potent to touch—omnipotent to transform the hearts of men." No one will ever scatter those "burning coals of juniper," which melt the stony hearts of sinners, or wield those weapons which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds—until he has discovered that the only true morality is love of Christ.

The secret of every great preacher's strength, is in the doctrines of the Gospel, the truths that cluster around Christ and Him crucified. With a slender frame and a weak voice, but with logical precision and intense earnestness, Edwards bore down upon his hearers with these doctrines until he compelled them to grasp in terror the pillars of the Church, and in one instance, while preaching that awful sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," a minister at his side in the pulpit, involuntarily exclaimed, "Mr. Edwards, is not God merciful as well as just?" Not to enumerate other examples, this is evidently that which gives its effectiveness to the preaching of that "burning and shining light," Spurgeon—may he never be-

come a wandering star or a meteor of the night. These doctrines are to be preached according to the divine proportion and analogy of faith, giving to each one its due prominence and sinking none beneath its real importance in the great system of doctrinal truth. In this, our safest guides are the "Creeds" and "Confessions of Faith," in which the Church has embodied from age to age her understanding of divine truth in scientific form. Of these we give the preference, of course, to the "Westminster Confession," as presenting the most complete, harmonious, and truthful system of doctrine that has yet been given to the world. Some one has recently thanked God for rash men! When I hear one of the most popular preachers of the day, and I do not hesitate to add one of the ablest and noblest men among us, saying—"All that there is to me of God is bound up in that name, Christ Jesus—a dim and shadowy effluence rises from Christ, and that I am taught to call the Father. A yet more tenuous and invisible film of thought arises, and that is the Holy Spirit!" I cannot but thank God for Catechisms and Confessions to teach us that "There are three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, *equal* in power and glory," and they preserve the Church from such wild presentations of her most precious doctrines. Men talk about dead Creeds, but they are only dead in the sense that we fail to make the proper use of them. When in com-

pany with a friend, I visited the Navy Yard in the city of Brooklyn, we saw the cannon all arranged in rows, the balls all piled in beautiful and mathematical precision and order—those iron dogs of war slumbered, those winged messengers of destruction were all silent and still, because there was no alarm of danger to arouse the one, or errands upon which the other might speed with the message of death. The old power was in them—they showed us an enormous gun, that had put a ball through fourteen thicknesses of sheet iron, as easily, apparently, as a giant would thrust his hand through a sheet of paper. Thus, said I, we do with our doctrines; we put them away in beautiful order in our Confessions, Creeds, and Testimonies, but fail to employ them as we should—that great gun is the doctrine of “Justification by Faith,” with which the Reformers of the first Reformation riddled and bored the hull of the Papacy until she has been leaking and floundering ever since, soon to sink like a great millstone in the seas of God’s wrath—it is the doctrine of “Christ’s Headship,” the great truth of the second Reformation, destined to prove not only the “reviving of Scotland,” but of the world.

If these batteries are silenced, it can only be because those who man them are too cowardly to bring them to bear upon the enemy, or have turned back faint-hearted on the day of battle. The state of the Church is one of incessant warfare. No one of these great fundamental truths have, or can fall before the

assaults of the enemy, it only requires more zeal and courage in the employment of them, to manifest that they are mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin and Satan.

II. How we are to preach. Here we encounter opinions which, with tongue of brass and lips of iron, we would fail to enumerate. Almost every one has some standard of his own—whether true or false, matters not to our present purpose ; more likely, however, to be the latter—by which he measures ministerial excellence : a “ Procrustean bed,” which the preacher must fill precisely ; if he comes short, or goes beyond, his fate is equally sealed.

One desires nothing more than the simple enunciation of Gospel truth, in a plain, quiet, conversational style and manner, as he has heard a sainted father, perhaps, instruct his family around the fire on a Sabbath evening, or one of those “ Theological Professors ” under whom the late Dr. M’Leod was accustomed to say that he had studied, discuss a “ question ” in the society meeting.

Another, whose intellectual powers are of a somewhat higher order, delights in argument ; wishes to hear a truth clearly and forcibly enunciated, and then supported by a long array of convincing proof. It is not enough that an error be condemned ; it must be put into the vice of a remorseless logic, and crushed to death. The speaker must rain upon it “ chained thunder, and hail of iron globes,” until it is over-



thrown and annihilated. Such an one would be delighted, though the discourse were as dry as "Aristotle's Ethics," or as destitute of ornament as "Butler's Analogy," or "Edwards upon the Will."

Another desires the splendors of a vivid imagination; the glory of superb diction; fervid and fiery declamation; sudden and brilliant flashes of thought, bursting and falling like rockets, in showers of pearls and diamonds, upon the astonished hearers; can only be satisfied where he discovers the play of those powers, which are given only to the *born* orator and poet.

Feeling is the great point with some. The preacher is judged by his power to move the affections and touch the heart. Enough for such hearers that they were made to feel; instruction is not much sought after or desired. The discourse would be measured by the height to which the waves of emotion have arisen in the heart.

The combination of all these excellencies would make the perfect preacher. To reach such a standard, however, is in the power of none; to approximate it, even, the attainment of few. What, then, is the course to pursue amid such diversity of taste—such a contrariety of opinion?

1. Let every man stir up the gift that is in him, and preach as God has given him ability—remembering that he is not to please men but God, taking no man's opinion for his guide, no man's manner as his model.

Minds are as different as features ; the natural endowments and circumstances which have contributed to make one man, are wholly different from those which have formed every other. As well might you expect the Hudson and the Mississippi to exchange channels, or the Earth and Jupiter orbits, as to suppose that one mind could take the place of another. The attempt to compel them does violence to all the laws of our mental constitution ; is wholly impossible ; and excites in all observers either pity, or, most probably, contempt. Let every man make the best use possible of those powers that God has bestowed upon him ; employ to the best purpose the talent with which he has been entrusted ; and endeavor to be himself, and nobody else. This is the only honest course ; and, besides, it is the only one that will be ultimately successful. It stands opposed, on the one hand, to any attempt to be more than we are ; on the other, to be less than we are. David could do best with his own sling, and smooth stones from the brook. The variety of tastes to which we have alluded, is not an indication of Providence that we must attempt to conform to them all, but that there is room for the exercise of every variety of endowment. " Plain Gospel truths for plain people," has passed into a kind of proverb in some quarters. Like all such phrases, it contains some truth, doubtless ; but it is a monstrous fallacy in the way in which it is frequently employed and understood. If it mean that the style of the pulpit should

be free from all affectation, from obscurity, from technical or scientific terms and phrases, we grant it. If it mean that Christian congregations will not be pleased and edified, with massive thought, with cogent argument, with figurative language, with happy illustration, with classical perfection and grace in the style and manner, we must enter our decided protest. If, in order to make himself understood, the preacher descend to the level of common-place thought and language—if he supposes that mere stale truisms or flat platitudes, uttered in a style imported into the pulpit from the farm, the counting-house, or the *street*, will either please or edify his hearers, he makes a most egregious blunder. Vulgarity in matter and manner is disgusting to the highest and the lowest alike ; the affectation of the coxcomb is more endurable than this. The truth is, we do not stand so far above the level of our hearers as we sometimes imagine ; they are not flattered by any attempt to let ourselves down to their capacity—prefer that it should be taken for granted that they are something more than mere babes in knowledge. The eagerness with which the masses crowd to hear, and the appreciative interest with which they hang upon the lips of the most polished orators, sufficiently demonstrate their capacity to be both delighted and instructed with the very highest style of cultivated eloquence. Not by listening Senates, not by the *elite* of metropolitan audiences, not by the refined and educated alone, but upon the hustings, in

remote rural districts, by the common people, have the greatest orators of the pulpit, the platform, and the forum, been heard with admiration and delight. Whatever the manner, let it be genuine—let it have the ring of the true metal, and the preacher may indulge himself to the full bent of his power, assured that thus he will attain the highest degree of perfection, and accomplish the greatest amount of good which is for himself possible.

2. Earnestly—this is compatible with every style of matter and manner ; and is essential to effectiveness in all. “Why is it,” a minister is said to have asked Garrick, “that you actors produce so deep an impression with your falsehoods ; we ministers so feeble an one with our truth?” “Because,” said the witty actor, “we speak our lies as though they were true ; you speak your truths as though they were lies.” The old canon of criticism, “If you wish me to weep, you must first weep yourself,” applicable to all forms of speech, is eminently true of this. The man who manifests, by look, tone, and gesture, that he is neither convinced nor impressed, need not expect that he will either convince or impress others. Without a genuine earnestness, all the graces of style and manner—all the tropes and figures that can be employed—all the fury of voice and gesture, are of no avail ; worse than useless—the mere crackling of thorns under a pot—sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. On the other hand, though there may be crudeness of

thought to a certain extent, rudeness of speech, and awkwardness of manner, if there is evidence that the man really feels his theme, is impressed with the truth which he is attempting to inculcate, if heart and lips have been touched with fire from the altar, he cannot fail to impress and impart warmth to his hearers, and gain admittance for the truth into the heart and conscience of those whom he addresses.

The man who is thoroughly in earnest, may always be sure of a candid hearing, whatever the disadvantages with which he may have to contend. He who is not, whatever adventitious circumstances he may call to his aid, will assuredly meet with mortification and disappointment. Earnestness may not atone for a bad cause ; the want of it cannot fail to damage a good one. A bad man may possess this quality, provided he be sufficiently ambitious ; a good man will never be found destitute of it. We would not, with Carlyle, make it the object of *worship*, or its presence the measure of character ; but in the Gospel minister nothing can atone for its absence.

The man who clearly apprehends the great truths of the Gospel ; who believes them with a firm, unflinching faith ; and into whose heart they have entered as a principle of action,—cannot fail to manifest a deep concern in their reception by others. A profound conviction that interests of eternal moment are suspended upon the manner in which they are viewed by those to whom they are addressed, will impart to the

mind a solemn and serious awe that cannot fail to be manifest in their delivery.

God has furnished us with an inexhaustible storehouse of living truth from which to draw our themes ; truth which possesses an undying interest for the universal human heart ; truth, which, although always old, is ever new. He who draws from this fountain of living waters cannot fail to interest ; while he who betakes himself to the broken cisterns of a heathen philosophy, or of modern speculation, can never be in earnest himself, or impart zeal to others. I need scarcely add that the earnestness of which I speak is not the mere excitement of animal nature, nor the mere fervor of intellectual activity, nor alone the impassioned glow of a natural emotion and sympathy ; but a fire brought from the Throne, kindled at the altar, fanned into a flame by love to God and love to souls. If a profound conviction of the truth is essential to this quality in the preacher, the latitudinarian spirit which prevails at the present time, and which views all creeds alike, and all with equal indifference, must be fatal to its manifestation. The ancient giant was invincible while his feet were firmly planted upon his native soil : the preacher must stand firmly upon his own profession of the truth, and draw his vigor from the distinctive principles of his own Church. Lifted from that his strength fails, and he is easily overcome. This zeal for the cause of Christ can only be maintained by a close walk and communion with

God in prayer. If we would learn the secret of the success of those who have been greatly instrumental in the conversion of souls, we will find it to lie in their intense earnestness ; and the secret of their earnestness in this, "They were men of prayer and of faith ; they dwelt upon the mount of communion with God, from whence they came down like Moses to the people, radiant with the glory on which they had been themselves intently gazing."

The labors of the feeble, the languid, indifferent, and lukewarm, never have been, and never will be blessed by God. The man who finds this his prevalent tone and habit, should seek, by all the means that God has put in his power, for its correction ; and failing, retire from an office for which he is not adapted, and to which, manifestly, he has never been called. To be an earnest minister requires *exclusive* devotion to that work. No amount of natural talent whatever will suffice for failure in this respect ; no man can give any considerable portion of the week to any secular pursuit, and come forth upon the Sabbath fully fraught with the message of the Gospel—*it is an utter impossibility*. The work is great enough for *all* the time and *all* the powers of the mightiest intellect that ever lived. Feebleness and crudeness in the pulpit is the penalty which every one pays for devotion to other pursuits. Where this is forced upon the minister through want of a competent support—if this deficiency arises from positive inability on the part of his people—it is, in

most cases, an indication of Divine Providence that he is not called to labor in that field ; if it arises from any other cause, it is still more emphatically a call to "Arise and depart." With a considerable acquaintance with the financial ability of the Church in this country, we assert most unhesitatingly that there is no absolute necessity for any minister within our bounds imitating Paul in this respect, however important that they should be like him in others. There is, we assert, no reason why *all* should not give themselves to prayer, and the ministry of the Word. To congregations we would say, expect to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles—sow upon a rock, plow there with oxen, and expect a harvest ; but do not expect to profit by the ministry of a man whose mind is constantly distracted by worldly anxieties, and who is compelled to eke out a living for himself and his family by labor upon the farm or in the school-room. It is God's ordination that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. This law cannot be violated without serious harm and detriment to all concerned.

3. Fearlessly—"That I may open my mouth boldly." There is no class of men more admired in theory ; none who meet with more opposition in practice than fearless ministers. There is no sphere in which moral courage is more essential ; none in which it is more difficult to manifest that virtue. To preserve the golden mean between timidity, on the one hand, and



rashness upon the other : to rebuke firmly the sins of those whom you address, and yet temper the admonition with the due measure of kindness and tenderness, requires, as every one must see, no small measure of that wisdom which is profitable to direct. His business is to attack sin, and that too, as it manifests itself in persons to whom he is bound by ties intimate and tender, persons whose feelings he would not unnecessarily wound, but who are very liable to attribute to personal dislike that which was intended for their highest welfare, and their soul's good. It is difficult, sometimes, to expel the *demon* and save the man—to cure the disease and save the patient. Every minister, like every parent, must feel the extreme delicacy of the task, when he undertakes to attemper firmness with affection, and to denounce the sin, while attracting instead of repelling the sinner.

Again, every one must have observed how very few there are who admire that courage which confronts *themselves*. They enjoy it hugely while it is directed against others ; the balls cannot fly too thick or fast, provided they strike another fortress ; the weapon cannot be too keen that takes the head off another's sin,—but their note is quite changed when their own vices are the objects of attack. That which they admired before, now excites animosity and opposition. Moreover, there is no one so much exposed, perhaps, to under-currents, to secret influences of which he has no knowledge, and over which, consequently, he has

no control. In most cases, we venture to affirm, the true ground of opposition to the minister is concealed, while something more tangible is levied upon and pushed into the foreground, the influence of many a faithful minister has been destroyed by designing men, when, had the secret cause been known, they would only have met the scorn and contempt of their brethren and the world.

Notwithstanding these and a thousand other considerations that might be adduced, well known to the experienced, the ambassador of Christ must be destitute of the fear of men, which brings a snare. He is commanded, "cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." "I do send thee unto them, and thou shalt say unto them, thus saith the Lord God, and they, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them."

No consideration of whatever kind, will exonerate the herald of the cross from a full, faithful, and uncompromising presentation of the truth upon all points that relate to life and godliness ; he must declare the whole truth and keep nothing back, remembering that he is responsible to God and not to man. And while it will be the aim and the desire of every right-hearted man, to commend himself to every man's conscience

in the sight of God, and to present the truth of the Gospel in all the attraction of a sweet and persuasive loveliness, in order to win men to Christ, he will yet feel that necessity is laid upon him to preach the Word, not according to the will and inclination of men, but the command of God. I need not delay to expose the infernal Jesuitism of those who preach and publish a mutilated Gospel, on the plea that men will have no other. For a whole Gospel and a whole Christ, the noble band of confessors and martyrs of past ages took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, endured all tortures, and all agonies, and witnessed a good confession before many witnesses. That demon that has taken possession of so large a portion of professing christianity of the day, viz., that we must give men so much of the truth as they will receive—must be exorcised, or our religion will go down amid a night of darkness, worse than the thousand years that preceded the reformation of the sixteenth century.

The names which shine brightest upon the pages of the Church's history, and brightest in the roll and record on high, are the names of those who have done, and dared, and sacrificed all for Christ, who have "stood up for Jesus" in despite of all opposition, and like Luther hurled their defiant no in the very face of the mightiest potentates of the earth.

Never was the necessity for such men greater than in the present—men of the "Lion heart and Eagle eye," to defend the cause of Christ from foes within

and foes without, and to expose the complete corruption and heartlessness of much which passes under the name of religion. But alas! their voice is not upon any shore—the sound of their footsteps is not upon any land.

True courage, it is unnecessary to say, does not consist in denouncing sin in the abstract, or evils which exist in other communities and other ecclesiastical organizations, but in meeting it face to face, and in carrying on the conflict with it as it exists in all forms of individual and organic wickedness around us.

We have enough who are the champions of battles long ago fought and won, who are bold and defiant, so long as the opposition is an “airy nothing without a local habitation or a name,” but who have no relish for a hand to hand encounter with those great organized systems of oppression and iniquity that are opposed to the kingdom of the Redeemer in the present—in these cases prefer the *mild* and the *persuasive*, and consider it altogether better that Christianity should not come in contact with existing institutions.

Had the Church of past ages been of this mind, no martyr's blood would ever have been shed, the sacrifice of so many noble lives of apostles and their successors would have been avoided, and untold sufferings escaped—pity that the Church has learned this wisdom so lately! If we are to accept such views now, we must reverse our former opinions, the past and present admiration which the world entertains for the mar-

tyr spirit, is a pernicious sympathy for bigoted and misguided zeal, and those heroic deaths from which even unbelief does not withhold the tribute of its praise, but little better than suicide!

Men may plume themselves upon their superior wisdom in shunning all the great moral conflicts of the age, but whether they will have equal cause to congratulate themselves when they appear to receive the crown of a faithful and valiant soldier of the truth and cause of Christ, is a point upon which we may be permitted to entertain at least a doubt.

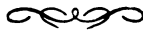
4. And finally—All must be done in entire dependence upon the Spirit—"Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." "Paul may plant and Apollas water, God only can give the increase." Christ did not enter upon His work until the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him like a dove. The apostles did not go forth to proclaim His Gospel until they had received the unction of the Holy One. All our preaching will be in vain unless accompanied by its power—its breath must breathe upon the slain in the valley of vision ere they can live. The blood of Christ avails to cleanse from all sin only when applied by the Spirit. The Church is frequently in the Scripture compared to a field, but it is only fruitful when the Spirit descends upon it, like "rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asun-

der of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"—this power is derived from the accompanying Spirit—"the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."

That our labors are not greatly blessed in the conversion of sinners, is what we must all, however sorrowfully, admit. The seed is sown, but when we look for its springing up, it nowhere appears. God appears to have executed His ancient threatening, "And I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass, and your strength shall be spent in vain." We have relied too much upon our own and too little upon the Spirit's strength. What we want, and what the Church, wants, is the Holy Ghost.

When our prayers ascend like pillars of smoke to the throne for the outpouring of the Spirit from on High, then may we expect the windows of heaven to be opened and a blessing poured out until there shall not be room to receive. In answer to fervent, united, and effectual prayer, the heavenly rain will descend, the wilderness and the solitary place be made glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

God will give His Holy Spirit to them who ask Him.



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