LECTURE XXVI.

THE DIVISION: NECESSITY, EXPRESSION.

THE word "division" defines itself. We designate by it the principal sections of an orderly discussion.

I. Are divisions necessary in a sermon? The question is twofold: Is the existence of divisions necessary to the speaker? Is the statement of divisions necessary to the hearer?

1st, The objections to either the existence or the statement of divisions are briefly these: 1. That preaching by pre-arranged plan tends to the exclusion of extemporaneous thought; 2. That it tends to excessive formality in preaching; 3. That it impairs the freedom of direct appeals; 4. That it is unfavorable to unity of discourse; 5. That in argumentative sermons it gives needless prominence to weak arguments.

2d, Yet these objections will disappear as we proceed to consider the reasons for both having and stating divisions in the discourses of the pulpit. We suspend, for the present, all questions respecting the number of divisions, and the numerical form of statement. All that is claimed at present is that good discourse in the pulpit demands that a preacher shall have divisions in his own mind, and that he shall so state them that hearers shall be distinctly sensible of them.

(1) Divisions thus formed and stated promote per

spicuity of discussion. They aid a preacher in gaining perspicuity; clear mental action works instinctively by plan, and each assists the other. You understand a subject the better for having reduced it to a plan of discourse. A natural division of a subject for use is no more nor less than a philosophical analysis and arrangement of its materials; your own thoughts are the more lucid for the discipline. Divisions also assist the hearer to clearness in understanding a discussion. Why should not a hearer, in this respect, profit by a statement of a plan, as well as a preacher by the existence of a plan? The fact that he is a hearer, that he must depend on the momentary perceptions of the ear, that he has no chance for review, for delay, for growth of thought, renders him specially dependent upon the facilities which logic suggests for an understanding of oral discourse. The whole argument for the statement of propositions bears with nearly equal force upon the necessity of stating divisions also.

Specially is it to be borne in mind that the subjects of the pulpit are such as to render divisions necessary to clearness in their oral discussion. The range of thought with which the pulpit has to deal is immensely above that to which the popular mind is stimulated by any other form of public speech. A preacher has a very critical work to do in attempting to bring down themes of high discourse within reach of the common mind, and to secure for them an intelligent and interested hearing. Science tells us that a drop of water contains a flash of lightning. Thus electric are the elements of the common stock of thought in pulpit discourse. Common are they as the raindrops; yet the forces of vivid conception and of intense impression are locked up in them. A preacher's work is to release

and to develop those forces. To do this, we need every facility of expression which logic gives to vividness.

Hence has arisen the peculiar favor with which these forms of analytic discourse have been regarded in the pulpit. So far from their being a deformity, originating in the pedantry of the pulpit, they are one of the necessities to which the pulpit has been driven by the lofty nature of its subjects. How large a proportion of the common people, taken at random, could Ralph Waldo Emerson hold together by his cementless periods on Immortality? Yet the pulpit sets itself to the task of making immortality a living truth to men whose days are spent in shoe-shops and hay-fields, and to women who live over wash-tubs and cooking-stoves. The thing can not be done by the fluent and unscholarly method of the lyceum.

(2) Divisions promote comprehensiveness of discussion. They assist a preacher in collecting and arranging the materials for such a discussion. Try the experiment on the materials of a half-digested sermon. Reduce such thoughts as you have to a plan. The effect will be to reveal to you at once what deficiency exists, and where it is. That is to say a deficiency, if it exists, is disclosed by classification. Is an argument missing? Is an objection unanswered? Is a fact wanting for illustration? Is one side of the subject a blank? Is an application of it impracticable, or far-fetched? Whatever be the gap in the fabric, classifying in a plan, in which statement shall be definite, and arrangement orderly, will discover the gap, and will set you at work to fill it. In this respect, the materials of a discourse are like the specimens of a cabinet of minerals. Nothing but a reduction of them to order by classification

will disclose what vacancies exist, and must be filled Important omissions in a sermon are thus avoided.

Divisions also assist a hearer in perceiving and appreciating the comprehensiveness of discussion. St. Peter's at Rome makes no such impression of magnitude from an outside view as from the interior. So it is with a complete discussion. To be appreciated, it must be explored: the parts of it, in their order, must be seen. Materials classified in a visible plan will make the impression of immensity, when the same materials thrown together miscellaneously will seem diminutive, because incoherent, and, if arranged in invisible order, will be monotonous.

The entire force of textual preaching depends on this power of divisions to reveal a subject. The fullness of thought in a commonplace text may often be disclosed to the dullest hearer by the expedient of textual divisions. A modern preacher, on the text, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," divides his discussion thus: 1. The text commands a duty, which a modern philosopher has pronounced the "most stupendous" act of which man is capable, — "To *pray;*" 2. The text enforces the duty of prayer by appeal to the supreme faculty of our nature, — "Men *ought* to pray;" 3. The text suggests that, so far as we know, no other order of being exists, to which prayer is a duty so imperative as to man; 4. The text implies that success in prayer depends on that state of mind which insures its constancy, — "Men ought *always* to pray;" 5. The text teaches that prayer is an act of courage in times of extreme emergency: "Men ought always to pray, and *not to faint.*" Does not this plan illustrate how hackneyed texts may be freshened, and how biblical authority may be given to a suggestive

train of thought, by the mere sense of fullness in the discussion, produced by a textual division elaborated and formally stated?

(3) Divisions promote unity of discussion. They assist a preacher in preserving unity. That preacher must habitually think in slipshod gait who can deliberately plan a vagrant discourse. The very effort to classify materials tends to unify them in the result. It is an excellence in divisions, that they thus stand guard over extemporaneous thinking, and shut out all that is not tributary to the result. Still more do well-constructed divisions assist hearers in perceiving the unity of a sermon. Why is it that the incidents often seem to make more impression than the doctrine of a sermon? A standing grief is this to preachers. An illustration, an anecdote, a pictorial passage, an antithetic sentence will be remembered and commented upon, when the drift of thought to which they were tributary will not seem to have been understood. The reason often is that the drift of thought has not been made palpable by landmarks. If you have ever read Carlyle's "History of the French Revolution," you were doubtless sensible of the fact that it is unfit for a beginner in the study of French history. Familiarity with other histories of the same period is necessary to an understanding of Carlyle. Unity of aim exists in his work. Trained readers can perceive that unity. But to other readers it is a chaos of inconsequent remark, from which they get nothing but here and there a thought, a metaphor, an invective, which stands alone in a wilderness of incoherences. History to such readers the work is not. Very similar are those sermons which require trained thinkers to perceive the drift of them underlying their incidents.

(4) Divisions, further, promote progress in a discussion. They assist a preacher in making progress. Organization achieves in discourse that which it achieves in every thing else, — rapidity of execution. Sir Walter Scott lamented late in life that he had never habituated himself to compose his imaginative fiction by previously formed outline of materials. He advised young writers not to imitate his carelessness in that respect. He pronounced it intellectual recklessness to trust, as he did, to the excitement of composition for the evolution of his plots. That he could do it he attributed to the imaginative character of his work.

The same expedient assists a hearer, also, in perceiving progress of discussion. Few things are so essential to impressive discourse as the sense of progress. Hearers crave the consciousness of achievement. Have you never listened to sermons in which this sense of achievement was so feeble, that hearing was labor? Very earnest and animated preachers may produce this effect. They remind you of a top at the height of its invisible revolutions, so tremendously busy are they spinning on their own axis; but you do not seem to get on with them. Why do hills, valleys, rivers, ravines, mile-stones, guide-boards make a traveler sensible of progress? Any thing which diversifies the monotony of scenery creates the sense of advance. St. Paul, when he came to "The Three Taverns," "thanked God, and took courage."

Our modern usage in oratory, by which we say "in the first place," "in the second place," and so on, had its origin in the old Roman custom which the speakers in the Forum had, of associating mentally the heads of a speech with certain localities around them. This thought was deposited in one place, that thought in

another place; and, as the speech advanced, the orator moved around mentally from one locality to another, gathering his materials as he went, and labeling them for the aid of the hearer's sense of progress, as well as his own, with the formulæ of introduction, "in the first place," etc. In the first rank of forensic appeals the transitions are marked with even more than the clerical precision of "first," "secondly," "thirdly." "I have now finished this part of my argument;" "I beg you to remember the fact which I have proved;" "And now let me ask your attention to another point,"—such is the style of transition which you hear in court-rooms, where pleaders have a point to carry, with twelve plain men in a jury-box. The smooth ground-swell of discourse so often chosen in the pulpit by men who affect a literary style would find no favor among the leaders of the English or American bar.

(5) Divisions also promote conciseness of discussion. They aid a preacher in being concise. Skillful architects will tell you to the inch the shape and proportions of the building which shall most successfully economize space. So, in a sermon, good divisions help to compact structure. A perfect sermonizer will trust largely to them for crowding the greatest bulk of thought into the shortest time.

Divisions also assist a hearer in appreciating a compact discussion. To make an undisciplined hearer sensible of the fact of crowded thought in a sermon, you must in some way tell him of it. Divisions do this indirectly. They call attention to one thing at a time: therefore they concentrate attention. They disclose, if it exists, all waste of words. Consequently preachers who spin discourses of thin fabric are not fond of definite divisions. Nothing discovers poverty

of thought more surely than a pertinent plan. A good division would cause many an inflated sermon to collapse. "Oh for a thought!" said one layman, after listening to a fluent preacher,—"Oh for a thought! I get nothing to carry away with me." Probably the sermon contained no thought which would admit of crisp statement; nothing which would bear to be numbered "one, two, three:" therefore nothing worth carrying away. So far from being an evil, it is an excellence in divisions, that they restrain excessive hortation. For some men it is a healthful restraint upon tiresome appeals, that it is unnatural to say, "In the fourth place I warn you, and in the fifth place I exhort you, and in the sixth place I beg you to weep."

(6) Divisions promote elegance of discussion. But are not divisions formal, hard, angular? I answer, Is there no beauty in a plan of thought, in logical order, in fitness, in proportion? Is transparency never beautiful? Are not the angles of a star beautiful? The truth is that there may be very great beauty in an outline of a sermon. Clearness of statement, finish of form, orderly succession, unity of aim, completeness as a whole, and growth in construction are all elements of graceful discourse. By having framed one such division, a preacher is unconsciously quickened. The hearer, too, feels the magnetism of it, though unconscious of its origin.

(7) Divisions may be made to assist a preacher in meeting without loss of power the popular demand for brevity. This demand is a threatening evil. Audiences will not tolerate the old measurement of length of sermons. Preachers can not control the public taste. We have only to accept it, and to make the best of it. How to do this is a very intricate problem. We can

not do it by brevity of speech alone. Much as the popular mind craves brevity, it will not now, any more than it would a century ago, tolerate preaching which has no solid thought. The task of the preacher, therefore, is to compress into the smallest possible amount of time in the delivery the greatest possible amount of solid yet interesting matter.

To achieve this, well-framed divisions are indispensable. Short, crisp statements of the salient thoughts of a discourse will often save the necessity of prolix argument. Statement which carries in itself the force of argument is the style of divisions now needed in the pulpit. With such divisions to emphasize the imperial points of a discourse, you can pack into it vastly more material than can by any ingenuity be put into the same length of slipshod harangue. Take some of President Finney's sermons, for example. Although he carries division to an extreme, yet his sermons show illustriously the power of solid thought, when sharply stated, arranged in rigorous logical order, and enforced by a profound evangelical spirit. One of his most powerful discourses contains thirty-one of these massive blocks of thought, some of them with no amplification whatever. Few preachers of our own age have illustrated so splendidly as he did the power of naked truth to reach the human conscience. Such preaching is to the pulpit what the telegraph is to the press. It is force and speed combined in the superlative degree. Yet it would be impossible without a vigorous and constant use of the organizing power, which expresses itself in good divisions.

(8) Divisions promote interest in a discussion. This they do by promoting clearness, unity, elegance, and speed. The enthusiasm of the preacher is most

vigorously sustained by a clear, unified, elegant, progressive plan of thought before him as a model. The act of framing such a plan creates a courageous interest in executing the details. The interest of the hearer is even more dependent upon good divisions. The unity which they create prevents the tedium of confused thought; and nothing is more tedious than confused thinking. Their elegant structure invites interest in their expansion. The sense of progress which they quicken stimulates attention; and the mental rests which they furnish relieve the weariness of prolonged attention. Observe the rhetorical structure which Coleridge has given to the essay which he has entitled "The Friend." He introduces several *excursus* from the main subject, which he terms "landing-places." They are chiefly a rhetorical device for relieving the tedium of prolonged and abstract discussion. John Locke would have sought the same effect by means of chapters and sections. Sermons find the same relief in the expedient of divisions.

Even that class of hearers who are beguiled by false tastes and affectations can always be reined up to healthy thinking by a compact, racy statement of an elemental truth, like those which divisions should express. Plain sense pithily uttered will catch and hold a wandering mind. No sane man ever clears himself wholly from common sense. Let that speak in concentrated thought, and thought will spring to answer thought. On the contrary, that style of discourse which needs no divisions is not weighty enough to produce in the hearer any interest which demands relief. It may please; it may entertain; it may excite curiosity; it may reach the superficial feelings: but it does not penetrate profound sensibilities; the great

passions are not moved by it; hearts are not swayed by it. It is a style of thinking which resembles the work of a portrait-painter who was noted for the beauty of his faces without the expression of character in them, and whom Chantry criticised by saying, that, "in painting a head, he took out all the bones and all the brains."

This view of the necessity of divisions to that style of thinking which most deeply moves hearers is confirmed by the fact that really powerful preachers who have been theoretically opposed to them have still used them. The most potent arguments against them which I have ever seen were attributed to Robert Hall. Yet he generally employed them. Only two or three of his published sermons appear without them; and those were occasional sermons, like that on the death of the Princess Charlotte, in which he thought it necessary to be specially literary and ornate. In his ordinary discourses, in which he aimed to achieve the direct business of preaching, he found them necessary, as do other preachers. In our own country, no man has contended against the fetters of divisions more earnestly than Dr. James Alexander. His "Thoughts on Preaching" is full of flings at them. Yet he, also, in his practice, used them. These men were both of them strong preachers. They found, that, theory or no theory, the great strength of the pulpit can not find utterance without these "angular" expedients of logic.

(9) Divisions promote permanence of impression. We may safely say, that, other things being equal, that is the best sermon which furnishes the most effective means of holding it in the memory. The most effective of such means commonly are the text, the proposition, and the divisions. These are the parts of a sermon which usually have the longest life. A preacher, above

all other public speakers, aims at lasting impressions He needs, therefore, as many expedients as are natural, to make truth penetrate the memory. Dr. Lyman Beecher used to tell an audience, in his uncouth way, at the close of a division which was vital to his argument, exactly what he wished them to remember. "Hold that fast," he would say; "Nail that thought down;" "Don't let this slip away;" "Put a peg in there." Just this is the natural working of clear, concise, orderly divisions. They are the "nails fastened by the masters of assemblies."

I have dwelt thus long upon the necessity of this expedient in sermonizing, because it is so often underrated. The present drift of clerical taste underrates it. Secular literature ignores it. Wit, which has no claim either to piety or to literature, makes a butt of it. Many preachers, therefore, are inclined to surrender it as an antiquated fixture of the pulpit, which should go with the sounding-board. Yet one thing is noticeable; that the depreciation of the use of divisions accompanies the depreciation of elaborate preaching. The less esteem a preacher has for them, the less he feels for the preaching which needs them. Argumentative sermons, doctrinal sermons, intellectual sermons, long sermons are generally decried in the same breath which pronounces against divisions. Talks, exhortations, pious remarks take the place of sermons in the practice of such critics.

By this review of the necessity of divisions, and of the style of thinking in sermons which divisions represent, I am reminded of what Pascal has said of the "geometrical spirit." He contends that all profoundest thinking involves a tendency to geometrize. That is, it involves that bent of mind which defines, which

proves, which demonstrates, which therefore affirms positively in the end. Plato said of the Infinite Mind, "it constantly geometrizes." This drift towards definitive truth is characteristic of all vigorous preaching. As we observed of propositions, so, also, is it true of divisions, that they represent this style of thinking in the pulpit; and the disuse of the one is destructive to the other. Cultivate, then, that which Pascal calls the geometrical spirit. Only thus can you fairly deliver the inmost spirit of Christianity. Ours is one of the few "religions of the book" which the world has known. It claims to be definite, revealed, positive, authoritative. It is reason addressed to reason, and faith commanding faith. To speak to men in the full spirit of it we must "geometrize." We must construct. We must be architects and builders. Sermons must be elaborated and finished structures. No other part of them should be so deftly elaborated as the inner framework. That should be a finished mechanism, even if nothing else is finished.

II. The second general topic in the treatment of divisions is the inquiry, To what extent should visible division of the materials of a sermon be carried? This is a topic on which we should keep clear of artificial rules. Yet certain general principles every preacher's good sense can apply in a flexible way.

1st, The extent of division should be regulated primarily by the nature of the subject.

(1) Some subjects repel numerous divisions. A house built of bamboo could scarcely admit of a second and third story. So a theme may by its nature be restricted to divisions simple and few. For example, transparent subjects are burdened, if treated with numerous divisions. "The value of the soul,"—how

would you naturally divide a sermon on this theme? The subject is commonplace; the best materials of thought upon it are painfully so: the aim of a sermon upon it is clear from the outset. There is no opportunity for the surprises induced by an unexpected train of thought. Is it natural to load down such a subject with a long array of division and subdivision? Obviously not. Division and subdivision are the index of elaboration. A public speaker must be watchful of his implications as well as of his expressions. The title of one of Fichte's philosophical tracts is this, "A statement, clear as the sun, of the true nature of my philosophy; or, an attempt to *force* the reader to understand." What is the implication in such a title? Either that the volume is very abstruse, or that the reader is very obtuse. So the framework of a sermon may have its implications. Elaborate division and subdivision imply their own necessity, either because of the nature of the subject, or the character of the audience. When, therefore, they are applied to a very simple theme, they awaken a sense of incongruity by the contrast of great labor with easy and foreseen result. We do not like to be dragged laboriously to a foregone conclusion. Subjects, also, of which the chief use is to appeal to the sensibilities of hearers do not admit of numerous divisions. A sermon of consolation to the afflicted could scarcely be minutely subdivided. Divisions are the index, not of an emotive, but of an intellectual process. The crisis of a tragedy can not naturally be developed in the form of a syllogism.

(2) Some subjects demand minute division. The necessity of analysis is evident on the face of them. Subjects on which the truth is easily misunderstood or may be plausibly perverted may require numerous

divisions. The doctrine of decrees is one of the difficult subjects of discussion in the pulpit; and the difficulty lies largely at the point of making hearers understand what the doctrine is. It must therefore be analyzed, distinguished from what it is not, defended against perversions, shown to be a necessary outgrowth of any form of divine government. It is one of a class of themes on which we not only must distinguish truth from error, but must as carefully distinguish truth from truth. Proportion and perspective are every thing in such discussions. In like manner, truths which are open to many and intricate objections often need to be treated with numerous divisions. The doctrines of depravity, of prayer, of the Trinity, are exposed to a multitude of objections. So far as they go, the objections are forcible. Around all the centers of Christian thought real difficulties are dense. If such truths are to be thoroughly handled, objections must be fairly stated, and conclusively answered. This requires divisions proportioned to the points to be discussed. Guarded statement, explanation, assertion qualified by assertion, truth balanced by truth, proof multiplied upon proof, — in a word, all the arts germane to logic, may be needed to disentangle such truths from the crowd of real difficulties which surround them in the minds of hearers.

Further: subjects which are very prolific of practical applications may need numerous divisions. Of some themes the distinguishing feature is their marvelous fecundity in practical applications. They branch out into innumerable uses. You can not unfold their affluence without stating and distinguishing those uses. The natural vehicle for their conveyance is divisions.

(3) One general principle, therefore, which should

regulate the extent of divisions is this, that, the more severely the subject tasks the mind, the more imperative is the need of a thorough division of materials. Even when the power of intellection is not severely tasked, the power of recollection may be.

2d, The extent of division must be regulated, in part, by the character of the discussion proposed. The same subject may admit of a difficult or a facile discussion. An argumentative discussion obviously demands more careful division than an exhortation. An explanatory discussion may require a more thorough analysis of the materials than an argument on a subject well-known. A polemic discussion may call for more cautious and multiplied distinctions than a practical treatment of a truth undisputed. A comprehensive discussion would clearly necessitate more numerous divisions than one of restricted range. I name these particulars only to enforce the principle which they all illustrate, that division should equal, not exceed, the demands of the discussion. To determine what those demands are criticism can not go back of the good sense of the preacher.

3d, The extent of division must be regulated, in part, by the character of the audience addressed. An audience of children would demand that divisions be few. But they would demand, also, subjects and discussions which require but few divisions. An uncultivated audience of any kind would require that divisions be moderate in number and degree. To an undisciplined mind, multiplied or intricate divisions are as burdensome as a labyrinth of thought undivided. But no audience is independent of divisions in any elaborate discourse. It is a mistake to trust to the intelligence even of a select audience to follow an elaborate train

of thought, without the helps to perspicuity which visible divisions furnish.

4th, The extent of division must be regulated, in part, by the time at command in preaching. You will soon discover that the same amount of material can be presented in less time with only a general division than with a general division and a subdivision. Every division is a rest. Its statement requires time. The chief change which the outline of a discourse often needs is to abandon subdivisions, and to throw the salient thoughts into one continuous series. The difference between the two methods is like that between a way-train and an express-train. You traverse the same distance at different rates of speed, because with different numbers of rests.

More definite rules than these are impracticable. But a sensible study of these criteria enables us to pass judgment upon certain abuses of divisions which have brought them into disrepute. The application of these principles to those abuses will be considered in the next lecture.

LECTURE XXVII.

THE DIVISION: EXPRESSION, MATERIALS.

5TH, Continuing the discussion of the visible expression of divisions, we notice in the fifth place certain obvious abuses of divisions.

(1) Of these may be named first the employment of any arbitrary number. William Jay says that he commonly made his sermons consist of five divisions. But why five, rather than seven, or three? A fixed number for which no reason can be given is an abuse. An ancient conceit of the pulpit was that of assigning to divisions some one of the so-called "sacred" numbers, — five, seven, twelve, forty.

The more frequent error of this class was one, relics of which remain to this day. It was that of a prescribed threefold division in honor of the Trinity. It is marvelous in how many different ways the piety of the mediæval Church expressed its reverence for this central doctrine of Christianity. The same spirit which led to the building of a church in the form of a cross, and to the cross in window-sashes and in the paneling of doors, induced preachers to work the idea of trinity into the mechanism of sermons. The mediæval mind saw trinity in every thing, from the Mosaic record of creation down to a three-leaved clover. One of the developments of this fancy was that of the trinitarian

division of a sermon. No matter what the subject, or its mode of treatment, the sermon must be confined or stretched, with procrustean uniformity, to three parts, no more, and no less. Some of our elder clergy, within my recollection, adhered to this as a matter of taste, perhaps without knowing its real origin. I once heard a sermon before an association of clergymen approved for consisting of three general divisions, each of which had three subdivisions, each of these being developed with three leading thoughts, and all followed by three inferences in the conclusion, and ending with the Trinitarian Doxology. The preacher should have delivered it in a three-cornered hat. Such a discourse is a miserable piece of trichotomy. The taste which could delight in it is like that which enjoys anagrams and acrostics. Persuasive speech is infinitely above it.

(2) A lawless multiplication of divisions is an abuse. Charnock's discourse on "The Being of God" has one hundred and two divisions; and his discourse on "Spiritual Worship" has one hundred and ten. One of his contemporaries preached to the extent of one hundred and seventy divisions. This is not yet an antiquated abuse. De Quincey's article on Hume's argument against miracles, though limited to twenty-four pages, has thirty-seven divisions; and another article from the same pen, of but thirty pages, has forty-one divisions. Such models are no more trustworthy than any other mania. Never whittle a subject for the amusement of it.

(3) Uniformity in the number of divisions is an abuse. Sermons should never be divided by habit. If you find yourself constructing every discourse with about the same number of general divisions, and about the same number of subdivisions, and about the same number of inferences and remarks, be assured that you

are falling into a mechanism of the pen. The life of your pulpit is dying out. The demands of subjects, of discussions, and of audiences, if well considered and obeyed, will necessitate variety.

(4) Generally it is an abuse to extend division beyond the second degree. Subdivisions of subdivisions will rarely, if ever, be distinguished as such by hearers. Few subjects which are fit for oral address in the pulpit need them, and common audiences are confused by them. In listening to such a sermon, the hearer, if his patience is not exhausted, is constantly feeling about mentally for the thread of discourse. But the great majority of ordinary hearers do not attempt to follow such a sermon at all. Whatever they get from it is in "shreds and patches," here and there. Consecutive discourse to them it is not.

(5) Visible division is an abuse, so far as it is framed for the convenience of the speaker alone. A good speaker must have more elaborate divisions in his own mind than a good hearer needs. Orderly discourse can not exist ideally without many invisible sections. To the speaker it is a convenience to state these visibly; but to the hearer this statement may complicate and encumber the subject. Concealment of your subdivision, therefore, may be a necessity to moral impression, if not to rhetorical perspicuity. Yet often the preacher's convenience overrides his practice. He maps out the discussion with excess of form, for his own use only.

(6) Visible division is an abuse so far as it exceeds the necessities of elaboration. This, again, is most frequently illustrated in needless subdivisions. Visible subdivision is elaborate form representing elaborate thinking. It is diagram representing science. Beyond the necessities of elaboration, form becomes not only

an incumbrance, but, what is worse, an affectation; for it pretends to an intricacy which does not exist. It thrusts upon the hearer a help which he does not need. It is like offering him a telescope to find his neighbor's house. The result is, that no one is relieved, but every one is encumbered.

(7) Visible division is an abuse, so far as it outweighs rhetorical force. In all oral speech, and specially in preaching, results depend much more on rhetorical impression than on scientific form. Science must therefore often yield to rhetoric in the structure and expansion of a sermon. Its structure must depend on its proposed expansion. Its frame must be such that it can be expanded forcibly. The table of contents of a book may be very perfect as a scientific structure; but it is dull reading, because it has no rhetorical force. It has no expansion: it is all form. It has as little eloquence as a triangle. So a sermon may be divided and subdivided till it is little else than a skeleton. A sermon of superior materials may break down under this excess of machinery. It may be elaborately thought out and as elaborately framed: its divisions may be accurate, and their order natural. As a scientific lecture it may be a model; but as a sermon it is arid and brittle: it wants spring, speed, wings. The first step in its improvement is to reduce its weight of form, abandon the double for the single series of divisions, make science succumb to rhetoric. You will soon discover that the single series of divisions is more easily handled than the double series in rhetorical expansion. It is more flexible. Said Prior of Dr. Johnson, "His reasoning is marshaled with the exactness of a heraldic procession, or the rank and file of an army." Something is wrong in a discourse in which that sense of

order is lifted above the sense of force. Specially in the pulpit our concern is chiefly with truth in its rhetorical rather than in its scientific forms. We must divide and arrange discourse as orators, not as scientific lecturers, nor as academic teachers.

III. The third general topic of the discussions before us is that of the materials of divisions; that is, the thoughts of which they should be composed. Respecting these, the following are the fundamental principles.

1st, A division of a discourse should be necessary to the development of its proposition. The proposition is the plan in the germ: the plan is the proposition unfolded. Every division in the plan, therefore, should be essential to the expansion of the proposition. It should grow out of the proposition, and live upon the proposition, as a branch grows out of and lives upon the root of a tree. It should be impossible to see how the proposition in hand could dispense with the division in hand.

Preachers may learn a lesson from the best writers of fiction. They study the necessities of the narrative. They keep to the probabilities of history. Mr. Dickens tells us, that, while he was publishing "The Old Curiosity Shop" as a serial story, he received letters from friends and strangers on both sides of the Atlantic, begging him not to give a tragic ending to the story by the death of "little Nell." But those letters were to his mind evidence that the tragic ending was the necessary one, because the only natural one. Else, why did readers forebode it? That instinctive foreboding was an instinctive decree of art. So Mr. Dickens reasoned, and he refused to obey the suggestions of his correspondents. This kind of study of the necessities of a theme is needed in the construction of sermons.

We can not neglect it, and yet present truth in natural relations.

(1) To be necessary to a proposition, a division must be comprised in that proposition. Lord Bacon once theorized that a birch-tree might grow from the root of a felled oak. Divisions are sometimes grafted upon propositions on a similar theory. A division is often relevant to the general subject when it is not so to the proposition. It belongs to the same genus, but does not come under the species. The preacher is deceived, and classifies loosely. Your proposition is to consider the doctrine of intercession: why, then, should a division be given to remarks upon prayer in the general? Your proposition is to treat of the sin of ingratitude: why, then, devote a division to depravity? Your proposition is to urge the duty of repentance: why, then, bestow a division upon a general exhortation to a religious life? Much aimless preaching would be avoided, if preachers would adhere more rigidly to the distinction that relevancy to subject is not necessarily relevancy to proposition.

This principle, again, is sometimes violated by an unphilosophical use of biblical passages parallel to the text. Some preachers, with the laudable aim of being biblical preachers, make an unwarranted use of their reference Bibles. I can not better illustrate this error than by citing some fragments from Dr. James Alexander. Of his own method of sermonizing at one period of his ministry he writes, "Another method which I pursued was to choose a text, and then, having written out in full all the parallel passages, to classify them, and found my divisions on this classification. I flattered myself that this was a happy method, because it made my sermon scriptural."

But observe this method for a moment. "Classification" of what? Of the materials of the text? No. Of the materials of a proposition derived from the text? No. Of the natural surroundings of the text or theme? No. But of the parallel passages found in Bagster's Bible. It is impossible that such divisions should fail to contain irrelevant material. Dr. Alexander soon found this out, and ingenuously confesses it. He says, "The *nexus* between the texts was factitious, often refined and recondite, always more obvious to the writer than to the reader. It prevented the flow of thought in a natural channel. It was like a number of lakes connected by artificial canals. The discourse was disjointed, and over-laden with texts. One passage of Scripture suggested unsought is worth a hundred lugged in *collo obtorto*." All artifices for making a sermon scriptural defeat themselves. Biblical thought runs in natural channels. It is all in rivers, never in canals. Force it into canals, and you get nothing but stagnant water.

(2) To be necessary to a proposition, a division must be founded on a real distinction from every other division. Distinction without real difference is often the defect of two consecutive divisions. Difference of phraseology is accepted as difference of thought. Difference in the materials of development may conceal the fact that there is no difference of divisions. Massillon, in one of his charges to his clergy, discourses on "The Spirit of the Ministry of the Gospel" as being; 1. A spirit of separation from the world; 2. A spirit of prayer; 3. A spirit of zeal; 4. A spirit of labor; 5. A spirit of knowledge; 6. A spirit of piety. Of these divisions the last is inclusive of all the rest.

(3) To be necessary to a proposition, a division must

be founded on an important distinction from all the other divisions. One variety of error in this respect is very deceptive. It is that in which a division unimportant in itself is advanced for the sake of interesting materials which can be introduced under it. We sometimes hear discourses in which the divisions give no hint of the materials of interest in the discussion. The salient things in the discourse are not the leading thoughts: they are incidents, illustrations, antitheses, quotations, paradoxes, or other artful expedients of composition. They do not suggest the ground-work of thought; nor are they forcibly suggested by it. The outline of the sermon, therefore, is not needed for its own sake. It is only the string for the beads. Such selection of the materials of division is unnatural; yet, executed by a genius, it may be delusive. Some fascinating composition of this kind is found in all literatures. It is the chief defect in the writings of De Quincey. His "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" is an entire volume constructed in this way. He himself so describes it. A discourse thus framed may contain passages of great power and brilliancy; but as a structure of thought it is unnatural. The power to write in this way is a dangerous one: it tempts a preacher to artifice and clap-trap.

2d, A second principle respecting the materials of divisions is the converse of the one last named. It is that the divisions as a whole should fully develop the proposition. Not only should no needless divisions be introduced, but no necessary divisions should be omitted. Collectively the divisions should be a complete discussion of the proposition.

(1) Upon this topic, observe a principle which we have had occasion to notice before, — that exhaustion

of a proposition is not exhaustion of a subject. The prolix discourses of some of the English and Scotch divines grew out of a failure to recognize this distinction. Hence their interminable divisions. Their conclusions especially are omniferous. They include applicatory divisions sufficient for two or three discourses. A doctrine thus treated is like a light in a grotto of gems. The glow of the wealth discovered is dazzling; but beyond the confused sense of affluence of applicatory thought one receives no impression. No focal density of thought attracts us. This is the necessary result of an attempt to exhaust a great subject.

(2) That divisions may fully develop a proposition, the proposition and divisions should be so invented as to fit together. There are always two ways of fitting two things to each other: you may stretch the one, or contract the other. A very common illustration of this occurs in the adjustment of propositions to divisions by the use of a qualifying word or phrase in the form of the proposition. You wish, for instance, to consider the reasons for a certain duty; but you find that you can not discuss all those reasons. Perhaps you do not know them all. It is hazardous to promise all the reasons for any thing. Perhaps you have not time to discuss them all: yet you can discuss a certain group of them, which shall have weight and unity. What shall be done? Qualify your proposition by some modal phrase. Say, "Let us consider *some* of the reasons;" or, "a *few* of the reasons;" or, "the more *important* reasons," etc. A study of the proposition and the divisions relatively to each other is needful in order to disclose where the proper guard is to be applied against the danger of a failure to match.

(3) Divisions do not fully develop a proposition, if they do not sustain its intrinsic dignity. A profound proposition superficially treated, an affluent theme meagerly treated, a novel subject tritely treated indicate unfortunate omissions, which the divisions ought to have supplied. On the standard themes of the pulpit a certain fund of popular thought exists below which a sermon on one of those themes ought not to fall. They are great subjects. They are susceptible of such discussion as shall produce a great impression. The popular mind feels them to be great, and as such reveres them. The history of the pulpit has made them great in their homiletic forms. Great minds have discoursed upon them, and lifted them to a lofty niche in the popular conceptions of them. Very unequal sermons may be preached upon them by unequal minds. But a meager sermon upon one of them should never be preached by any one. More evil than good would be the natural result of such a sermon. If we can not confirm the work of our predecessors in the discussion of the grand themes of the pulpit, we, at least, should not undo it by our imbecility. For such subjects, our best efforts should be reserved. Our best health, our most profound and penetrative studies, our most elastic moods, our most affluent religious experiences should be expended upon them. Even thus, we shall not equal these imperial themes. But we may equal, and more than equal, the existing popular thought upon them. If not, our call to preach needs revision.

The most serious omissions in preaching are of materials the absence of which obscures the evangelical spirit of the discourse. If a subject naturally leads thought to Christ, it is the saddest of all omissions to leave out Christ. Yet this may be done with

no irreverent design. I once heard a sermon on "The Holiness of God," the divisions of which were restricted to the intimations of divine holiness in the material universe. Yet it is impossible to develop that subject well, without assigning the central place to the illustration of it furnished by the divine work of Atonement for the sins of man. The sermon disclosed this by its glaring omissions. Intellectually considered, it was a superior production; but it was well-nigh useless as a sermon on that theme. If the proposition had been to consider "The intimations of the divine holiness in the material universe," and only those, the case would have been entirely changed, and the evil avoided. The divisions then would have matched the proposition. But as they stood the proposition pointed to the center, and the divisions to the outskirts, of the theme. The very heart of it, as it opens to a thoughtful mind, was left a blank. Sermons which thus omit the evangelical elements of a subject are as ungainly as they are inefficient. The loss of a limb is a deformity as well as an inconvenience. But what of the loss of a head?

3d, A third principle respecting the materials of divisions is that they should consist of the most powerful thoughts which a mastery of the subject discovers. Two things in this principle are to be emphasized, — mastery of subjects, and the use only of selected materials. Defect in either is loss of power.

(1) The secret of weakness in many sermons is premature discussion. A glance at the outline of a discourse is often sufficient to show that the preacher is not ready to discuss that theme. He has not mastered it. He has worked in the dark. Collateral bearings of it have not been well explored. The divisions are

inadequate, because he has not had the subject well in hand. Statements are made, therefore, which need to be qualified, or understatements are made which need to be intensified. Till you know a subject all around and all through, you are not competent to affirm with confidence any broad range of discussion respecting it.

(2) A still more frequent evil is poverty of materials. This, too, the plan of a sermon will often discover. The divisions are not the rich products of a full mind. They are not select materials. They hint at no unspoken reserves. In discourse, as in war, power often lies in reserved forces. The possession of such unexpressed resources affects the whole movement of masterly discussion. Without that mastery of subjects which allows selection, a discourse can not be radically strengthened by criticism of details. Criticism must go back to the preliminary study of the theme.

(3) The view here expressed should modify the objections often urged against "great" sermons. Intellectual preaching is objectionable only so far as the intellectual strain is disproportioned to the spiritual fervor. In this one principle of proportion lies the gist of the whole argument on the subject. This balance being well preserved, it may be safely said, that, the more intellectual our preaching is, the better it is. This is as true as is its converse, — that, the more spiritual preaching is, the better it is. Each element is the complement of the other in the true ideal of a sermon.

There is a very obvious sense, then, in which sermons must be "great." They must embody the best materials germane to their subjects; and this, realized in any pulpit, will, in the long-run, create a "great" pulpit. In no other way can we eradicate from the

popular mind effeminate and quiddling tastes, which, if encouraged, doom the pulpit to degeneracy. You can not improve such tastes by preaching to them or at them. The way to lift the people above them is not by a direct dead lift, but by a certain leverage of preaching which can not be understood by a weak or listless mind. To create strength, you must give strength. Put into your pulpit the strength of the everlasting hills, and it will not need the coruscations of the *Aurora borealis*. Give to your preaching the vividness of the lightning, and your people will not crave the phosphorescence of fireflies.

In an age like ours, no pulpit can succeed, which, like the pulpit of Germany, lives, in large disproportion, upon the natural spirituality of womanhood and the innocence of childhood. These must be supplemented by the intellectual strength of a nation, or the pulpit can not exist as a national power. And, to command the strength, it must *be* strength. Great and timely subjects, thorough discussions, weight and fullness of selected materials, costly thoughts, — these, immersed in the depths of an intense spiritual nature, must constitute the popular preaching of the age, or the time is not distant when no preaching will be popular. All this reduced to few and plain words means that we must have great preachers, who shall give great sermons on great themes, composed of the best materials which such themes furnish to an educated mind. To the utmost of each one's ability we must be such preachers; and each one's conscience must be trained, by a thoughtful rather than an effervescent piety, to bear the intellectual strain which such preaching creates.

Is this theory a temptation to clerical ambition?

Yes: it is open to that abuse. But the peril must be met, as other moral perils must be, in doing the work of a world's necessity. The greater the deed, the greater the probationary peril in the doing: this is the law of all great achievement. The supreme temptation in this world's history assailed Him who came to it in supreme self-sacrifice. The trial, so far as we can judge of it, came in this very form of appeal to His human ambition, through the dawning consciousness of divine power over divine opportunity. Similar is the moral danger of an intellectual pulpit; and that is tyranny over a weak conscience which holds a preacher back from the encounter by religious scruples.

LECTURE XXVIII.

THE DIVISION: MATERIALS, FORM.

4TH, A fourth principle respecting the materials of divisions is that they should all be classified, if possible, upon the same principle of division.

(1) Materials are often arranged on different principles of division. A truth may be discussed subjectively by considering its nature, or objectively by considering its effects. It may be treated negatively or positively. It may be developed by argument, or by illustration, or by explanation, or by exhortation. It may be discussed under any one of a great variety of relations.

(2) Sometimes a mingling of different principles of division in one discourse is a necessity. You can not always develop a subject thoroughly on any one principle of classifying materials. The practical aim of a sermon may demand an eclectic division. Such eclecticism is no evil when its necessity is obvious.

(3) The needless mingling of diverse principles of division is an evil. This will be best illustrated by an example. The following plan of thought was once presented in this lecture-room for criticism. The proposition is "The character of St. Paul." The divisions are: 1. St. Paul's acuteness as a reasoner; 2. St. Paul's depth of sensibility; 3. St. Paul's love of his country; 4. St. Paul's fidelity to Christ; 5. St. Paul

in the closing scenes of his life. These are all salient points, in which the individuality of the Apostle's character is seen. Each one regarded singly is interesting. Each one can be impressively developed. Yet this can not be pronounced a good plan of the subject. Why? Because of the needless diversity of the principles of division. They are no less than five in number. St. Paul's intellectual character, his emotive nature, his social relations, his religious experience, the chronological order of his biography, — these five distinct principles are suggested in the plan, and each one stands alone. They give distinct patches of material cut from as many different species of fabric. What is the evil of such combinations of material? It is twofold. In the first place they tend to deceive the preacher. Such divisions often seem distinct in form when they are not so in reality. They covertly overlap; and the consequence is that the preacher unconsciously repeats himself. You can not make the three sections of a cone, and yet avoid their intersection somewhere. This is the difficulty to which divisions founded on different principles of analysis are always liable. Further: such cross-divisions tend to confuse the hearer. If the necessity for them is not obvious, the rhetorical instinct which is in every mind will in some minds murmur its sense of confusion, however bold the distinctions may be in form of statement. Here is a Gothic window. I describe it by saying that it is made of wood, and glass, and lead, and oak, and paint. I add that some of its panes are red, and some are circular, and some are blue, and some are larger than others, and that some are square, and some are green. I continue, that some are diamond-shaped, and some are opaque, and some are crescent, and some are

concave, and some are ground, and some are painted, and some are yellow, and some are cracked, and some are transparent, and some are patched, and some are missing. Taking breath, I conclude by observing that it was modeled by Michael Angelo, and is a memorial window, and that it is a venerable relic of Italian art, and that it still exists in the Church of Santa Maria in Florence, with a picture of a dove in the center, which has lost one wing. This may all be true. But is it a good description of a Gothic window?

5th, A fifth principle respecting the materials of divisions is that they should be susceptible of unity of development. We have remarked of the proposition, that it should be such that unity may characterize the discussion as a whole. The same principle applies to divisions. Each should be in itself a unit, and susceptible of compact development.

(1) Therefore a division should not comprise materials which are not one in their natural impression. For example, it is often unphilosophical to consider the nature and the cause of a thing under one division. The nature of sin and the cause of sin invite totally different processes of research, and suggest different materials of thought. They demand, therefore, separate divisions. Again: it is often unphilosophical to combine explanation and proof in one division, unless the one is but a brief preliminary to the other. To explain and to prove on equal terms in the same division invite divided attention. To explain what is meant by the perseverance of the saints and to prove the fact of the perseverance of the saints are processes so unlike, that they are not natural associates in discussion. Each must concentrate attention upon itself. For this, each requires a separate division. Still less philosophical is

it to discuss the conciliatory and the comminatory bearings of a truth in one division. Often it is not wise to do this even in one sermon. It is not natural to invite and to threaten in the same breath. Men do not yield to invitation and to threats at the same moment. It is a mark of an ill-trained mind to utter both in volatile succession. Colloquial excitement which vents itself in both excites laughter.

Further: it is unphilosophical to apply a truth to Christians and to the impenitent in the same division, unless the application is one. Many truths are applicable to men indiscriminately; but many others are not. The Lord's Supper is not the same to the godly and to the ungodly alike. Its practical bearing upon the two classes requires separation into different sections. Often it is unphilosophical to present argument and appeal in the same division. This is not always true. But often argument may be abstract, or it may be incomplete; and in either case the mood for appeal may not have been created. If not created in the hearers, it ought not to exist in the speaker. The unity of the division is sacrificed, if the appeal be forced.

You will perceive from these illustrations, that the principle involved in them is not arbitrary nor trivial. It is grounded in the nature of certain processes of mind which are concerned both in constructing and in receiving a communication of thought. Certain processes can not naturally be intermingled. They may succeed each other; but they can not be blended This is only affirming, that, in constructing a sermon, a preacher should attend thoroughly to one thing at a time. Yet you will often detect the absence of this unity as the secret cause of the self-contradiction of a division in your struggle to develop it. The defect

lies in the materials of the division itself. Though not self-contradictory logically, it is so in rhetorical impression. It is bifurcate. You have two grooves to follow at once, which are not parallel.

(2) Yet the unity of a division may admit of obvious distinction of materials. All that unity requires is a certain sympathy in the resultant impressions. This does not conflict with diversity in the instruments of impression. For instance, unity of division admits the combination of mental processes, which, though distinct, lie in one line of thought. Thus a division may propose to illustrate and to prove a truth. Illustration and proof are very closely allied in rhetorical character They assist each other. To a certain extent they interchange offices. Proof often illustrates a truth, and illustration often proves a truth. As mutual allies, they may aim at one result, and make one impression.

In like manner, unity of division admits the statement of qualities of a thing, which, though distinct, have close resemblance. A division may treat of the depth and the breadth of a principle. You are to show that it is profound in its nature, and far-reaching in its applications. These are distinct qualities, yet in unison. Depth and breadth are both measures of magnitude. The impression, therefore, is one. No mental strain is required to develop it, and none to receive it. On the same principle, unity of division admits the mention of graces of character, which, though distinct, have an obvious sympathy. You may consider in the same division injuries as demanding both forbearance and forgiveness. These graces lie in the same line. Not only is no confusion produced; but no effort is necessary, if we consider both simultaneously.

Furthermore, unity of division permits the discussion

of duties and of sins, which, though distinct, naturally accompany each other. You may propose to treat in the same paragraph the duties of godly sorrow and repentance, or the sinfulness of falsehood and hypocrisy. The duties here named are distinct in character, yet never separate in life. The sins here specified are not synonymous, yet they are always co-existent. No violence, therefore, is done to the natural connections, if such diversities are covered by one division.

Once more, unity of division allows even the combination of certain opposites of material. Opposites are not always contradictories, as facts are not always truths. Some opposites in thought are complements to each other. Beneath the surface a hidden current unites and intermingles them. One of the early preachers of New England published a sermon on "Flattery and Slander." A keen judgment of character disclosed to him the fact that these two sins, though seemingly at antipodes, are one in sympathy. They are the fruit of the same mental vice, and are very apt to co-exist in the same person. The flatterer to your face will probably slander you behind your back. These opposites, and others like them, might be properly treated, not only in one discourse, but even in the same division of a discourse.

These illustrations are ample to show that unity of division admits of very great diversity of materials. It demands no iron rigidity of exclusion; but is ductile, rather, to the utmost extent of natural combinations of thought. Specially is the dual division often the natural unit. To one who is accustomed to minute criticism of discourse, the phenomenon becomes a curiosity from the frequency of its occurrence, — that things live and move by twos. It almost seems as if the

double structure of our brains created duality of thought. The point to be watched, therefore, in adjusting the materials of divisions, is not the fact, but the degree, of diversity. Any degree is natural which leaves room for natural oneness of impression. All that criticism can say is that the diversity should not be such as to impair that unity.

6th, The sixth principle respecting the materials of divisions is that those of the body of the sermon should not anticipate those of the conclusion. Here, again, as in the structure of the introduction, the locality of materials is a prime object of study. The "where" is often as vital to impression as the "what." Certain materials in every discourse naturally belong to the conclusion. To anticipate them is to impair their force. It is like reading a book backwards.

(1) Obedience to this principle is often essential to the logical symmetry of a discussion. In an argumentative sermon, for instance, the development of the proposition, and the applications of it, are totally distinct processes. The one belongs, in the nature of the case, to the body of the discourse, and the others belong to its ending. You have no logical right to apply a truth before it is proved. That is not compact argument which is suspended in the middle to give place to an appeal. The divisions of the body of the discourse must in such a case keep to the necessities of logic.

(2) The observance of the principle in question is often necessary to rhetorical force when not essential to the symmetry of logic. There is an order of rhetorical force which can no more be violated with impunity than the laws of perspective can be in painting. In an illustrative discourse, for example, it may be that no necessities of logic locate the materials here or there;

yet they may be weak here, and powerful there. Locality may determine every thing about them which is worth determining. The point of culmination in the interest of a sermon may turn on the question whether you shall present a certain illustration early in the discussion, or reserve it for the close. Even in a sermon made up mainly of exhortation, the succession of the materials may be the vital feature of the whole. Which first? which last? Hope, love, fear, — which shall begin, and which end, the appeal? Rhetorical force depends specially on cumulative impression. Some materials are more intense than others. Those of the body of the sermon should be so selected and adjusted as to leave the most intense for the conclusion.

(3) Preaching is exposed to peculiar peril of premature applications of truth. No other themes of public discussion are so prolific of practical application as are those of the pulpit. No others have such intense applications. No others are commonly so urgent in point of time. "Now," "now," is the applicatory symbol always present to a preacher's mind in the flush of his eagerness to reach his object. Therefore a pressure of applicatory thought often crowds upon the process of discussion. The materials for an appeal accumulate as the discussion advances. The impulse is to give way to them. At a felicitous turn of thought the application comes to view so luminously and so grandly, that you feel impelled to use it then and there. "Now or never" says the impulse of your sensibility. It often requires intellectual self-denial to restrain that impulse.

If you have ever ascended Mount Rhigi or Mount Washington on a clear day, did it not cost you an effort to refrain from a first look at the scenery below you, till you reached the summit, and could take in the

whole in one immense panorama? Side-looks at patches of the valley were tempting you all the way up. So it is often with homiletic experience in the handling of intense subjects. We are tempted to frequent pauses for an applicatory use of our materials in fragments. Hence proceeds that structure of discourse in which the conclusion is inferior in applicatory power to certain fragments in the body of the sermon. The first and overwhelming look was halfway down the mountain. Nothing subsequent bears comparison with that in its impression. Hence, also, comes that structure of discourse in which the applicatory impression is dissipated before the conclusion is reached. The whole bulk of the conclusion proper has been stolen in parcels, a little here, and a little there. By petty distribution of impression all impression is lost. The practical impression of discourse may be squandered by excessive distribution. The conclusion can only repeat what it might have been, if the preacher had practiced reserve and concentration.

7th, A seventh principle is that the materials of the conclusion should not return upon the foregoing parts of a sermon, except by way of intentional recapitulation.

(1) The divisions of a conclusion may return thus improperly upon previous parts of the sermon by the suggestion of new materials which belong to those previous localities. Qualifying statements which should have been in the introduction; explanatory remarks on the text which should have preceded the announcement of the subject; new proofs of the proposition which should have been divisions in the discussion, — are examples to the point. Rhetorically they are like the postscript to a letter.

(2) The same defect may arise from sheer repetition of material. The proposition may be reproduced in the form of an inference. For example, the proposition is, "The stability of the Christian Church." The sermon illustrates or proves this; then the preacher observes in conclusion, "1. We see from this subject that the Church of Christ can never be destroyed." Such discourses recall the Irish legend of St. Patrick going on a pilgrimage, carrying his own head under his arm.

8th, An eighth principle respecting the materials of divisions is that they should be as suggestive as possible of the main thoughts of the proposition.

(1) No single quality of good divisions is more valuable than this. The idea of it is that the materials of each division should be so related to the proposition as to be a reminder of it. The two should be connected by a something, perhaps an indefinite *je ne sais quoi*, like the indefinable resemblance which we often detect between parent and child.

(2) The opposite of this is a division constructed in abstract form, which relies on its development to make its relation to the proposition obvious. Have you not heard sermons which set you upon the inquiries, "What was the subject? what was the text? what has this division to do with either?" It does not remind you of the theme. You have to search for that, and then to carry it by the dead-lift of memory. The central thought of the discourse is mined out from the depths of each division as its development proceeds, instead of being visible on its surface; while usually, in a well-constructed plan, every division is an "outcrop" of the proposition. You are not at any moment in doubt as to what the subject is.

(3) Yet this incessant reproduction of the proposi

tion in the divisions can not be achieved by forms alone. The thoughts of the divisions must produce the effect. Things, not forms, must create it. Here, as elsewhere, that style only is good which springs into being at the command of thought. But, when the very substance of a division demands the form which embodies this suggestion of the proposition, no audience is so uncritical as not to feel the excellence. It lies in the instinct of good hearing to catch such sympathy between subject and division, and to feel the tribute of it to powerful discourse. When you approach the monument on Bunker Hill, you observe that the very fence which incloses the grounds is made to act as a reminder, one might almost say a historian, of the event commemorated within. It is massive in size; it is made of cast-iron; the posts are images of cannons. At a glance, you interpret them in a double sense. They are more significant than hieroglyphs. Similar to that is the effect which we should aim to create by the very frame-work of a sermon, as related to the subject which it incloses.

(4) Yet it should be observed that this quality is a matter of degrees. Not every proposition is susceptible of being thus represented with vividness in the structure of divisions. The best materials may not admit of statements which shall act as exact mirrors to the proposition. It is in illustrative sermons chiefly that we find the most striking examples of this excellence. But all sermons admit of some degree of it. It lies in the very nature of good divisions, as a growth from the root of a good proposition. If it is not possible, either the proposition or the division is to be suspected of some radical defect.

IV. The fourth general topic in the discussion of divisions is that of their form of statement.

1st, All those principles which have been observed as requisite to the construction of the forms of propositions apply as well to the forms of divisions. The practical objects aimed at are three, — that the forms of statement be intelligible without being hackneyed, that they be interesting without being fanciful, and that they be easily remembered. Divisions, however, have facilities for attaining these objects which propositions have not, and they are exposed to defects to which propositions are not so liable. I offer, therefore, some additional suggestions on this topic of the forms of divisions.

2d, The forms of divisions should be adjusted as forcibly as possible to the design of the proposition. A division may be assimilated to a proposition, not merely by its materials, but also by its verbal structure. A plan of a sermon was once delivered here for criticism, of which the proposition was, "To consider the qualifications requisite to a public profession of religion." The first division was, "The Church should be composed of regenerate men." The critic suggested this as a superior form, "The first qualification requisite to a public profession of religion is a regenerate character." "But," said the preacher, "that is the same thing." — "True," was the reply. "I did not mean to interpolate a different *thing*, but to suggest a different *form*. You propose to discuss qualifications: why not enumerate qualifications? Why approach results by inference, which can as well be taken in hand by direct assertion? Why not thus make your division a direct auxiliary to your proposition?"

(1) Yet this formal assimilation of divisions to the proposition is of no value, if it is in form only. Architects tell us that high art tolerates no painted woods.

So, in sermonizing, we want no fictions. But resemblances in fact can be used as such most effectually through resemblances in form.

(2) But visible resemblance to a proposition in the form of a division is not always practicable. The proposition may not invite such forms of divisions. It may be a doctrine to be proved by arguments, the natural statement of which is not directly suggestive of the doctrine. Very well: do not, then, force the resemblance. The oratorical instinct must decide when this excellence of form is practicable. All that criticism can say is, Recognize it as an excellence, and use it whenever it is a natural expression of the sympathy between proposition and division.

3d, Divisions should be constructed, if possible, so as to suggest each other. When they can not resemble the proposition, they may often resemble each other. If similarity of thought exists, resemblance in form may express that similarity. Interrogative divisions may often have such a resemblance. Such divisions very directly suggest each other. A series of antithetic divisions may do the same. Even a series of declarative divisions may so resemble each other in brevity as to be mutually suggestive. Said one preacher, "Let us consider the chief elements of the spirit of prayer. They are: 1. Desire; 2. Submission; 3. Trust; 4. Constancy." The resemblance here in brevity of expression makes these divisions expedients of suggestion to each other. What advantages has this resemblance in the forms of divisions? Chiefly three. The resemblance is pleasing in itself considered; it assists intelligent progress through a discourse; and it aids the retention of a discourse in the memory. The Rev. William Jay was so studious of this quality, that his

hearers used to quote entire plans of his sermons many years after they were preached.

It should be observed, however, that resemblances in the forms of divisions are not worth the seeking them by the use of fanciful expedients. Professor Tholuck, in one of his "University Sermons," has the following series of divisions: —

"1. Die Stätte seines Scheidens,
die Stätte seines Leidens:

2. Verhüllet ist sein Anfang,
verhüllet ist sein Ausgang:

3. Der Schluss von seinen Wegen
ist für die seinen Segen:

4. Er ist von uns geschieden,
und ist uns doch geblieben:

5. Er bleibt verhüllet den Seinen
bis er wird klar erscheinen."

This is ingenious; but it is ingenious caricature. The forced antitheses and the rhyme are both out of keeping with persuasive discourse. The danger always attends the cultivation of an excellence of this kind, that some minds will crowd it into caricature.

4th, Divisions should be so constructed that they shall not be easily confounded with each other.

(1) Resemblance in the sound of certain significant words may confound divisions which are really distinct. "Conscience" and "consciousness" express different ideas. But two contiguous divisions, in which those two words should be the emphatic words, would almost certainly be confounded by some hearers. The "humility" of Christ and the "humiliation" of Christ express distinct things; yet divisions con-

structed around those words as centers would inevitably be fused, and would run together, in the minds of many hearers.

(2) Distinct divisions may be confounded by the predominance of resemblance over difference of thought in the forms of statement. The sermons of the Rev. Albert Barnes sometimes illustrate this error. His mind was marvelously prolific of practical reflections on sacred themes. As he expanded them, they would be seen to be distinct; but as he stated them they sometimes appeared to be repetitions. His "Notes," which were largely sermons in their original form, exhibit many instances to the point. His practical remarks on a passage are usually plans of sermons; and in some cases a reader finds it difficult to see distinctions in the absence of the homiletic developments which made them plain. He composed with great rapidity; and his divisions were sometimes carelessly framed, as those of other pastors are apt to be, from the same cause. Confusion is tolerated, because the development removes it. Yet the superior taste would admit no confusion to be removed.

5th, Divisions should be so constructed as to be truthful in the connections in which they stand. A principle may in itself be true; a given statement of it may by itself be true: yet in the connection in which it stands in a sermon it may make a false impression. Something may precede, or something may be omitted, which renders the statement practically untrue. Error of statement may thus arise from mere position of statement.

LECTURE XXIX.

THE DIVISION: FORM, ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENT.

6TH, The forms of divisions again demand our attention for the sake of a sixth principle; namely, that divisions should be so stated as to foster expectation in the hearer.

(1) This may be done by avoiding needless commonplace in the forms of divisions. The common stock of thought in the pulpit has modes of statement which use has worn out. The more solemn the thought, the more threadbare it often is in its ancient forms. To change the figure, the utterance of such a thought in such a form is an opiate: it is either nauseating or soporific. Seek fresh expression for such materials: revolve them in mind till you can frame less hackneyed statements which shall still be natural and clear. You thus stimulate attention by quickening expectation. "The value of the soul" was in our Lord's time no novelty to human thought. To the Jewish mind it certainly was as old as the time of the great Law-giver. It must have had time-worn forms of expression inherited from the prophets. It was our Saviour's mission to give it a new life, and to deepen the sense of its reality. How did he do this? He achieved it, in part, by inventing an entirely novel way of putting it in familiar discourse: "What shall a man give in exchange

for his soul?" That man possesses in his spiritual nature a treasure distinct from all others, which he subjects to barter for material joys, has been the theme of thousands of Christian sermons; but that way of putting the case was, so far as we know, original with the mind of Christ. We do not know that preacher, or prophet, or poet, or philosopher, ever invented that contrast of thought before he gave it.

How many such resurrections of old and dormant and dying thoughts our Saviour accomplished by his spiritual inventiveness, who can say? Yet this was no inimitable virtue in his preaching. A preacher has only to put his thought to himself in such a way that it touches him to the quick, and he can not help putting it to hearers in some form the piquancy of which gives it the force of an original. Grasp the handle of an electric battery fully charged, and the bystanders will know what you find there as soon as you do. So, penetrate any theme of discourse profoundly enough to be yourself electrified by it, and the electric expression of it to others comes with the electric thrill in you.

(2) Expectation may be fostered by the concealment of the conclusion in the forms of divisions. Never hint, before the time, whether you intend to appeal to a hearer's judgment in the conclusion, or to his sensibilities. By all natural arts keep the conclusion secret. Emerson writes, "Beware of the man who *says* 'I am on the eve of a revelation.'" Hearers always suspect a speaker who foretells much of what he is going to do. The doing of it they welcome in the time of it; but the promise to do they elude. One of the evils of announcing a synopsis of the sermon at the beginning is that it foretells too much. It hints at conclusions, often reveals them outright. Expectation is cloyed. It is

unfortunate when a preacher says, in announcing the last division of a sermon, "Before proceeding to apply this subject, let us remark," etc. Why hint that the subject is to be applied? A wiser expedient, often, is to have no application, in order to break up the monotony in the hearer's mind of the inevitable appeal. At the least, we should not remind him of that of which the chief peril is that he will foreknow it, and therefore will be forewarned against it. Suspense respecting the conclusion is not painful to a hearer. If the subject interests him, the suspense intensifies the interest.

(3) Expectation may be fostered by the negative method of discussion. A series of divisions shows that the truth is not this, is not that, is not the other. What is the rhetorical effect of this method? It is to excite curiosity to know what the truth is. A coming negative first suggests that the affirmative is to follow.

(4) Expectation may be cherished by the interrogative forms of division. A question is a prospective statement of a thought: it gives promise of an unknown answer: it is the forerunner of an invisible guest. To every alert mind it is welcome. Sometimes, therefore, an entire series of divisions thrown into the form of interrogatives will be a succession of stimulants to the expectant mood. Interrogative statements of emphatic truths are a striking feature in our Saviour's preaching. Socrates by his example has given it a name. Such interrogatives draw a hearer into a discussion by the sheer attraction of curiosity to see what is to come next.

(5) Expectation is stimulated by a certain indefiniteness of form in the statement of divisions. English style has an idiom, of which I have just given an example unconsciously. I spoke of "a certain indefiniteness of form." This idiom is designed to express two things,

— certainty of thought, with indefiniteness of expression. A something is hinted at as existing in the mind of the speaker, and well known to him; but the full expression of it is held in reserve. In the use of this idiom we mean both to define and to reserve our thought. We give a glimpse of it, and promise more. The form of statement is suggestive: it is a tacit prediction of more than it expresses. This form of statement is admissible in the divisions of sermons. Instead of disclosing the entire outline of the thing which you are about to develop, you hint at it as "a certain thing," — certain to you the speaker, not yet disclosed to the hearer. If this seems to be a refinement of speculative criticism, I reply that it is such only in the seeming. The oratorical instinct frequently resorts to it in practice, without consciousness of doing so. The secret charm which invites that oratorical instinct to it is the stimulus which it applies to the mood of expectation.

7th, A seventh principle is that in different discourses divisions should be constructed with diversity of form. The best forms become hackneyed by use. Genius itself would become the synonym of dullness if it worked a treadmill. An intelligent lady writes to me as follows of her young pastor who has just been dismissed: "He was a kind of machine. Clay went in on one side, and bricks ready-made came out on the other. Every Sunday he brought us a fresh brick. It was impossible not to love him for his finely-disciplined mind, and his handsome face, and his tender, spiritual tone; but his sermons were — dreadful! 'Oh!' I thought, 'if he would but have had a brick one-sided, or too big, or too little, or slack-baked, or burnt, or imprinted with his own fingers, what a joy it would be!' There was a relief when the next minister came, and gave us chips and sawdust."

What was the trouble with this handsome pastor? It may have been a want of fertility of mind; but probably not, for he was a diligent student. The *desid eratum* in his sermons was more likely to be a variety, not in their materials, but in their construction. Sermons are not bricks: they should not be made in one mould, and piled one on another with trowel and plumb-line. The intrinsic demands of thought, if obeyed, necessitate variety. Truth puts a premium on variety, because in no other way can she obtain self-expression.

V. The fifth general topic in the treatment of divisions is that of their order. What is the natural order of thought? If we take into consideration the subject, its discussion, its aim, its relation to the hearers, it is obvious that the natural order of thought must be variable. Much must be left to the homiletic instinct in the selection. The most that criticism can do is to point out the chief varieties of order by which divisions may be arranged. Each will be seen to involve a distinct principle of arrangement.

1st, Divisions may be arranged by an order of logical necessity. Some materials of discussion must from their very nature precede other materials. Some thoughts have no logical force till others have prepared the way for them. Some divisions, therefore, are founded upon other divisions; and the foundations must be first constructed. If you discuss in the same sermon the nature of a doctrine and the proof of that doctrine, the divisions explanatory of its nature must precede those advanced in evidence. You can not naturally prove a thing till you know and have affirmed what the thing is. In such cases the order of discourse is evidently imperative. We can not depart from it: we can not vary it: we can scarcely mistake it.

Oratorical instinct adopts it almost involuntarily. It is the order of logical necessity.

2d, Divisions may be arranged in an order founded on the relation between cause and effect. You propose to discuss the causes and the consequences of a moral phenomenon in the same sermon. Which shall take precedence in the order of discourse? The order of creation is not necessarily the natural order of discussion. It may be best to advance from effect to cause. Divine providence reasons with men mainly by that order. No rule, therefore, can be given, as between cause and effect, determining which shall take the precedence. We can only recognize the principle of order as founded on the relation between these two things, and recognize, also, that the order is reversible.

3d, Divisions may be arranged in an order founded on the relation between genus and species. This, again, is a specimen of a reversible order. Not invariably must the genus be first considered. The order of discovery is generally from species to genus. So may be that of popular discourse. Cumulative impression may demand this order, yet a different purpose might require the reverse order. Criticism can only recognize the order and its reversibility.

4th, Divisions may be arranged in the order of intrinsic dignity. Oratorical instinct outruns criticism in approving the value of (if I may coin a much needed word) a *climactic* procession of thought. Intuitively in discourse we begin with the less, and end with the greater. Power of impression depends largely on rise of impression. What possible sense of order in thought could have directed Neal, in his history of the Puritans, when he described Bernard Gilpin in the following language? — "He was a

heavenly-minded man, of a large and generous soul, of a tall stature of body, with a Roman nose, and his clothes were neat." Could the historian more perfectly have justified De Quincey's famous caricature of climax? — "If a man indulges himself in murder, he very soon comes to think little of robbery and from robbing he comes to drinking, and from that to incivility and procrastination."

Sometimes, however, it is an open question which of two divisions is the superior. In the defense of Professor Webster, his counsel adopted as nearly as possible the same order that Cicero did in the defense of Milo. Whether consciously or not, I do not know; but the imitation was remarkable. He argued: 1. That Professor Webster did not kill Dr. Parkman; 2. That, if he did, he committed justifiable homicide. Then, after a recess, he returned to the point first discussed, — the denial of the deed. Members of the bar in Boston were divided in opinion as to the wisdom of this order. Some contended that it indicated a wavering of conviction on the part of the counsel; that the division claiming that he did not commit the deed should have been reserved wholly for the close of the discussion. A very grave question, in that case, depended on the order of the argument. So, in preaching, the force of a sermon may demand a delicate discrimination in determining what is the order of dignity. In intrinsic dignity that truth is the most weighty which will carry the most weight over to the object of discourse.

5th, Divisions may be arranged in an order suggested by psychological analysis. A large class of the materials of the pulpit group themselves around the faculties given by the analysis of the mind. For instance, we should naturally argue man's duty: 1. To acquaint

himself with the Scriptures; 2. To yield his heart to their control; 3. To obey their precepts in his life. "Psychological" is a profound word to apply to these divisions. No hearer will think of them as such; no wise preacher will call them such in the pulpit: but they are such. Intellect, feeling, and will lie at the basis of the division. The oratorical instinct often adopts this order in the pulpit, even when unconscious of any metaphysical design. This is also one of the reversible orders. We can not always preach in the psychological groove, beginning with the intellect, and ending with the will. The opposite order may be necessary to the purpose of the sermon. All that criticism can say, therefore, is that this is an order founded on the psychological analysis. From which end the order shall proceed must depend on the aim of the discourse, and will commonly be decided, not by a deliberate, but by a spontaneous, decision of the rhetorical instinct.

6th, Divisions may be arranged in an order of time. Events in historical order, biography in chronological order, hypotheses in the order of probable occurrence are illustrations of this. Experience as actually lived lies at the foundation of a multitude of sermons.

7th, Divisions may be arranged in an order founded on weight of argument. This will commonly coincide with the order of intrinsic dignity. Like that, the order of argument should be climactic, — the weakest argument first, the unanswerable argument last. Positive argument naturally follows negative argument. Probable argument follows presumptive argument. Conclusive argument follows proximate argument. If an argument is relatively weak, be it so; let it be seen to be so; call it so, if you please. More is gained by

candor than by logical legerdemain. Inform an audience just how much an argument is worth, just how far it carries you towards your conclusion, and claim no more for it; and you command their assent both to your logic and to your candor. One argument, if true, is as good as another, so far as it goes. Weight is weight. The small weight, if gained honestly, is as respectable as a large one.

"I want good solid arguments at first sight," says Montaigne. Very true; and the pulpit should use no other than good arguments and solid. But if, of solid arguments, one is less weighty than another, why should we cheat in the weight by concealing the inferiority? Let it stand at the beginning: claim for it only what it is: let it seem to be what presumption is to demonstration. So decides intuitive logic.

8th, Divisions may be arranged in an order dependent on progress in the personal interest of hearers. One of the chief aims of preaching is to individualize hearers, and to bring truth home to each man's personality. Hence the order perhaps most frequently adopted by a keen homiletic instinct is that of progress in stimulating individual interest.

The following plan of discourse, once presented in this place, will illustrate this. Upon the subject of "The claims of foreign missions upon the Church," the divisions are as follows. Foreign missions are essential: 1. To the fulfillment of the purposes of God; 2. To the salvation of the heathen world; 3. To the development of the Church in Christian lands; 4. To certain special benefits to the churches of our own land; 5. To symmetry of religious growth in every Christian soul. In this order the advance is from the remote to the near, from the truth of infinite range to the truth of present con

sciousness. The thought moves like a ball in a spiral groove, which conducts it by narrowing circuits to a point at the center.

Such are the most important varieties of order in the arrangement of divisions. They suggest three additional remarks.

(1) Varieties of order will sometimes coincide. Two or more may be applicable to the same materials of discourse.

(2) Varieties of order will frequently conflict with each other. The aim of one may defeat the aim of another. The order of time may be the reverse of that of progressive individual interest. The order of psychological analysis is often reversed by the order of experience. The following plan will illustrate this. From the proposition, "The effects of sin on the human soul," the divisions are, the effects of sin: 1. On the human intellect; 2. On the human affection; 3. On the human will. Such was a plan once offered here for criticism! In the light of mental science it seemed philosophical. It was complete and symmetrical. What was the defect? The critic claimed, and justly, that the case was one in which the order of experience in time superseded all other principles of arrangement. In actual experience sin does not commence its ravages in the intellect. No sin exists till the will is corrupted. The order of the sermon, therefore, the materials remaining unchanged, should have been reversed. A more powerful impression may be produced by following the line of experience, and showing, first, that the will is perverted, and for good uses debilitated; then, that the sensibilities are corrupted, and for holy objects deadened; and finally, that the poison of sin is so virulent, that even the intellect

becomes degenerated, and for its loftiest purposes blinded. Thus moral perception is distorted, opinions are refracted from pure truth; then the entire moral being deteriorates under the infection, and integrity of belief ceases.

(3) Various as the several orders of division are, the object aimed at in them is always the same. It is progress in intensity of moral impression. The order which best promotes this is in any given case the superlative order. Follow that order, and you can not go wrong. End with that for which the hearer's need of the discourse is the most imperative. Final impressions should be intrinsically and relatively the most vital of all impressions.

VI. The last general topic to be considered is that of the mode of announcing divisions. This concerns chiefly two things, the use of numerical announcements, and the use of other prefatory words. By either method the chief objects of the announcement are three, — intelligibility, congruity with the feelings of the hearer, and permanence in the memory of the hearer. With these objects in view we readily see the propriety of certain principles which are flexible in their application.

1st, Divisions should be so announced that transition shall be distinctly perceptible. Must numerical forms, then, always be used? Certainly not. Transition can often be made distinct by the use of such prefatory words as "again," "further," "moreover," "once more," "finally." The object is to call attention to the fact of transition. Whatever does that announces a division sufficiently. May numerical forms, then, always be omitted? Certainly not. Some discussions require them. Transitions must often be emphasized in order to be observed. Colloquial usage em-

ploys the numerical forms freely. The common people, expressing serious thought, or offering arguments, instinctively resort to numbers. Sometimes they will assist the numerical announcements by count upon the fingers. To illiterate hearers, the numerals are of special value in quickening attention to the fact of transition, and in assisting them to follow discourse more elaborate than any which they could originate.

2d, Divisions should be so announced as to preserve congruity with the nature of the materials. "In the third place I exhort you;" "In the fifth place I entreat you:" what is the cause of rhetorical friction here? It is a want of congruity between emotive materials and the severest of logical forms. Numerals are adapted to explanatory and argumentative divisions. They are germane to intricate trains of thought. For hortatory, and often for illustrative materials, the less formal preface is sufficient, and therefore the more becoming.

3d, Divisions should be so announced as not to be confounded with each other. General divisions and subdivisions are often thus confounded. If both are introduced numerically, it is difficult in oral address to avoid confusion. A good general rule, therefore, is to number your general divisions only, and announce your subdivisions by the less formal method. Usually this will be congruous with the nature of your materials.

4th, Divisions should not be needlessly announced by a preliminary synopsis at the beginning of the discussion. We have already noticed this as often a needless form of the proposition. But frequently it is a more needless appendage to the proposition. The subject is formally announced, and then the entire outline

of the discussion is proclaimed. In very rare cases this may be a necessity. It marks the extreme of all possible form: it ought to indicate the extreme of difficulty in following the line of thought. Otherwise it is a dead weight of form which the hearer's memory must lift and carry. De Quincey, speaking of a peculiarity of Paganism, says, "Under this original peculiarity of Paganism there arose two consequences, which I shall mark by the Greek letters α and β. The latter I shall notice in their order, first calling attention to the consequence marked α, which is this, etc." You feel at once that ease is here sacrificed to form, and needlessly. The artist is obtruding upon us the tools of his workshop. Yet the forms of the pulpit are sometimes as excessive and superfluous. We have few such preachers as Dr. Emmons, and still fewer such audiences as that of the old church in Franklin fifty years ago. Yet even in Emmons's works I am unable to find more than two or three sermons in which this pre-announcement of the divisions is demanded by the character of the materials.

5th, Divisions should be so announced as not to disclose prematurely the character of the conclusion. A conclusion may be foretold, not only by the substance of the divisions, not only by their form, but also by their prefatory announcements. The Rev. Albert Barnes has a discourse, the five divisions of which are all pre-announced; and then is interpolated this declaration: "The first three of these topics I shall treat by way of illustration, and the last two in the way of inference and remark." In this declaration the preacher soliloquizes. He thus maps out the discussion for his own convenience. The discussion contains nothing which needs any such forewarning for the use of the

hearers. The disclosure of the conclusion especially is premature. Whatever else must be foretold, the character of the application should never be revealed till the moment of its instant use.

6th, Divisions should be so announced as not to deceive an audience respecting the destined length of the discourse. Never express or hint at false promises of brevity. Do not announce "a brief notice" of a division which drags itself out voluminously. Do not promise "only to hint at" a thought which you proceed to exhaust. Do not ask leave "to add a word or two" which swell into a harangue. Do not declare that you will state an inference "without remark," and then add an appeal. Then, having done all these things, do not apologize for the feebleness of your discussion on the ground of "want of time."

A preacher is under obligations of honor to his audience in this thing. He is master of the field. His hearers are helpless under the imposition of his flux of words, through which they peer in vain for the end. They can not rise and rebuke him for his prolixity. A boy crunching peanuts in Faneuil Hall has more liberty to silence a political speaker on the platform than a judge of the Supreme Court has in a church to silence a driveling preacher. Such breaches of good faith are often committed in the use of the prefatory words of concluding divisions. A preacher says "lastly," and "finally," and "once more," and "yet one thought, and I have done." Two, three, even four such consolatory glimpses of the end I have known to be given in succession; and once three such harbingers of rest were followed by a promise, which shrewd hearers were by that time too impatient to believe, that the subject should "be brought to a close by a *few* remarks." "Fi-

nally" is a very precious word to an audience. Hearers often watch for it as they that watch for the morning. Sometimes the more thrilling the sermon, the more welcome is its close. There is a weariness of excitement as well as of *ennui*. The most popular quality of preaching is brevity. If a sermon does not possess it, do not exasperate an audience by promising it.

In closing this discussion of divisions, let me express the conviction that strength in preaching depends on no other rhetorical excellence so much as on good divisions and propositions; that is, on good planning of thought. Cultivate the faculty of strong, compact, finished planning. Study critically the plans of your own discourses. Rewrite your best sermons rather than your poorest, if, by so doing, you can improve the substance, or the forms, or the order of their outline. A skeleton is not a thing of beauty; but it is the thing which, more than any other, makes a body erect and strong and swift. John Quincy Adams says that "divisions belong to the art of thinking." They are fundamental, then, to the art of uttering thought. To the same purpose is the old Roman proverb, ***Qui bene distinguit, bene docet.***

LECTURE XXX.

THE DEVELOPMENT: DEFINITION, PREREQUISITES, CHARACTERISTICS.

WE have now considered, with one exception, all those parts of a sermon which properly belong to its frame-work. The theme next in order is that which has been denominated the development.

I. In the criticism of a sermon the term "development" may be used to designate one or more of the following things: the entire sermon as related to the text the proposition and divisions of a sermon as related to the subject, or the divisions alone as related to the proposition. It is, yet again, restricted more narrowly to the amplification of each separate division of the discourse, and of all of them collectively. The text, the proposition, and the divisions being given, criticism designates the remainder of the sermon as the "development," and applies the term either to a division separately, or to all the divisions collectively. If true to its object, the development is an unfolding of the salient thoughts expressed in the divisions, and no more. In this sense, the work of development is the composition of the sermon as distinct from the planning of it. It is the doing of the thing proposed in the plan. It is the clothing of the skeleton of the sermon with the elements of effective discourse. It is in this

last and most limited sense that I employ the word in discussing the development as one of the constituent parts of a sermon.

The work of developing, as distinct from the planning of a discourse, defines itself in practice beyond the possibility of mistake. You doubtless are sensible of this in your own experience. When you have chosen a text, evolved a proposition, and outlined a plan of a sermon, the bulk of your work is, in the majority of cases, yet to be executed. You are now to amplify, to expand, to unfold, to evolve, to fill up, to enlarge upon, to develop, — whatever you may call it; and the thing is clearly distinct from any other process concerned in the building of a sermon. To many preachers it is a work of much greater difficulty than is involved in any other process. It sets invention at work more severely, and calls into service a greater variety of mental powers, than does any other part of a discourse.

II. Let it be observed, then, that the foundation of a good development is laid in certain things which precede its execution.

1st, Of these prerequisites should be named, the possession of the right quantity and quality of materials. Obviously, if your mind is filled with only anatomical materials, you must fail in the attempt to make them live in a breathing sermon. Moreover, a certain degree of fullness of mind with right material is essential to forcible development. Sparse thoughts invite feeble utterance, even of that which a man has to say. Thoughts must crowd thoughts, that any thing may come out with force. It is the full fountain which bubbles to the surface. We often speak of digested and undigested thought. The figure is apt. A healthy stomach is a coarse symbol, but a true one, of a healthy

mind. Physicians tell us that a certain quantity of food in the digestive organs is necessary to vigorous digestion. Similar to this are certain mental operations. Fullness of mind on a subject of thought is essential to the best utterance of thought. Solid thought is requisite. Powerful utterance must be the outflow of a well-stocked brain.

(1) Yet on this topic of the invention of materials criticism can, in my judgment, say very little that is of practical use. The ancient rhetoricians — the only great ones the world has known — thought otherwise; and it requires some courage to dissent from them in this thing. They elaborated very carefully the hints by which they imagined that a mind in composing, or preparing to compose, could be assisted in gathering its stock of thought. It was believed that the mind might put out certain feelers into any subject, and invent, accordingly, both the divisions and the development of discourse. Possibly the early thinkers of the race found practical help in these artificial aids; but of what use are they now? What modern author or speaker has ever consciously employed them? Certain it is that the literary and professional world has laid them aside. The stock of the world's thought has grown large, and authorship and speech now live upon that. I can explain in no other way the fact that expedients which Aristotle — perhaps the master-mind of the race — could commend are never adopted by the leaders of modern thought.

(2) The oratorical instinct, at least, claims freedom from such artificial helps. All that criticism can do, therefore, for its assistance in the matter of invention, is to direct it to the cultivation of the thinking power In actual composing, a writer must take what comes to

him, with no such elaborate searching in prescribed channels of inquiry. I know nothing of any process of successful composition which has not in it a large infusion of the element which the world calls "chance." As a Christian preacher, I willingly give to it a more sacred name. That preacher is not to be envied who knows nothing in his own experience of a secondary fulfillment of the promise: "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." Yet divine suggestion uses, not ignores, the laws of mind.

(3) When, therefore, a division of discourse presents a blank to your mind which you do not know how to fill, set your mind to thinking upon it. Fix the mind on the thing in hand: check rambling thought: have done with reverie. This is the first and the vital thing. Then group together all that you do know of the matter. Something you know, or you could not state your thought. Use that something as a bait to suggestion. Follow it into its natural surroundings. Write it down, and thus obtain the suggestive aid of the eye. A pen in hand, and an eye on a written thought are marvelous allies to the thinking power. Use in this manner whatever of the common stock of thought on any subject you find in present possession. The stock will grow upon your hands inevitably. The law of your experience will be that to him that hath shall be given.

(4) If, by such self-disciplinary communings, you originate nothing worth saying, resort to suggestive reading for a while. Read any thing which stimulates thinking. You have probably discovered in your libraries, before this time, one or two authors whom you never can read for a half-hour listlessly. They are awakening powers to your power. Your mind always

springs at their bidding. They have become your intellectual auxiliaries and friends. Turn to such volumes, and use them for the stimulus which they furnish. The thing needed is a mental awakening and uplifting which shall bring within your range of vision a broader intellectual scenery. Thus uplifted, the mind obtains inspiration, and, thus inspired, it may go back to the thing in hand, tremulous with inventive ardor. Such a process, or something equivalent to it, you will find to be effective in breaking the dead-lock which is often so discouraging to a young preacher, and which seems to spring from vacancy of mind. There is no such thing as vacancy of mind. The dead-lock ceases the instant that you succeed in putting an end to reverie. One of the remedies of physical lock-jaw is a smart charge from an electric battery. Similar is the remedy for a speechless mind.

If any one finds practical assistance from conducting the thinking process by the categories of the ancient rhetoricians, there can be no objection. But I have yet to see the youthful preacher who does find practical aid in such devices, or the practised writer who ever employs them. With such self-disciplinary use as I have advised of the materials which one finds at spontaneous command on any theme, the oratorical instinct of an educated mind may be safely left to work its own way to the requisite increase of stock. The difficulty is mental inertia, and, when that is removed, mental floundering. Get rid of these, and production follows in orderly and rich abundance, like that of any other work of creation.

2d, But this work of inventing materials suggests another prerequisite of a good development. It is a settlement of the question, What kind of treatment

does the thought in hand require? The question to be asked is, What does this division need in order to bend its development to the aim of the sermon? Is there any thing here to be explained, any thing to be proved, any thing to be intensified by illustration, any thing to be applied by direct hortation? Some one of these elements of all composing must be needed. If more than one are needed, the inquiry is, In what proportion and in what order shall the two or more be intermingled? Consciously or unconsciously, every mind in the act of successful composition does propose to itself, and does answer, these inquiries. They are the nearest approach which modern authorship makes to the use of the Aristotelian categories.

On the other hand, the incongruous character of many discourses is due mainly to inattention to such inquiries. If you prove when you ought to illustrate, or illustrate when you ought to prove, or do either or both when you ought to explain, or prove, illustrate, and explain when you ought to exhort, or exhort when you ought to do any thing else rather than that, you inevitably flounder into an incongruous and inefficient development. No amount or intrinsic excellence of materials can atone for the loss of the fundamental virtue of speaking to the point.

It becomes, then, an inquiry of vital moment to a good development, How shall a preacher judge when to explain, when to prove, when to illustrate, when to exhort, and when and how to intermingle these processes? Beyond a few simple hints, the oratorical instinct must be left to act at its own discretion. Criticism can only make the following suggestions.

(1) Judge, in part, by the genius of the subject. On the very face of it a subject may demand one

method of treatment, and as decisively repel another. Some themes must be treated, if presented at all to a popular audience, by illustration mainly. Others must be treated argumentatively. To the one class, argument would be frigid; to the other class, an imperative necessity. For example; consider for a moment the two subjects, "The Love of Christ," and "The Extent of the Atonement." Suppose that you develop the first of these argumentatively, and the second historically. You prove that Christ loved man, and you describe pictorially the range of the Atonement. It is not difficult to see, that, in each of these cases, the genius of the subject enters a protest. The two themes need to change places. You have proved where you should have painted, and painted where you should have reasoned. Your sky is green, and your grass, blue.

(2) Judge of the method of treatment, in part, by the character of the audience. An illiterate audience may require an explanatory sermon on a topic of which a cultured audience may demand proof, and an audience of children a pictorial discussion. Many hortatory sermons have been preached in college chapels, but never one as a *concio ad clerum* in the week of commencement. The character of the audience obviously determines to common sense the rhetorical development of many discourses. The oratorical instinct must be woefully warped or indolent, if it fails to respond, in many instances, to the necessities of the case in hand, without any other hint than this given by the character of the audience. Rarely will it be so distorted as in the case of one preacher in the chapel of this seminary, who developed one division of his sermon in the form of an exhortation to aged sinners, at a time when the only gray-haired man in the house was a saint of sixty years' growth.

(3) Judge of the method of treatment, in part, by the demands of the occasion. The key to the problem is sometimes found in the occasion; not in the subject, not in the hearers. Is the occasion exceptional? Is it a funeral, a Thanksgiving, a Fast Day, a Christmas, a New-Year's Day? Is there a peculiar state of things among the people? Are they in a religious revival? Are they on the eve of one? Are they in the wake of one? Are they in a religious decline? In the midst of a powerful religious excitement, it is surprising what an amount of hortation an audience will bear with quick response of conscience, when the half of it at any other time would stupefy them. On the other hand, when the wave of revival has receded, the effect is painful, if the pulpit struggles to perpetuate the quantity and quality of hortatory discussion which the revival created a demand for, but which now falls on satiated ears. Such untimely exhortation is like hammering iron when its red-heat is gone.

(4) Judge of rhetorical development, in part, by the recent proportions of your preaching, in respect to its rhetorical character. If argumentative discourse has largely preponderated in your pulpit for a while, that may be a sufficient reason for a change. Follow such an argumentative period with illustrative sermons. The need of such may properly have a retrospective bearing, and may direct your choice of subjects. Change the diet, and you may promote the more robust health. Other things being equal, the most versatile pulpit is the most effective. Few things which need so much study receive so little as the adjustment of proportions in the pulpit.

(5) Judge of the rhetorical treatment, in part, by personal tastes, information, and moods. I group these

three things together as expressive of a preacher's individuality respecting the point before us. This criterion is more frequently abused than normally used. But abuse is no argument against many use. You may sometimes be wise in treating a subject in that method in which you will probably succeed most happily. This will sometimes be that into which your own tastes enable you to enter most enthusiastically. It may now and then be that which your present information will enable you to execute most intelligently. It may occasionally be that in which a present mood of feeling may enable you to compose most rapidly, and therefore most intensely. Within certain guarded limits, a preacher's individuality has a claim to authority. In this, as in other things, a man's best work is happy work. It is whole-souled work. It is work to which the mind springs expectantly, even jubilantly. God never meant that any man should work wretchedly. Dejection is never a divine teaching. God has never designed that a man's work should be against the grain of his intellectual make. This is pre-eminently true of the work of the pulpit. The most effective preachers are elastic and joyous men. Eternal decrees written in a preacher's mental constitution lie back of the best of sermons.

These suggestions comprise the substance of all that criticism can wisely say to the oratorical instinct respecting the choice of rhetorical method in the development of discourses. Beyond these, criticism knows nothing, and needs to know nothing. Mother-wit does all the rest. To that instinct thus disciplined there are no impracticable subjects, unless they are dead subjects. Good sermons can thus be made on any subjects which have living roots in Christian thought.

3d, The third of those prerequisites to a good development, which lie back of its execution, is a certain mental dexterity which comes from practice only. In every art there is a knack which is never a gift. It is the fruit of an apprenticeship. I stand in awe of a carpenter, a tailor, a machinist, a locksmith, a sailor, who are well to do at their trades. They manipulate their work with such marvelous adroitness, that to me it is miracle. They are all experts from another world than mine. Their arms, fingers, legs, feet, eyes seem inspired. Their very shoulders have motions of use which I can no more imitate than I can the swoop of an eagle. They put soul into dead matter. A carpet-loom, the work of somebody's genius, has iron fingers more sensitive than mine. Its dumb lips pronounce verdict upon a defective thread which my eyes can not see, even when it stops to give time for a search. They who do these things ask me what they can do for me, and I can only mumble, "What shall be done?" They are the wise men, and I am the fool. Yet not a man of them was born inspired. Not one escaped the drudgery of an apprenticeship, long and hard, and inflexible as fate.

The same principle holds good in literary working. How to do it never comes from knowing only what to do. It comes, in part, from doing. It comes from failures, awkwardness, blunders, despairs, infinitesimal beginnings of success, happy hits which are never repeated, and the slow growth of faculties which a man can never outrun in composing. They hold him back to give them time to grow. A good development of a thought is never achieved without this knack of doing the right thing. Moreover, this knack of doing is always a specialty. We must drill for the specific

thing we have to do. We can never succeed by apprenticeship to the universe in general. An author does not get the knack of oral discourse from the making of books. A critic does not get the knack of preaching from the criticism of sermons. Journalists say that it is no matter what a man can do in the making of books, sermons, speeches: he can not write well for the newspapers, till he has served his time at it. They are right. A man can do nothing well till he has "served his time at it."

This need of mental dexterity in good preaching I notice, not because criticism can do much to promote it, but because the fact of its existence, and the laws of its growth, are a great encouragement to young preachers. It should teach you not to waste yourselves in fruitless despair, or fears of failure. Of course you will fail. Make up your minds to failure. Expect to waste a great many sermons. Expect to see some of your best sermons slipping out of your hands, and taking to themselves wings of flame. But be assured that every such discovery of failure is a germ of success. You are uplifted by so much height as you consciously stand above your yesterday's work. You have only to lay out on a present effort the best of your present power, and that very effort begets power. Thus your mind grows with perpetual increments of the knack of doing.

III. Passing, now, from these fundamental prerequisites of a good development, which lie back of its execution, let us observe, in the third place, the chief characteristics of a good development.

1st, Of these the first is unity. A division amplified is a discourse in miniature. Its singleness is essential to secure speaking to the point.

(1) Unity is specially sacrificed by an unconscious discussion of different things with one heading. This may arise from the confounding of similar ideas. A division is upon the Christian grace of patience; but the train of thought branches off into remarks upon fortitude, resignation, fidelity. The resemblance of these passive graces misleads; and a development which begins with one thing ends with another. This indiscriminate composing is the cause of a vast amount of remark in sermons upon religion in general. Every religious thought has some sort of affiliation with every other religious thought. Weak thinking has always a gravitation downward from the species to the genus It is deceived by a resemblance into the utterance of platitudes.

Another form of the same defect is a confusion arising from resemblance or sameness of words. Two words resembling each other may form an arch, over which the development passes from the thing in hand to the thing in the other hand. Have you not listened to sermons in which the guilt of selfishness was condemned in a strain of remark which involved the condemnation of all forms of self-love? Few theological blunders are fraught with so much mischief in the delusion of conscience as is the one involved in that confusion of terms. The sameness of a word in different senses is more frequently still the switch which sends the train upon a false track. Some preachers of long experience, probably have never preached a self-consistent sermon on faith, because the word is susceptible of such a variety of meanings.

Another way in which unity of development may be unconsciously sacrificed is by the confusion of thought springing from the indefiniteness of figurative language.

When figurative language droops its wings, and becomes literal, the truth which it expressed in the air may become a falsehood on the ground. Yet a preacher not sharp in watching the change may affirm both in one paragraph. A vast amount of turbid discussion about our "guilty nature" has had its origin in this unconscious transition from figure to letter, and from letter to figure. The figure is made to drop its poetic sense; and in the same breath a sermon discusses interchangeably constitutional depravity and willful sin. In the discussion of central doctrines of our faith, this unconscious passing from the figure to the letter makes sad havoc with theological consistency.

One other form of this defect arises from pressing to an extreme the suggestions of analogy. One of the most difficult things to conduct well in discourse is the use of analogies. The difficulty is owing chiefly to the double use which may be made of them. Analogy may prove a thing; but, again, it may only illustrate a thing. The difficulty, therefore, if the aim is argument, is to stop where proof ends, and not to pursue the analogy into remote bearings in which it becomes illustration only. I once heard the boy's game of marbles adduced as logical evidence of the earth-born origin of man. "See," said the wise man, "no sooner does the snow melt in the spring, and uncover the soil, than down goes human nature on all-fours to greet and grovel on mother-earth." Whatever else this was, argument it was not. Yet much of that which goes by the name of analogous reasoning suffers from thus pursuing analogy beyond the province of logic into the domain of fancy, without consciousness of the transition.

LECTURE XXXI.

THE DEVELOPMENT: CHARACTERISTICS.

(2) THE unity of a good development requires further consideration by observing a second class of errors by which it is sacrificed. These consist of intentional digressions. Every thing is intentional digression in which a speaker consciously dallies with the thing in hand. This error may take the form of discourse without construction. This is the ideal of a certain class of preachers. Religious talk, without connection, and without aim other than the general one of "pious remark," may be capped with a text, and dignified with a subject, when neither is more than a figure-head. Such a sermon is all digression. That is, it has no center of converging thought: its desultory materials have only the centrifugal power.

Again: digression may take the form of talking against time. A speaker in the United States Senate once spoke twenty-four hours continuously in order to compel the close of the session before a certain vote should be taken. It was said, that, in that time, he rambled over every political topic within the knowledge of man. Unity of impression requires intensity of aim; and an intense aim shuts out every thing but necessities. The arrow which strikes the mark goes straight and quick. The bullet which kills pauses for nothing

between. Much desultory remark in sermons springs from transient relaxation of mental intensity in composing. For the moment, the preacher speaks to fill time; and he knows that he does so. Necessary material does not crowd for utterance, and he consciously fills in with commonplaces. Commonplace is always the fruit of indifferent or of jaded thinking.

Again: digression may take the form of excessive illustration. The difficulties of composition must have already disclosed to you the temptation which a preacher experiences to illustrate for other purposes than to meet the necessities of the thing in hand. We are tempted to illustrate for the sake of the illustration, its beauty, its novelty, its eccentricity. We are tempted to illustrate for the sake of rhetorical display, display of ingenuity, of learning, of originality. We are tempted to illustrate for the entertainment of an audience. We are tempted to fill in with anecdote for the sake of the story, not because the thing in hand demands the anecdote. You all know a certain popular lecturer, whose passion for anecdote is so great as to have degenerated into what De Quincey calls "anecdotage." Illustrative stories have so multiplied in number, that now the larger portion of the time spent in listening to him is devoted to laughter at his jocular coruscations. His hearers find that their digestion improves more than their culture. All these forms of illustrative digression are claptrap. That they can be linked logically to the subject does not save them from the charge. Every thing conceivable can be linked logically to every other thing by some sort of underground connections. Such illustrations do not advance the subject. They do not carry it: it carries them.

Further: digression may take the form of a deliberate

change of theme. In such a case the unity of the discussion, and all other qualities of intense discourse are sacrificed to the single purpose of pricking the ears of an audience. Rowland Hill used to practice and defend this as a legitimate expedient in the pulpit. He claimed the right to introduce any number of doctrines into a sermon, if he found the variety necessary to sustain the flagging interest of the hearers. With a delicacy of taste equaled only by the severity of his logic, he himself compared his homiletic policy to the process of milking cows. Said he, "The gospel is an excellent milch cow, which always gives plenty of milk, and of the best quality. I first pull at justification; then I give a plug at adoption, and afterwards a tit at sanctification; and so on, till I have filled my pail with gospel milk." "Gospel milk," indeed! We are told that the gospel is to be preached to babes; but are calves specified? The bovine theory of preaching is not Pauline.

2d, The second characteristic of a good development is pertinency. The Rev. William Jay relates that he once delivered a speech before the Bible Society in Bath, and, soon after, a committee of the society waited upon him to ask for the publication "of so much of the speech as related to the subject in hand."

The following points may be noted as things which will illustrate themselves in your practice.

(1) Strict unity will commonly secure pertinency of development. If discourse holds to one thing, it will probably be *the* one thing which the division proposes. Rarely will an educated preacher state one thing, and then at the very start discuss another thing. The arrow when on the string is usually aimed right. Guard unity by intense composing, and pertinency will probably follow.

(2) Irrelevancy of material often concerns only its location. Remarks are often relevant to a different division from that under which they occur. Not the choice of material, but its locality, is in fault. It is relevant to the subject, but belongs there, not here

(3) Irrelevancy of material is often limited to isolated remarks. It seldom covers whole pages consecutively. It blotches them over with single remarks in which the preacher has written with momentary languor; and the progress of thought is impeded accordingly. Is it necessary to correct such isolated examples of irrelevant remark? What harm do they do? I answer, They are to discourse what excessive friction is to machinery. Intense discourse does not tolerate these fragmentary impertinences, and intense impression is always impaired by them.

(4) The habit of precise and intense thinking will tend to adjust the details of a development as rigidly as it plans the outline of a sermon. Why should it not do so? Every sentence of a sermon is a subdivision of something. The same law of close thinking should govern the species as the genus. Yet just here occurs the collapse in the power of many sermons. Good plans are feebly executed. Many minds, as I have before remarked, think vigorously in outlines, but languidly in details. They become enervated when they pass from the work of the scholar to the work of the orator. Any one of us could have constructed what Milton calls "The Argument" of the "Paradise Lost;" but only Milton could produce the poem. Similar is the difference of which we are often sensible in passing from scholarship to oratory, from logic to rhetoric, from reasoning to persuasion.

What is the obvious remedy? Simply that sturdy

thinking should hold its own to the end. One reason that the Puritan preaching of the seventeenth century was so vivacious, in spite of its prolixity, was that its thinking was so vigorous. It could suspend argument to interweave illustration, anecdote, biography, history, any thing which would illumine the train of thought, without a break in that train, and without the creation of any sense of irrelevance. This was done with such unconscious adroitness, that the sense of consecutiveness was seldom lost. In no other way than by this intensity of thinking power could the prolix sermons of the Puritan divines have commanded the hearing they received from popular multitudes.

(5) Rhetorical pertinence often requires that a development shall receive a more vigorous treatment than is demanded by the mere connections of logic. Logical sequence may be indirect and yet unbroken. Rhetorical force may be so diluted by indirectness as to evaporate in commonplaces. Logic deals with the intellect pure and simple; rhetoric deals chiefly with the sensibilities. Intellect may thread the mazes of a languid development, provided that logic be kept unbroken; the sensibilities can not always do that. They do not readily obey threadlike and tortuous lines of connection. They require obvious continuity. They often demand close proximity to the object of their excitement. They are roused by boldness of representation. They are stimulated by high coloring. They sometimes need contrasts of coloring, in which the mind passes back and forth with unconscious speed. To preserve absolute pertinence of material in such a process is a far more difficult achievement than to forge the links of an argument. It requires more narrow thinking power.

3d, A third characteristic of a good development is completeness. The development is to the division in hand what the divisions collectively are to the proposition. The one should exhaust the other.

(1) Completeness of development, then, may be obviously sacrificed by the omission of a necessary link in the argument.

(2) It may also be sacrificed by an inadequate statement of the strong point in an argument. A development should not claim less than it really proves. A preacher who had Daniel Webster for a hearer once preached on the evidences of Christianity. One division of the discourse was devoted to the testimony of the sacred writers themselves. This was amplified so forcibly, that Mr. Webster saw the reach of it beyond the claim of the preacher. The preacher rested his case on this alternative: "Either Christianity is true, or the sacred writers were deluded men." — "No," said Mr. Webster, "the alternative is stronger than that, — either Christianity is true, or the Apostles were knaves. Their testimony is credible, or it is downright fraud." If candor forbids a preacher to claim more than he proves, fidelity forbids him to claim less.

(3) Completeness of development is impaired by a want of clearness of connection. Certain passages in every prolonged discourse have no other purpose than to make connections. Certain sentences, paragraphs, pages are to a discourse as a whole what certain words in every vocabulary are to the rest: they are simply connectives. By themselves they are forceless; yet without them discourse would be impossible. Without them, men could commune with each other only in ejaculations. They are joints, which make discourse continuous and flexible. These transitional passages

are often carelessly constructed; and the result is a sense of inconsequence in the progress of thought.

(4) Completeness of development is further sacrificed by a want of forcible presentation. Materials may be unified, pertinent, connected, and yet may fail for the want of vividness. Generally the defect is the want of illustration. Pure argument seldom does itself justice before the popular mind. The same is true of purely didactic explanation. No man can discourse orally upon pure mathematics. The illustrative element in popular discourse is necessary to completeness, because it is necessary to forcible impression. Frequently the only change which criticism can suggest in a development which fails of its object is not in the stock of it, nor in its frame-work, but in its temperature. It is constructed of good material, and is well jointed; but it wants glow. It needs to be recomposed to gain intensity. The excellences which it has will not come forth palpably to the popular eye without red heat.

(5) This suggests that completeness of development is often sacrificed by excessive qualifications of truth. Qualifications should never be the equivalents of retractions. The father of Samuel J. Mills was the pastor of a Congregational Church in Connecticut. He was a man of very positive opinions, which he never hesitated to proclaim. He once delivered a sermon on the text, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." At the close he uttered a fervent appeal to parents, exhorting them to fidelity in obedience to the text; and ended by saying, "After all, brethren, character depends very much on the blood." Such qualifications are practical contradictions: they expose secret convictions, which seem to be more honest than those which have been

avowed. A preacher has no right to have secret convictions on any thing which he professes to preach. Qualifications ought not to contain the most vivacious materials of a discourse. If they do, they will be remembered when the statements which they qualify are forgotten.

4th, A fourth characteristic of a good development is conciseness. The chief distinction of the eloquence of Demosthenes was its velocity of rhetorical movement. One critic says that he spoke "like a passionate man tormented by the truth." Such a man can not help speaking with quick advances. What he has to say he says, and has done with it. Thought, structure, style are all condensed. The chinks and crevices of discourse are packed full. The effect in utterance is a combination of weight and speed, and that combination is always power: it is like the power of a cannon-ball. We need much of this kind of discourse in the pulpit. The subjects of the pulpit invite it. The moral exigencies which have created the pulpit demand it. Those preachers whose sympathy with the work of the pulpit is the most profound practice it spontaneously.

(1) Yet it should be remarked that conciseness in preaching must be subordinated to completeness of discussion. Conciseness is a relative excellence: it must be adjusted to subject and to audience. Some themes in the pulpit, discussed before some audiences, will not bear extreme compactness: they need amplitude. Oral discourse in its very nature requires a certain bulk of expression. Proof, often, will not be taken in, if expressed in naked syllogism. Explanation may not be understood if given with mathematical brevity. Illustration is often needed, as much to gain time for the thinking power of a hearer to rally around a thought,

as for the direct purpose of making it luminous. A laconic development is fit only for self-evident truths.

Some of President Finney's discourses are defective in this respect. His twenty or thirty divisions, barely stated, with but one or two sentences exhaustive of each, sound like an inventory. Four or five divisions expanded to such length as to be rounded and full would be more effective, because more natural to the procedure of oratory. Milton speaks of the "close palm" of logic and of the "open palm" of rhetoric. The open palm is the symbol of homiletic development.

(2) Conciseness of development is promoted by cultivation of the condensing power. A condensed style *is* concise development. But I mean more than this. Every expedient which reduces circumlocutory expression promotes the power and the habit of condensed thinking. A taste for short words, for Saxon words, for unqualified substantives, for crisp sentences, helps the thinking power to work in close quarters. A writer who acquires a fondness for speaking brevities learns to think in brevities. Happy is the man whose habit it is to think laconically. There are few things in which the re-action of style on thought and on the thinking force is so obvious as in the growth of this condensing power.

(3) Conciseness of development depends chiefly on a wise retrenchment of materials. The work is mainly negative. Eliminate superfluous thoughts, say only necessary things, depend on selection, not on conglomeration of materials, and conciseness is inevitable. For example, avoid needless explanations. We observed the necessity of this in expository discourse. It is equally needful in all explanatory development. Assume all that can safely be assumed of the intelli-

gence of the hearer. On the same principle, avoid proof of things which can safely be assumed. A wise preacher studies when to argue, and when to dictate. Do not try to prove that men are sinners, that time is short, that death is certain, that eternity is important, that truth is right. The most stupendous truths, and sometimes the most bitterly contested, must generally be assumed in preaching. The being of God, the necessity of revelation, the authority of conscience, the truth of the Scriptures, the facts of heaven and of hell must commonly be proclaimed by assumption.

So of the countless minor threads of thought which make up the woof of sermons: speak by authority when there is no need of argument: assume as much as possible of existing belief in the hearer's mind. Avoid preaching to absent opponents. Some preachers are always in war-paint; all subjects open to them controversially. They find it difficult to develop a subject pacifically. A vast amount of needless expansion in sermons would be saved, if preachers would on some subjects instruct and illustrate more, and argue and contend less. For the same reason, avoid giving to infidelity an undue eminence in the labors of the pulpit. Specially if a preacher has been himself a skeptic, is he apt to exhibit an excessive sympathy with skeptics in his preaching by incessantly preaching to them or at them. A wise retrenchment of such materials would throw out from many sermons remarks which are relevant only to an absent audience.

Note here a brief *excursus* on the true relation of preaching to skeptics. The preaching of the Rev. Albert Barnes betrayed to the last his own early experience of infidelity. It was the chief defect in his otherwise masterly pulpit. Argument needed by infi-

dels only was poured out in profusion, often when, probably, not a hearer was present who could be directly benefited by it. It was done in a masterly way; the only difficulty was that it was addressed to an assembly of believers. It may be generally assumed that the hearers of the gospel are at least nominal Christians. As a rule, skeptics and infidels are not frequenters of churches. The abandonment of the house of God generally precedes the development of skepticism.

Moreover, skeptics are not so numerous in any Christian country as they are often imagined to be. Minorities have the gift of speech inordinately developed: they are very apt to vociferate, and are often estimated by the noise they make. Did you ever sit in the twilight in the autumn, when three or four crickets were serenading each other? They made the whole house ring: one would think that they were a thousand strong. So we exaggerate the numbers and the strength of infidelity, so far as the masses of the people are concerned. They are not unbelievers on any large scale, and never have been. Indifferentism is not infidelity. Skepticism is never popular: it is aristocratic, rather. We over-estimate it, if we judge it by the airs it puts on. Therefore be wary in preaching against infidelity. Do it thoroughly when it must be done, but do it rarely. Do not be for ever firing with a telescopic rifle at a foe invisible to the naked eye. Didactic preaching of the truth is a much more direct and brief process than the pursuit and overthrow of error. Very much of useless expansion in sermons would be avoided, if we should preach to believers more, and to unbelievers less.

For similar reasons, avoid illustration beyond the

necessities of the case. The common stock of thought in sermons contains much which needs no illustration, more which needs but momentary illustration, and but little which needs illustration piled on illustration. The true medium is variable: it varies with subject; it varies with audience. Even when excess of illustration does not amount to intentional digression, it may sacrifice that compact union of weight and bulk which is requisite to swift movement and effective stroke.

On the same principle, avoid useless repetitions. Some repetitions popular discourse must have. The one thought repeated with variations is the staple of many sermons. Dr. Chalmers's discourses are largely of this kind. They are revolving-lights. Admitting the necessity of such productions, we must offset it by a stringent check upon excess in the use of them. Repeat, if necessary for emphasis. Practice variations on one thought, if necessary to gain time for growth of interest; but, as soon as your point is gained, drop it, and pass on. By thus retrenching superfluous materials, and materials of secondary worth, depending on selection rather than on volume, and saying only necessary things, conciseness of development is achieved as a matter of course. A sermon then becomes massive and solid.

5th, A fifth characteristic of a good development is order. Dean Swift said that style is "the right words in the right places." A good development might be defined to be "the right thoughts in the right places." A reason always exists for the location of a thought: in other words, there is always a natural order of thought. The oratorical instinct goes far to determine this; but it may be assisted, and at the same time obeyed, by attention to four very simple things.

(1) Finish one thing at a time. Say connectedly all that is to be said on a given thought. Concentrate discourse long enough to carry the point; and, once carried, let it alone.

(2) Aim deliberately at continuity of thought. This is a matter of conscious design. Every thought in a good discourse is a link in a chain. Every thought looks before and behind. It is naturally preceded and naturally followed. To see this natural continuity, and to execute it, must be the voluntary aim of a speaker. Disorderly speech is, very largely, unthinking speech.

(3) Avoid capricious lines of association. It is the infirmity of an undisciplined mind that it brings together the oddest and most dissimilar materials. It works in tangents, and has no orbit. The instinct of logic, which is in every mind, is constantly overruled by hysteric impulses which begin with no aim, and end nowhere. It is the prerogative of mental discipline to keep down such anarchic thinking, and to follow lines of association which are laws, and not caprices.

(4) Aim at increase of intensity in the progress of the development. Every vigorous composition has more or less of climax in the arrangement of its materials. Its materials intrinsically are such as to be susceptible of climax. They have gradation in their power of interest either to the intellect, or to the sensibilities, or to both. There is a much and a more and a most in their resources of impression. The oratorical instinct, if unsophisticated, will follow the order of comparison. It is assisted, therefore, if a preacher asks and answers for himself the question, "What is the order of increase in point of intensity?" Follow that order, and you always have the natural arrangement, even to the location of a word.

6th, The sixth characteristic of a good development, and the last which I shall name, is proportion.

(1) The development of each division as a whole should be proportioned to that of every other division. In this respect, proportion should be governed by weight. Give the largest bulk to the weightiest thought. That which is most essential to the aim of the discourse is the weightiest: necessities take precedence of luxuries. Search out, therefore, the organic elements of the discourse, and see to it that they have ample room in which to expand. The heaviest arguments, the critical explanations, the most necessary and speaking illustrations, the most intense materials of persuasion, — give space to these, and so proportion the divisions which contain them, that they shall not be cramped. This is only saying, "Give the largest place to the best things.

(2) To do this, it is essential to begin with reserved force. Never expand a first division thriftlessly. Many sermons are spoiled by the undue bulk of their first divisions. Because a division is the first (and perhaps with a lurking fear of dearth of stock) the preacher inflates it beyond its relative worth; and all that which comes after suffers from over-crowding. Military men say that an army behaves through the battle as it is handled at first. So it is with the forces of speech. Begin warily. Hold strength in reserve; look to the end; and measure resources and time. Then concentrate at the vital points. Never fear poverty of thought. The best things will suggest thought when you come to them in the emergency of discussion. Never amplify, therefore, at great length, merely because amplification just then and there is easy. Reserve the most robust handling for the exigent materials.

(3) The development of each division by itself should be proportioned in all its parts. On a miniature scale, a single division is a discourse. It is a structure which has its beginning and middle and end, as an entire sermon has. A principle should not be so expanded as to cramp its application. An argument should not be so amplified as to crowd into a nutshell the thing which it proves. An illustration should not be so dilated as to narrow to a point the thing illustrated. Explanatory remarks should not be so extended as to impoverish the use to be made of them. Here, as before, begin warily. Handle the materials with reserve of force; look to the end; discover the focal point of exigency; and shape every thing so as to converge and concentrate at that point. Oratorical instinct will do all this, if you keep it clear of the encumbrance of languid thinking and heedless habits of composing. Perfect discourse is mother-wit well trained, well instructed, and well used.

LECTURE XXXII.

THE CONCLUSION: DEFINITION, CAUSES OF WEAKNESS.

I. In what respect is the conclusion of a sermon distinct from the other parts of it? This inquiry is answered, in part, by the titles given to the conclusion in the nomenclature of the pulpit. In the practice of the older preachers we find it under the title of "uses" of the subject of discourse. President Edwards and many others commonly call the conclusion the "application" of the subject, and of its discussion. Dr. Emmons and often Dr. Finney term this part of a discourse the "improvement" of the subject. Dr. Dwight almost invariably designates it by the word "remarks," yet rarely by the term "inferences." Others adopt the less specific title of "reflections;" and some propose to conclude a sermon with "observations." This diversity of nomenclature is no evidence of indefiniteness in the conception of the thing. A single element distinguishes every variety of conclusion technically so called.

1st, The characteristic idea of the conclusion is *application* of the subject to results in advance of its discussion. President Edwards has the most exact and comprehensive title for it. The theory of the conclusion presupposes a theme discussed, which is now to be applied to something. It is to be used for a further

purpose. It is to be improved as an advantage gained for a sequel. It is to be reviewed, for the sake of practical remarks, observations, reflections. It is a premise from which inferences are to be drawn. The intense practicalness of a sermon is hinted in the characteristic idea of its ending. That is not a sermon which is intellectual discussion pure and simple.

2d, It should be observed, however, that this practical application of a subject, which we term the "conclusion," is not necessarily made to the will of the hearer. It may be an application of truth to any other faculty of the mind. For example, a truth discussed may be used to explain another truth: the fact of an Atonement established discloses the nature of sin. A truth discussed may be used, also, to intensify another truth: the fact of an Atonement established illustrates the love of God. Again: a truth discussed may be used to prove another truth: from the doctrine of human depravity, that of future retribution is an inference. Once more: a truth proved, illustrated, or explained may be further used as a force of direct hortation. Here, only, in all these varieties of application, is the will of the hearer directly approached. On the basis of any important truth of our religion, you may legitimately build a direct appeal.

A conclusion, then, may involve any or all of the radical processes of composition. It may explain, illustrate, prove, persuade, or all combined and intertwined. It may be the most complicated process in the whole structure of a sermon. It is susceptible of the most varied and ingenious methods of procedure. The culmination of a preacher's power may often be seen in these few closing paragraphs. Your utmost force of character as a man may use here, unconsciously to you,

your utmost skill as an orator and the richest treasures of your scholarship. The ancient orators proved themselves masters of many of the very same resources which the pulpit needs, when they put the supreme strain of their personal force into the outpouring of their perorations.

3d, Again: we must observe that a conclusion, as distinct from other parts of a discourse, is not necessarily restricted to the chronological termination. We must tolerate the paradox: the conclusion may be other than the *finis* of a sermon. Its characteristic idea is not the chronological ending, but the rhetorical end. It is the result which the sermon is made for. Its characteristic idea, of application, permits its distribution throughout the body of a sermon, in place of its concentration at the close.

4th, This applicatory portion of a sermon, wherever it occurs, is strikingly indicative of the intensity of preaching. Preaching is always for an object, always aimed at a practical result, never for dalliance with entertaining materials. No other part of a sermon therefore defines itself more positively. No matter if it be scattered in fragments through a discourse, those fragments all point one way: they are all directed by one aim. One query tests them all, Are they applicatory of the theme in hand, to something in advance of that? If not, they have no place where they stand: if they are, they are unlike all other materials in the sermon, and are identical in rhetorical character with each other.

As thus defined, the conclusion is obviously of prime importance in a sermon. Theoretically, it should seem, no part of a sermon can excel it. It may appear superfluous to argue this; yet the history of the pulpit gives great significance to the inquiry to which we now proceed.

II. What are the most disastrous drawbacks to the applicatory power in preaching?

1st, You anticipate me in naming, as the most obvious yet the most effective of these, the want of spiritual consecration in the preacher.

(1) Here the fact is fundamental, that, when we demand of a preacher that he be an eminently holy man, we only affirm in religious dialect one of the first principles of oratorical science. Eloquence in all its forms is built on, or more significantly is built *in*, intense character in the man. This is as fundamental to secular as to sacred eloquence. No man can be eloquent in any thing, who has not, *quoad hoc*, an intense working of his own character. His personal intelligence, his personal faith, his personal consciousness of an object, the utmost strain of his will-power are the vitalizing forces. Not adroitness in command of language, not zeal in the form of paroxysm, but the character of the man, in an intense unity of purpose, is the soul of speech in those lofty forms of it which we dignify as oratory. Therefore, in a teacher of religion, the force of speech is weakened by any thing which debilitates religious character, or suspends its working to the purpose in hand. A type of religious experience which deadens a preacher's personal faith in the truth he preaches may create a paralysis equivalent to that of downright unbelief. Theatrical working has even less force in the pulpit than in secular address.

(2) Hence we find, as we might reasonably expect to find, that, in the experience of the pulpit, the most vital changes for good have been spiritual changes in the men who have administered its utterances. "Restore unto *me* the joy of thy salvation; . . . and sinners shall be converted." The penitent Psalmist

here declares the law of all eminent success in the preaching of the gospel. An uplifting from a lower to a higher plane of religious life is sure to declare itself in a reduplication of power. The vital power in the preacher is the vitalizing power to the hearer. This is one of the most invariable of the discovered laws in the working of the Holy Ghost.

Yet in the pressure and ferment of ministerial duty, involving as it does the interplay of complicated motives, a sore temptation is encountered to be forgetful of this principle, and to work with the full machinery of intellectual industry in motion, with little or no care for spiritual conditions. Preaching is, intellectually, a work of great severity. Taking its continuity into account, no other professional labor, year in and year out, equals it. It is a marvelous absorbent of the mental forces. Said Dr. James Alexander on a certain occasion, "The last sermon I wrote is the least evangelical I ever wrote. Yet this did not once enter into my head till I had finished." The intellectual force of the preacher had so overpowered the spiritual force of the man, that he could compose a sermon of feeble evangelical spirit without knowing it.

Turn, for illustration of this law, to the memoirs of Chalmers, of Robert Hall, of Doddridge, of Norman McLeod. Revolutionary changes in the pulpits of these men were consequent upon religious changes in the men. Those improvements in the men deserve study. They were significant of a first principle in the history of the pulpit. Specially were they no superficial increments of feeling. They were not ebullitions of zeal consequent upon temporary exigencies. They were not meteoric excitements produced by the force of sympathy. They were permanent growths in sanctified

character. For the most part, they developed themselves in retirement. Chalmers encountered the decisive change in his ministry in the stillness of Kilmany. His humble cottagers found it out before he did. The fruit of such elemental changes is godliness in its etymological sense of godlikeness. Serene it may be, like the sensibility of an Infinite Mind. A fire in the soul it is, but a fire without crackling or flame, — the concentrated and still heat of a bed of kindled anthracite.

(3) One sequence of such sanctified growth often is the creation of an adroit instinct of persuasion. Perhaps thinking less, and caring less, than ever before about oratorical art, the man becomes inspired with an unconscious oratorical genius. He becomes a living power in the pulpit, without knowing it. By that which seems an inborn tact, like the swing of the right arm, he finds his way to hearts. He becomes inexhaustibly inventive of means and methods and auxiliaries of success.

(4) Another phenomenon of that preaching which is distinguished by the intensity of its applicatory force is a singular elevation, which imparts to it devotional power. Are there not certain portions of the Scriptures, not devotional in form, which are so in their profoundest impression upon us? We find them to be devotional helps. Their themes are so lofty, their range of thought is so elevated yet so simple, their emotive fervor is so concentrated yet so tranquil, that in the reading the mind rises Godward intuitively. Portions of the Epistles are of this character. Pre-eminently such are the discourses of our Lord. The line which separates them from prayer is scarcely felt by one whose mind is lifted into full sympathy with them. The reader may naturally reverse them, and utter them in devout address to their author.

Why has the Church for ages chanted the Apostles Creed as an act of worship? It was the opinion of Dr. Arnold, that "creeds in public worship should be used as triumphant hymns of thanksgiving." That such things as our creeds affirm are true is the joy of right-minded being throughout the universe. The songs of heaven, of which the Scriptures give us a distant echo, seem to be chiefly affirmations of some of the fundamental doctrines of our faith. The same liturgic strain is discernible in the most godly preaching. Certain sermons, of most intense appeal to human hearers, still read like words of communion with God. Some of Archbishop Leighton's discourses are of this godly cast. Some passages in the sermons of Frederick Robertson are of the same order. This is the most divine ideal of Christian preaching.

(5) In my judgment, some of the marvels recorded of the success of single sermons in the salvation of hearers are due to this exaltation of the work of the preacher into the atmosphere of the Divine Mind. It is God who seems to speak. On the wings of his suggestions, men rise into converse with him. When the Rev. John Livingstone, for instance, was instrumental in the awakening of five hundred hearers by one discourse, I suspect that his preaching was uplifted by the personal godliness of the man into the atmosphere of devotion. He became, for the time, an instrument on which the Spirit of God moved without hindrance.

We are told that "the chariots of God are thousands of angels." Among the mysteries of the divine life, it may be that God does in person move in the persons of his instruments. Their words are first his words; their thoughts his; their persuasions the direct movement of his will: and their work in preaching therefore becomes

his work, and the result of it is his decree. Hence come the miracles of their success. This intensity of personal holiness in the preacher distinguishes the periods of grandest spiritual success in the pulpit. The want of it, specially the opposite to it, is the fatal disease which makes many an able pulpit lifeless.

(6) You are too familiar with these views, to render necessary further enlargement upon them here. Yet, rhetorically considered, this is the root of the whole matter before us. It is no peculiarity of preaching, growing out of the sacredness of the work. It is only a development, in the forms of religious speech, of the fundamental principle of eloquence in all speech. The character is the speech: the man is the speech. That aim at the practical successes of the pulpit which springs from godlikeness of character in the man will often seem to scholarly criticism to be the work, the wisdom, the adroitness, the inspiration of genius, threading its way through the sinuosities of oratorical art. Yet oratorical art is the last thing the man cares for or thinks of.

(7) I have remarked that any thing which deadens a preacher's personal faith in the truths he preaches must tend to create a paralysis of applicatory force equivalent to that which springs from downright unbelief. It deserves to be here noted that this is specially true of the doctrine of retribution. To this doctrine the pulpit sustains a peculiar relation. Not that it is more sharply representative than others of the Christian system: in some respects it is inferior to others in applicatory power. The motive-power derived from it is less profound and less permanent than that derived from the more amiable aspects of our theology. But the peculiarity of the doctrine of retribu-

tion is, that, as related to the ministrations of the pulpit, it stands first in the order of time. As the exponent to a preacher of the state in which the gospel *finds* men, it stands in the forefront of all theology. Other views come to life in a preacher's experience subsequently, which are more far-reaching than this; but this is the alphabet of them all. In their fullness they all depend on this.

I have elsewhere spoken of the quadrilateral of doctrines in Christian theology, each one of which supports the rest; viz., the doctrines of depravity, of atonement, of regeneration, and of retribution. These are the elemental forces in the faith of a preacher. In homiletic use they illustrate, enforce, measure, and intensify each other. The proportions of each define the proportions of the others. The degree of faith which realizes one of them to a preacher's mind will affect his working faith in all the rest. They are all of them elements of an intense theology. Yet, of these four, the doctrine of retribution, indicative as it is of the peril in which the gospel finds men, and being, therefore, the first which naturally realizes itself to the faith of a preacher, will inevitably stand foremost in giving character to his experience of the rest. Lower the tone of his faith in this doctrine, either by secret intellectual doubts, or by moral insensibility, and the rest must sink proportionately. Sooner or later, the whole interior life of the pulpit must be what the preacher's faith is in this one of its elemental forces.

You will find it to be thus in your own homiletic development. The sense of laboring in a great emergency will brood over your pulpit at the very birth of a Christlike experience within you. The gathering and concentration of perils, the ripening of an infinite crisis,

the threatening of an unspeakable woe, the overshadowing of the critical and ultimate exigency of probation, — these are the phases of truth which will first become real to you, and which will measure the intensity of all that comes after in the experience of your mission as a Christian preacher. Let your experience at this point be sterile, and all that follows in the natural order of spiritual growth will be sterile also.

The principle involved in this view explains the fact, and is also strikingly illustrated by the fact, that unbelievers in the doctrine of future punishment are never on any very large scale efficient supporters of Christian missions. Why is this? The reason is simply that they do not believe, as others do, that this is a lost world. Not believing this elementary fact of the situation, they unconsciously lower the whole redemptive work to the level and to the temperature of that negative. On the same principle is it that life dies out of the ministry of an individual who attempts to preach with no heart in his faith in this doctrine, and therefore with no vivid conceptions of his audience as an assembly of lost souls.

(8) This train of thought suggests, further, that the doctrine of retribution, when held as the creed of the head, and not the faith of the heart, tends to create a recoil in the popular mind, proportioned to the intensity of the truth itself. Some truths, by a belief without corresponding sensibility in the believer, are transformed into prodigies of falsehood in the view of sensitive hearers. To the common sense of men, to believe certain dogmas, and not to feel them, is proof incontestable, either that the dogmas themselves are a monstrous delusion, or the believer is a monster in character. Then, inasmuch as the man, in such a case,

is commonly as amiable in his instincts as the average of men, the looker-on takes the other horn of the dilemma, and finds the monster in the dogma.

The faith of the Church is, in its nature, an intense faith. Belief of it tends to create intense character: it evokes intense sensibilities, intense activities, an intense consecration. A cool intellectual acceptance of it, which is only that, is demoniacal. But its believers are not demons. Therefore it is the faith that is wrong; that is a terrific dream. It is a nightmare of ascetic piety, which should command no trust, but abhorrence rather, proportioned to the claims which the falsehood asserts. The more intense it is, the more odious it is, because it is the intensity of a malign creed, which none but a satanic mind could have breathed into life. Such is the instinctive reasoning of men upon such a faith, when it is falsified by the character of the believer. Let that believer be the occupant of the pulpit, and he may create many infidels in the effort to save one. No more fatal catastrophe can overwhelm his ministry than the possession of this creed of the intellect without the faith of the heart.

So overpowering is this drift of the popular logic on the subject, that even the necessary reasonings of good men in defense of their faith are often denounced as malign. It is perilous to put into print the argument for certain doctrines: they need the human voice, eye, tone, gesture, to carry the impression of a faith as distinct from a creed. The frame-work of the doctrine needs to be weighted with the character of the man. For the proof of eternal punishment especially, oral address is superior to the press. Even President Edwards, one of the most saintly of men, is criticised by Matthew Arnold as a man of merciless temperament, because he

has left on record a cool logical defense of the Calvinistic theology. His sermon entitled "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," he could *preach* at Enfield to a crowd of awestruck and broken-hearted listeners; but that sermon in *print* has often been denounced as heartless and malign.

A melancholy illustration of this view, followed by most disastrous consequences, is yet fresh in the ecclesiastical history of New England. In the memoir of the Rev. Dr. Channing, and in certain other memoranda of his life, it is recorded that in his youth he was once taken by his father to hear a celebrated preacher of the orthodox school of theology. The boy was in a state of sensitive religious inquiry. He had naturally an ascetic temperament. In subsequent life he impaired his health by extreme vigils and fasting. On the occasion referred to, he listened in awe to the representation the preacher gave of man's lost state, and his exposure to eternal woe. The only hope held out to him was his helpless dependence on sovereign grace. The sermon seemed to him to throw a pall over the whole world. He left the church in speechless consternation. His soul was panic-struck in dread of what should come next. Who the preacher was, it is not said. He may have been a godly man, who preached in all sincerity the theology of the time. He may have been the Rev. Dr. Hopkins, who was a pastor in Channing's birthplace. But, whoever he was, there was a huge gap between the demonstrative sensibilities of the man, and those of the tender child among his hearers. To the boy the sermon seemed as one of the "rocks and the mountains" that should fall upon a doomed sinner. He waited for his father to speak to him of the ghastly doom before him. They stepped into the carriage, and

rode home in silence. He felt himself to be on the threshold of hell. Presently his father began to whistle, and, on entering the house, he called for his slippers, and sat down to read the newspapers. How natural was the child's notice of the little incidents of the ride and the coming home! Thus he reasoned: "If the fearful tidings I have heard from the eternal world are true, how can a sane man whistle, or think of his slippers, or open a newspaper?" To a child's mind the inference was irresistible: "The fearful dogma is not true. My father does not believe it. Deacon B—— does not believe it. The preacher did not believe it. Nobody believes it, and nobody can." He felt that he had been trifled with. The preacher had tortured his childish ignorance by a theologic bugbear. It may be, that on that memorable afternoon American Unitarianism was born.

I will not pause now to analyze the moral influences there at work; but so much as this is clear, that the youthful hearer of the gospel needed to have such a faith enveloped in the sensibilities of a warm human heart. He needed to receive it from the inmost soul of the preacher, tremulous with desire to save the souls of hearers. He needed to be made to feel that the doctrine of retribution is one which can be held and is held by benignant though awestruck believers. Can you not conceive of a method of bringing that doctrine, and others cognate with it, home to the conscience even of that monastic boy, which should have commanded his trust, and not merely his horror? And, if such had been the fact, who can say that the moral history of thousands might not have been affected benignly by that one sermon to that one child?

We must measure the intense theology of that age,

and the disproportioned development in it of the sterner aspects of our faith, in order to understand Dr Channing's inextinguishable hatred of the Calvinistic theology. As he had received it, it had appeared to bring him and all mankind down to the open gates of hell, and to leave them there. At its bidding he had looked in upon the lake of fire. The only rescue which was made real to his conceptions, and possible to his logic, was to fling the delusion from him as a demoniacal invention. Thus he ever afterwards, in his public ministry, caricatured the orthodox faith. After the experience of his childhood, under the preaching of that age, his intense mind could conceive of it in no other way. The Calvinistic Deity was to him a malign being. Retribution was the anger, the wrath, the fury, the rage of a satanic mind. The Atonement was a device of demoniacal torture. The cross he called the "central scaffold of the universe." We must always expect to find the hostility of profound natures to our faith proportioned to the intrinsic intensity of it, if we permit it to reach them from the pulpit, as a creed of the intellect only, not humanized by the sensibilities of a soul behind it.

(9) Further: it deserves emphatic notice that the spiritual element here claimed as requisite to the preaching of an intense theology can not be successfully imitated. Character in any thing can not be imitated with success in the long run; but nowhere else is a moral counterfeit so sure to be detected as in the pulpit. Even with honest purpose, with desire to save souls, a preacher can not put on the signs of moral earnestness with any reasonable hope that they will beguile the people into subjection to the genuine thing. Not only is it true that God is not mocked, but

the people are not mocked. There is a subtle something which is beyond all art; art can neither imitate it, nor conceal the absence of it.

Science tells us that chemical analysis can reduce a diamond to the same elements as those of charcoal, with such exact similitude, that the difference is less than one fifty-thousandth part of the diamond's weight. Yet never was the chemist born who could create a diamond. So homiletic art may conspire with an honest purpose to do good in imitating the exterior of a godly character in thought, in speech, in action, so exactly, that homiletic criticism can not detect the difference between the original and the copy. Yet the moral instinct of hearers will detect it. Even conscience can not make a godly preacher. The spirit answers only to the spirit. To every thing else souls are dumb.

LECTURE XXXIII.

THE CONCLUSION: CAUSES OF WEAKNESS.

2d, THE spiritual experience considered in the preceding lecture may in some degree exist, and yet the applicatory power of sermons may receive a drawback from a second cause; that is, an inordinate estimate of the intellectual, as distinct from the emotive and the executive effects of preaching. The sermons of Bishop Butler are the best of their kind in English literature. As literary models they are standards. One turns to them, sure of finding in them intellectual stimulus and refreshment. Yet they are deficient in a certain quality to which the French pulpit has given a name, — *onction*. What is unction in preaching? It is thought so clothed in emotion as itself to reproduce emotion.

(1) The English temperament, and, to a less extent, our American temperament are not friendly to this quality. That which in legislative debate corresponds to unction in the pulpit would be met with the derisive "Hear, Hear!" in the House of Commons. Unimpassioned intellect talking to intellects as cool as itself is the English ideal of a parliamentary speaker. Among the most orthodox divines of the English Church, accordingly, one often finds an over-growth of the didactic element, replete with common sense, but shrink

ing from close analytic applications of truth to the conscience in the forms of direct appeal.

(2) Any one who is familiar with the literature of the English pulpit, especially in unpublished form, must have observed the fact, also, that an over-estimate of the intellectual processes in preaching does not by any means necessitate the most profound intellectual products in the construction of sermons. On the contrary it may, and in the English pulpit it often does, result in the most lifeless of dead levels as it respects original thinking. The modern Established pulpit of England, abstracting from it perhaps three men, has scarcely a scintillation of originality.

If one may judge from the tone of criticism indulged by the secular press of England, the educated laymen of the Church no longer look there for the power of their clergy. They no longer look to the pulpit as an authority, as the creator of popular opinion, even in matters of religion. They do not hesitate to contrast, in this respect, the present decline of their pulpit with its splendid history. The effective labor of the Established clergy is now in the pastoral routine of the parish, wherever it is felt as a social power. There, I think, a more perfect ideal may be found of a Christian pastor than has ever been generally realized in this country. It lives yet as an inheritance from a past age, when Jeremy Taylor did not think it beneath him to minister to the cottagers of Golden Grove, numbering, probably, seldom, if ever, one hundred souls. Nowhere in Protestant Christendom has a finer conception of a Christian pastor been realized than that of the old parish priest of England. To this day, we all turn, for refreshment in the despised toils of the pastoral office, to George Herbert's "Country Parson."

In this country the fact is a lamentable one, that, in all denominations, pastoral visitation has declined. In many cases, even the visitation of the sick, which, by the rules of the Church of England, is an indispensable and most sacred portion of the pastoral routine, is very inefficiently conducted. The administration of charity to the poor, a most potent auxiliary to pastoral influence, has almost wholly passed out of clerical hands.

(3) This decline of pastoral duty is exerting a debilitating influence on the spiritual power of our pulpits. Among many of the clergy of the Church of England the ancient pastoral spirit is still rife. I have been told, by those who had the means of information on the subject, that rectors and curates, in large numbers, are still found performing pastoral duty with heroic fidelity in the rural districts and the manufacturing towns of England, and in portions of London where no man respectably clothed, except a clergyman, can go with safety without the protection of the police. But these are men who are never heard, or heard of, in the pulpit, outside of their own parish precincts. Speaking in the general, therefore, it is fair to affirm that the power of the English clergy has passed out of the pulpit with no present prospect of revival there.

(4) Quietism of the intellect sometimes takes a form still more objectionable, because more heartless. It is that tyranny of an effeminate taste in the pulpit, which rejects pungent applications of truth to the consciences of hearers, as being incongruous with the wants and prerogatives of refined society. The fidelity of John Knox to Queen Mary is, in the judgment of such a taste, a rudeness which the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and of this country has inherited in the habit of its ministry in individualizing hearers, and adjusting

applications of truth to character. To such an emasculated criticism the pulpit has ceased to be a power of reproof. Religion has become a sentiment. Revivals are germane only to uncultivated zeal. An athletic theology has become only historic. Modern refinement neither craves it, nor needs it. The doctrine of an eternal retribution, with its cognate themes, is out of place in a pulpit which is to address itself to the tastes of gentlemen.

The spirit of this type of clerical character pervades the atmosphere of culture everywhere in large cities. Minds which are braced against it, for the most part, by the inheritance of a robust theology and a zealous pulpit, may still be beguiled into some degree of sympathy with it; and that sympathy, without approving such a spirit, may still tempt a preacher to evade the discomfort, perhaps the peril, of shocking it by an unexpected directness, and an unfashionable fidelity of appeal or of reproof.

3d, Intimately allied with the foregoing, we find a third cause of dilution of the applicatory force of preaching, in a morbid fear of fanaticism. The religious weaknesses are very few which sap the strength of the pulpit more insidiously yet more fatally than this. It is not easy to decide which is the more disastrous to a preacher's power over the consciences of men, — to be a fanatic, or to preach in servile fear of being one. The following points deserve especial mention.

(1) The perils of the large majority of educated preachers are not in the direction of fanaticism, but in that of a servile fear of fanaticism. Culture itself is a breakwater against fanatical surges. Its danger is that of becoming a barrier to the inflow of rational

enthusiasm. History shows that genuine fanatics in the pulpit have been comparatively few, — not so numerous by a vast reckoning as those who have been ferocious denouncers of fanaticism. The weaklings who have succumbed to their dread of an intemperate pulpit by making their own pulpit stupid have been as the stars in multitude.

(2) Every revival of religion which has been extensive and powerful enough to become a landmark in history has found a certain proportion of the clergy in opposition to it, through their fear of fanatical distortions. Good men have been swept, by the current of antipathy to fanaticism, into the ranks of worldly hostility to every "great awakening." Pulpits have been closed, sometimes barricaded, against the eminent instruments of the awakening, as were many metropolitan pulpits of this country against Whitefield. Sermons by the thousands have been palsied in their applicatory force by the shock of recoil from fanatic vagaries. They have lost applicatory invention, and become stilted. The men who have preached them have fallen into professional routine. They have sunk under the disease, which, above all others, is most fatal to a regenerate ministry. The phenomenon is not infrequent, that the very men who have been instrumental in awakening the popular mind in a revival have become the most inveterate opposers of the movement which they originated. The beginning and the ending of a man's ministry have often been in sad contrast to each other in their spiritual affinities.

(3) The most destructive disease of the ministry, to which I allude, is satisfaction with other successes than those of saving souls, and building up a sanctified church. Nothing else equals this in its power to under

mine an evangelical pulpit. Let a preacher content himself with literary success, in writing and publishing sermons which may become standards of literary taste; or with social success, in building up a church, which, by its culture, its numbers, its wealth, becomes a social power, an attraction to the *élite* of a metropolitan community; or with conservative success, in holding fast an ancient creed or a venerable liturgy, building up a church which is anchored safely in a harbor whose coast bristles with polemic defenses; or with even that kind of missionary success which expresses itself in heavy pecuniary contributions to the support of missionary boards whose names have become an honor in the commercial world, — I say, let a pastor be content with such incidental and exterior successes as these, while no proportionate results are seen in the direct business of saving souls, and building up in them and by them the temple of the living God, and his ministry, in an eternal estimate of its value, may be a dead failure. The soundest historic orthodoxy may be preached in that pulpit; numbers may throng those pews; wealth may flow from them like water, as if at God's bidding: yet, to the look of ministering angels, that church may be but a wretched burlesque of what it seems to be to an admiring world. The world of sin and misery around it may feel its existence as little as the solid globe feels concussion with a peach-blossom. Yet this is sometimes the sequence of a morbid antipathy to fanaticism in a fashionable pulpit.

(4) Probably one of the most notable examples of a really powerful mind which was often thus crippled in the pulpit by its fear of fanaticism was Dr. Robert South. A man of more brawny force of intellect never stood in an English pulpit. He has scarcely had

his equal in command of that Saxon English which gives to speech power over the masses of his countrymen. In his delineation of the weak points of human nature he was the peer of Shakespeare. He deserves to rank among the most racy of English satirists. His casuistical sermons indicate a marvelous insight into human motives. He adhered stoutly to the Genevan theology, — a theology which has always held sway in England when the pulpit has been eminent among the practical forces of the age. To the court of the second Charles he might have been what John Knox was to that of Queen Mary. He was courage incarnate. He read prayers at Westminster on the day of the execution of Charles the First, praying for his Majesty by name. He had the intellectual resources and the temperament of a reformer at his command, at a time when England ran wild in its re-action from the rule of the Commonwealth, and needed just such a mind as his at the head of the English pulpit to stay the torrent of corruption which was flooding the Church.

Yet, with this singular adaptation of resources to opportunity, he missed it as fatally as if he had been imbecile. The sermons on which his fame as a preacher chiefly rests breathe scarcely a hint of apostolic appreciation of the crisis in which he acted. Indeed, some of them hardly suggest the possibility of their having been instrumental in the salvation of souls. Why? It is not for the want of sound evangelical themes from pungent biblical texts. Some of them are among the imperial themes, such as President Edwards would have used in the "Great Awakening." It is not for the want of practicality of aim in his discussions. Many of them are replete with application to real life as he read it. What is it, then, that

takes religious life out of so many of his sermons, and gives them the title which modern criticism has applied to them, of "week-day sermons"? Why are they read now as standards of literature, rather than of the evangelical life of the pulpit? Robert South was for more than fifty years contemporary with Richard Baxter. Why did South leave for posterity the sermon against Extemporaneous Prayer, and the sermon in Memory of Charles the First, the "Royal martyr of blessed memory," while Baxter left the "Saints' Rest" and the "Call to the Unconverted"?

I answer, South was corroded by his enmity to Puritan fanaticism. His pulpit was eaten through by that dry-rot. South the preacher shriveled into South the courtier. The prince of preachers became the most servile of courtiers, whenever he stood face to face with the reformatory spirit of the age. That spirit saluted him, and gave him his great opportunity; and he rebuffed it with ridicule and invective. Thenceforth his eye was closed for ever upon the future of England. While prophets and apostles were moving in the air, he could see no other revelation in the heavens than that Cromwell was "Baal," and Milton a "blind adder." Yet one might cull from the unpublished literature of the pulpit of every generation since his day, discourses, which, with none of his genius, resemble many of his in this, — their incapacity for evangelical uses, occasioned by their recoil from evangelical fanaticism. Dr. South heads the list of a class of preachers, of which every age has its representatives.

4th, To the causes which have now been named as tending to enervate the applicatory power of preaching, should be added one other, — the cherishing of theological theories which are unfriendly to rational uses of truth.

(1) Varieties in theological opinion may, in one aspect of them, be classified as those of a theology which can, and those of a theology which can not, be preached. That is to say, those of the latter class can not be rationally *used* for the practical purposes of the pulpit. May we not now regard it as a fact well understood among intelligent students in theology, that there are dogmas which have a place in historic creeds, which earnest men are constrained to abandon or to suspend when they enter the pulpit? We find such dogmas in the creeds, ancient and modern. They come to us sustained by traditionary reverence. They are still taught in theological schools. In systems of divinity they can be made plausible. In a word, in every form in which theology is shaped, aloof from the living world, they may live, they do live. But, in contact with real life, they fade out of a man's faith. For practical uses they are forgotten. They do not constitute a working theology, and they never did. They were monastic or academic in their origin. Christianity as a living faith has buoyed them up, and kept itself afloat in spite of them. They have never caught a breath of spontaneous favor from the popular heart, and they never can do so.

A preacher therefore finds them to be encumbrances upon the working power of the pulpit. He must apply them to humanity in the abstract, not to men and women as he finds them. Least of all can he reduce them to such simple forms that he can preach them to an intelligent child. A catechism which contains them falls into disuse in Sabbath schools. Reverend councils and assemblies endeavor to resuscitate it by ponderous resolutions and letters of advice; but it can not compete with a rollicking song-book.

(2) A working theology in the pulpit must possess three elements, — freedom from contradictions to itself, consonance with the necessary intuitions of the human mind, and harmony with the Scriptures as a whole, and as the unlettered mind reads them. Doctrines which will not bear these tests of truth, no man can use effectively in preaching. A theology which is pervaded by the spirit of such dogmas, or which is founded on them as a philosophical basis, is so far enfeebled as a practical force, whatever other valuable truths it may contain, or with whatever skill in dialectics it may be defended. The entire applicatory significance of the gospel must be impaired, so far as it is loaded with these impracticable weights, even though they are kept out of sight.

Medical science has invented an instrument by which, when grasped in the hand of one who is sinking under partial paralysis, may be measured the exact decline of nervous force throughout the system. Such a dynamometer is the pulpit, when held in the grasp of an impracticable theology. Just in proportion to the authority of that theology in the pulpit does the pulpit work nervelessly, even to the extent, it may be, of paralytic debility.

(3) As examples of this refractory theology, the following well-known dogmas deserve specification; namely, the theory of a limited Atonement; the theory of the imputation of Adam's sin, as a test of character and a ground of retribution, to his posterity; the consequent theory of sin as constitutional guilt; the inevitable inference from this of a sinner's inability to obey the commands of God; the theory of the untrustworthiness of the human reason in matters of religion; the inevitable inference from this, that reason and faith

conflict, and that in the conflict reason must of course give way; the theory that election to salvation is, as President Edwards repeatedly represents it, the "arbitrary" will of God; whatever Edwards may have meant by this, multitudes of his disciples have meant by it just what it seems to mean to the popular mind, and so they have been understood in their pulpits; the cognate theory of the intrinsic unfitness of truth to move an unregenerate heart otherwise than to develop and consolidate its depravity; the theory that it is not the secret purpose of God to save more than a fragment of the human race; the consequent conception of Christianity, as being an elective system to the few, and simply a detective system to the many, — being to these only a test of that depraved character, which it brings to light and develops to the full in fitness for eternal retribution: this I understand to have been the gist of the theory held by the late Rev. Dr. Lord of Hanover, and in which he has had a respectable following.

(4) We are not now concerned with the truth or falsehood of these theories. Much may be said in the defense of every one of them. They have commanded the theoretic trust of able and godly men. I have no heart to speak with disrespect of any thing which such men have revered. More, even, than this may be conceded to them: we may admit the truth of the whole of them, and yet the oratorical objection to them now before us will not be invalidated.

(5) The point I wish to emphasize is that these theories are not rational elements of persuasion in preaching. If we wish to persuade men to their salvation, we must find other materials than these to do it with. More than this, these doctrines, if held in the pulpit, must be held in silence. They must be kept

out of sight. True or false, it makes no difference. Suasive power is not in these doctrines; and they can not, by any rational process of speech, be galvanized into resources of persuasion to any rational being who can be induced to accept them intelligently.

These dogmas, therefore, are alien to the design of preaching, hostile to a preacher's mission, discouraging to a preacher's hopes, withering to all rational zeal in his work; and they build a firmament of brass to his prayers. Omnipotence, by making these doctrines true, could not change their bearing upon the moral nature of man, without first re-creating that nature, and making the human race something other than it is. The gospel, as a system of moral forces applicable to mankind as it is, ceases to exist, so soon as these theories concerning it receive the divine sanction. It is degraded into an arbitrary attempt to fit things into an arbitrary system, by an arbitrary expedient in which a reasoning being can see no sense, and for which he can discover no use. A more hopeless spot in this universe, outside of the world of retribution, you can not then find, than a Christian pulpit.

(6) Two inquiries are suggested here, in opposition to the view advanced. I admit that the points which they express are fairly taken, in the way of objection, and they deserve an answer. One is the inquiry, "Are not the perils here indicated peculiar to a theological extreme; and are not equal perils incident to the opposite extreme of dogmatic belief?" I answer, most certainly this is true. If my object, at present, were to teach the true proportions of theologic science, I should mark those perils as earnestly as these, and should characterize them as severely. But my province is not to teach theology as such, but only the homiletic

forms and uses of it. The dangers incident to the theological extreme opposite to that which I have defined do not imperil, as that does, the existence of the pulpit as a power of persuasion. If I exaggerate theologic truth on the humanitarian side of it, and distend it in the line of free agency, till it becomes a system of distortions, I imperil the pulpit in other respects, but not in this, — of crowding out of it rational uses of truth in application to free moral beings, such as all men feel themselves to be. Those uses, and a prepossession for them, and an undue, even a suicidal dependence upon them for the work of the pulpit, are germane to the very errors of an extremist in that direction.

But the misfortune of these other distortions which I have specified is that they cut the pulpit loose from strictly rational uses of any thing in preaching. They do not belong to a moral system at all. Under the gloom of such theories, hearers are not proper subjects of the appliances of persuasion. Persuasion, how? Persuasion by what? Persuasion to what? Nothing in the system gives intelligible answer. Man is no longer a moral being, in God's image, susceptible to right motive, capable of holy choice. Under the deadweight of such a system of government, — I can not call it "moral" government, — men are no more proper subjects of right influence by the instrumentality of preaching than so many oak-trees.

Worse than this even is their condition; and more hopeless is the mission of a preacher to such a world. For having lost by divine decree, and through inherited depravity, all susceptibility to truth as a regenerating and sanctifying power, and yet retaining susceptibility to truth as an aggravating and depraving power, men are by nature the kindred of devils in their moral con-

stitution. The only possible effect of preaching is to make them devils in the end, in their voluntary choices. The only ripened, full-grown character which they are capable of forming is that of matured and full-grown depravity. If the *animus* of such a theology were to control the pulpit self-consistently, so as to make it a unit in its theologic aim, and true to itself in its applications, the pulpit would become the most fearful of retributive engines in intensifying human guilt, and reduplicating human woe. For all redemptive working, it would be like an organ in which the motor nerve is paralyzed.

The other of the two inquiries by which the views I have advanced are fairly met is this, Have not some preachers been successful, who have held all or some of these alleged distortions in theology? Were not Augustine, Turretin, Calvin, Knox, successful preachers? Yet were they not necessitarians in their philosophy? Are not some preachers now infected with these theologic errors who still are wise in winning men to Christ? In view of this inquiry, several facts deserve consideration, which will be discussed in the next lecture.

LECTURE XXXIV.

THE CONCLUSION: CAUSES OF WEAKNESS.

THE last lecture closed with the mention of the inquiry, "Have not some preachers been successful in the pulpit, who have held all, or some, of certain theological distortions previously enumerated?"

I answer, in the first place, that it is very seldom that all the dogmas in question find a lodgment in one mind. Generally there is a break in the scheme of doctrine somewhere, where light streams in from a different system, and illumines the whole.

In the second place, these doctrines, when partially held, are rarely preached consistently to a popular audience. You hear them in university pulpits, but not often, in their completeness, in pulpits erected for the religious training of an ordinary church. We have read history to little purpose, if we look very confidently for theoretic consistency anywhere in a great work of real life. The wisest of men falsify impracticable theories when the brunt of practical life is to be encountered. Things which are pets in the study are apt to stay there when church-bells call to the house of God. It is characteristic of a very able man always, that he flings consistency to the winds, if he feels it to be blocking the wheels of success in a practical emergency. Bishop Berkeley was as wary as other citizens

of Newport in keeping himself on the safe side of a precipice, though he did not believe in the existence of precipices.

In the third place, the best of men falsify impracticable theories, under the impulse of godly emotions. It is characteristic of a very holy man, that he becomes as a little child in his faith in truth, when the fervor of a preacher's mission is upon him. He is then no longer the philosopher, the schoolman, the wise man, but the simple inquirer after God's bidding, and then he is apt to welcome that as other good men do, who have no philosophy but that of common sense. The spirit of a godly pulpit is like the spirit of prophecy, when the divine *afflatus* takes possession of it. Its language is, "Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put into my mouth?"

Hence it is that the large majority of preachers who hold theoretically dogmas which are unfriendly to applicatory power in the pulpit, either do not preach those dogmas, or, if they do, they ignore them when the point of application comes in the sermon which contains them. The two ends of a sermon are often charming contrasts to the eye of a logician. The Rev. James Alexander, D.D., believed the doctrine of limited Atonement; but I have been told by one who knew his habit in the pulpit, that nobody would have suspected it from his preaching. Luther believed in the servitude of the human will, and he left no room for doubt that he believed it; yet how sublime was his unconscious contradiction of it whenever he appealed to men to repent! William Jay was another of the sublime theologians. He said he thought that Calvinism, alluding to the necessitarian type of it, was a system to be held, but not a system to be preached. John Newton said it was

the worst system conceivable, if preached theoretically, but the best conceivable, if preached practically; that is, by expunging from it its fatalism.

All these godly men in their reservations and contradictions meant one thing. They meant that whatever their speculative theology contained which contradicted the necessary beliefs of men, and therefore hampered their own souls in appealing to the common sense and conscience of their hearers, should be flung aside when the business of the hour was to persuade men to be saved. Save men they must and would by all means at their command. Their theology must take care of itself.

On the same principle of theoretic inconsistency the fatalistic interpretations of Calvinism are generally held aloof, by those who believe them, from their applications of the gospel to their hearers. That is to say, they make those applications unconditionally. They do not remind men of their arbitrary destiny in the act of urging them to repent. They do not say to men, "Repent if you can; repent when you can; repent when God gives you the chance to repent." Who ever heard that in a Christian pulpit? Who ever heard it from any school of theology in a revival of religion? No: such preachers preach as other good men do. They say, "Repent, believe, obey, turn ye: why will ye die?" Under the impulse of their godly emotions they say these things just as if men could repent. Their hearers understand them as if they meant it. For the time they do mean it. Their necessitarian theories vanish while the practical business of the pulpit is in the foreground. Then the Spirit of God takes them at their word, and uses, not their philosophy, but the gospel, to the salvation of souls. This is the simple

history of a thousand necessitarian pulpits. Conscience, moved by the Spirit of God, if momentarily left to itself by the necessitarian tyranny, is quick to spring to its supremacy. It will then often lead men in triumph to their liberty and to the proof, in the very face of the slumbering philosophy, that they can repent by the act of repenting. A certain Scotch preacher, who held the theology of John Knox without abatement, had for years been accustomed to append to his exhortations to repentance the proviso that the Holy Spirit should impart the power to repent. At length, one day, his apostolic emotions so over-mastered him, that he forgot the wonted proviso, and let the exhortation stand by itself. At the close of the day a poor woman whom his philosophy had kept in bondage for years, so the story reads, came to him weeping tears of penitence and joy, and said to him, "Why didna ye ever tell me afore that I *could* believe?"

The majority of fatalistic preachers of our own day do tell sinners virtually that they can believe by the freeness with which, in the applications of their sermons, they exhort them to believe. It makes a vast difference to an awakened soul, if, at a certain juncture of its destiny, it is *not* reminded of its philosophic impotence. Silence on that point carries decisive implications. The Holy Spirit is quick and condescending to use the conclusions of many sermons, not pausing to settle their consistency with the beginnings. The practical hortation, with its invincible implications of human freedom, has behind it the whole force of the conscience and of the common sense of men. That buttress the necessitarian theology never has. Is it not quite intelligible, therefore, that many necessitarian preachers should have success in saving souls? Com-

pact together the apostolic fervor of the preacher, and the oratorical tact which that creates, and the unconscious magnetism of the man, and the truth of God which he utters at God's bidding, and the supremacy of conscience in the hearer, and the auxiliary force of his common sense, all wielded by the Holy Ghost, impelling the sinner's will one way, and what chance, speaking as the world speaks, has the fatalism preached a half-hour ago against the present omnipotence of such an alliance of moral forces?

But it may be imagined, that, if these theologic errors are so easily counteracted by the happy inconsistencies of preachers, they are of little or no moment in the pulpit. Why make an ado over them? This leads me to remark, in the fourth place, that a theoretic contradiction in the theology of the pulpit can never be wholly neutralized in its practical influence. Depravity is quick-witted. It is a sharp detective. It never ignores the inconsistencies of the pulpit. In times of religious awakening it is assisted by spiritual tempters, who, in all heathen history, have employed nothing else so destructively to the souls of men as fatalism. Numerically the large majority of mankind probably are held in bondage to-day by that one form of theologic error. That is an appalling conquest which the powers of evil make when they succeed in enthroning that error in a Christian pulpit under Christian forms. It is inconceivable that such a pulpit should be as effective for good in its appeals to men as it would be in whole-souled applications of the truth, in which the head and the heart of the preacher should move in harmony. Here, as elsewhere in oratorical speech, unity of spirit is essential to the ideal success.

Moreover, in the fifth place, it is not true that all

fatalistic theologians in the pulpit do save their usefulness by 'happy inconsistencies." Some minds are too unelastic in their intellectual make to admit of a practical rebound from the logic of their theories. Of this class was the mind of John Foster. He clung to his theory of the constitutional guilt and the irresponsible helplessness, yet the fatal doom, of mankind, till it had tinged with gloom all his views of this life, and driven him in desperation to an equivalent of the doctrine of universal salvation. He could find no other refuge for his faith in the benevolence of God. It is impossible that so rare a thinker would not have been a more successful preacher if he had held a theory of depravity which should have made preaching a rational business.

The Rev. Dr. John M. Mason, a celebrated preacher in the city of New York in the early part of this century, and the model of pulpit eloquence to a multitude of his admirers, held consistently his theory of limited Atonement and imputed guilt and arbitrary election and reprobation; and the consequence was that a revival of religion was an occasion of sorrow to him, because he was unable to adjust his preaching to its obvious demands. He confessed to Professor Stuart, in the midst of a revival at New Haven, that he dared not preach to impenitent men as New England preachers of the school to which Professor Stuart belonged were then accustomed to preach. He could not offer salvation to unregenerate men as if it were designed for them, and as if he expected them to accept it by repentance and faith; for he did not believe they were capable of either. Such preachers represent a class of logically consistent thinkers and honest men, who must preach as they believe, and who, on some themes, believe that which forbids them to preach the truths which an awakened

conscience craves. A fearful burden is that under which an honest man sinks in the pulpit, when he can not offer a free salvation to the souls of his hearers without conscious perjury to his own.

But there remains to be noticed, in the sixth place, a class of preachers, meager in number it is to be hoped, whose fatalistic theology is held and preached consistently and heartlessly. Serene and contented believers are they of their favorite dogmas, unmitigated by the inconsistencies either of great genius or of godly emotions; and they themselves are unconscious of any burden in their inability to preach so as to win men to Christ. Their homiletic power is exhausted in parading with hideous consistency a theology, which, set in the frame-work which such minds create for it, is worthy of a Turk.

I do not speak with such severity, without an example in mind which you will denounce with equal indignation. A preacher in one of the fossilized towns on the Hudson River once preached a discourse on the duty of repentance, which, after a discussion in brazen consistency with its application, he ended substantially in this wise, as reported to me by one of his hearers: "My impenitent friends, if I did not know that the time and the seasons are in God's hand, I should even exhort you to the immediate performance of this momentous duty. But 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy . . . He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.' I therefore pray you to watch for the Lord's time, and, if you ever receive his gracious calling, obey it and be saved: which may God in his mercy grant!"

Is this the preaching of the gospel? Is it the preach-

ing of any thing that is worthy of a sane man, or of a benevolent God? Could not one preach as rationally to a herd of buffaloes? I am glad to be able to say that I never heard such a sermon. Probably you never did. The men in the pulpit who can preach thus are cheeringly few: but that there was ever one such is evidence that probably there have been others; for it is the only consistent hortation which can follow certain theologic opinions which have been extensively held. Many have maintained their consistency by silence, so far as unregenerate hearers are concerned. Many preachers have preached only to converted hearers, and to them have preached so as to gain the reputation, and justly, of able and godly men.

Making all the deductions, then, which the facts of history will warrant, a charitable judgment leaves the pulpit beset by the causes which have now been named, operating with variable force to invalidate the applicatory power of preaching. The literature of the pulpit, published and unpublished, gives evidence that these malarial influences infect the atmosphere of ministries otherwise able and commanding: they indicate certain perpetual dangers to which the best of preachers are exposed, and against which they need perpetually to guard themselves. Men who are useful in spite of them are not as useful as they might be: they carry dead-weights in the race: they are shorn of strength which is their natural birthright.

III. The power of such causes as we have been considering to impair the practical force of the pulpit is more clearly seen in the contrast with the fact which I proceed now to notice as the third general topic in the treatment of conclusions. It is the intensity given to the applicatory uses of truth by the evangelical theory of preaching.

The facts and principles most essential to the development of this truth you will readily anticipate. I name them with brief remark. They are facts and principles which the evangelical theory of preaching always assumes in practice, whatever it may be in the abstract. Godly preachers of all schools in theology, who are intent on the saving of souls, always act on the assumption of these truths, whether consistently or not. They are the following.

1st, The extreme emergency in which the gospel finds men. Evangelical preaching addresses men as lost beings. It is speech in the most formidable of emergencies. The emergency is real: the peril is imminent. The most tragic of catastrophes is in the prospect, is actually occurring all the while in those invisible processes by which moral natures are indurated in sin, and from which they pass on to a hopeless eternity. There is no softening of it in the primary conception of what men are, and what their moral prospects are, as the gospel finds them. This is the initial idea held by an evangelical pulpit. We believe this: we come to our work with this idea uppermost in our thoughts of what we have to do. A continent heaving in the throes of an earthquake is not more exigent in its pressure on the sensibilities and the working energies of men than the condition of this world is as it lies mapped out before the mind of a Christian preacher.

2d, The second fact is the sufficiency of the provisions of the gospel to save men. This is as real as the necessity of salvation in the evangelical theory. The one is the counterpart of the other in intensity of meaning. The provisions are ample to meet the emergency. This world is a wreck surrounded with life-boats. It is a lost battle-field, with reserves at hand which are

ample to reverse the fortunes of the day. It is a world on fire, with the windows of heaven opening over the conflagration. This, too, we believe. We come to our work with the conviction that the loss of a soul is never a necessary catastrophe. We can not express our work more significantly than when we call it the business of saving souls. Not retribution, but eternal life, is the chief burden of our message.

3d, The third fact is, therefore, that, in the evangelical theory, this work of saving souls is a practicable business. We do not concede that it contains a *scintilla* of romance. It is a plain, prosaic business of real life as truly as the navigation of the sea. That is not preaching which expends itself in imaginative discussions. In the very nature of the case, preaching is a sound and hopeful business for a practicable object. Its distinguishing characteristic is good sense. We believe this. We come to our work with the conviction that we have a just claim to the approval of the common sense of men, in concentrating our strength upon the work of saving souls. The history of our work proves this. It has been a success: it is a success: its future is a triumph. Our missionaries have stood before princes in this work of saving a world, as calmly as Columbus did when he pleaded for the means of discovering a world. No man who is thoroughly possessed of the evangelical faith on this subject ever has a misgiving respecting it.

4th, And this is true because of a fourth fact in our theory, — that preaching, above all other instrumentalities, is divinely appointed to success in saving men. The gospel proclaimed by the living voice has preeminently the divine sanction. Not the press, not the universities, not the libraries of the world, but the

pulpit, is the chief agency concerned in the development of divine decrees to this end. Men exist, ordained to this work by divine appointment. Preaching is performed thus under the shadow of an Almighty Presence: it is done in execution of an Infinite Will. This, also, we believe. We come to our work impelled to it by an eternal decree. For this cause came we into the world. We do not appreciate our calling until we accept it as a calling of God, a high calling, a calling for which we have reason to revere ourselves. We are not qualified for our work if we do not accept in holy faith this fact of a divine indwelling.

5th, A fifth fact in the evangelical theory of preaching is that the philosophy of its working is in entire accordance with the laws of the human mind. Not only is success in preaching practicable, not only is it ordained of God, but the *rationale* of the process by which it achieves success contains nothing contradictory to the laws of the human mind, or suspensive of those laws. Divine decree in the work does not ignore those laws. Decree embraces and energizes the very laws by which mind acts on mind in this work. Preaching therefore has no concern with any miraculous process in its ways of working. Conversion is not a miracle. Persuasion to repentance is not a miracle. Persuasion by preaching is achieved by the very same means and methods of speech by which men are successfully moved by eloquent address on other than religious subjects of human thought. On the evangelical theory the pulpit claims no exemption from dependence on natural laws. We do not expect to escape the consequences of their violation. We entertain no such notion of dependence on the Holy Ghost as to encourage neglect or abuse of the arts of

speech. We use those arts, depend upon them, look for success in them, as if we had no other hope of success than that which encourages speech in the senate or at the bar. This again we believe. We come to our work as philosophers as well as preachers. The telescope is not constructed with faith in the operation of natural laws more wisely than the theory of preaching is with faith in the laws of the human mind.

The point respecting these five truths which I would emphasize is this, that successful preachers, whatever they may believe, or think they believe, of some of these truths abstractly, always assume the validity of every one of them in that preaching which achieves their success. Necessitarians, as well as their opponents, always preach as if these things were true, whenever they succeed in persuading men to repent. From such preaching these principles are every one of them logical inferences, whatever the preacher may theoretically believe or deny. In every genuine success they preach as if men were in the emergency of lost souls; they preach as if the provisions of grace were adequate to the salvation of all men; they preach as if preaching were a sensible business of real life; they preach as if they were called of God, and ordained to his work; they preach as if they must succeed by the natural use of natural laws, and as if they had nothing else on which to build a hope of success. No matter what they believe outside of the pulpit, in the pulpit, and when the prophetic baptism is upon them, they preach as if all these things were true. Other things being equal, success is proportioned to the consistency and the energy with which they act on these assumptions. The more genially the head and the heart unite in accepting these principles as the basis of operation, the more joyous is the work, and the more magnificent its results.

Such a theory of preaching as is here delineated, it needs hardly to be said, must inevitably work out intense applications of truth in practice. Directness, pungency, versatile invention, studied adjustments of truth to character, ingenuity in discovery of the uses of the truth spring forth from such a theory through indubitable intuitions. William Jay remarks of the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Davies, one of his contemporaries, that he preached like a man who "never looked off from the value of a soul." Yet the worth of the soul is only one of the cosmical ideas of our Christian faith. Infuse them all into the conceptions which a preacher has of his work as a practical business, and where can you find a combination of moral forces which can equal them in giving power to human speech?

This suggests another fact which deserves special mention. It is, that, under such a theory of preaching, the pulpit ought to present examples of effective eloquence superior to the productions of the great secular orators of history. The most illustrious secular orators have been great in their practical uses of truth. As we might expect, their power has culminated in their conclusions. There they have girded themselves for the conquest of their audiences. The ancient orators threw the utmost vehemence of appeal into their perorations. Their whole reserve of might and will was often hurled in that last onset upon the will of their hearers. They studied, planned, executed, finished their conclusions, with most sedulous care. Their fame rests more securely upon their perorations than upon any other one feature of their oratory.

Modern eloquence, also, has examples of the same concentration of force, and impetuosity of movement, and premeditated skill, in conclusions. The closing

paragraphs of Edmund Burke's first speech on the impeachment of Warren Hastings did more to create and perpetuate his fame than any other passage of his writings. Hastings himself said, that, in listening to them, he felt himself to be the most guilty man alive. Those paragraphs Burke elaborated sixteen times before their delivery. Lord Brougham's conclusion of his defense of Queen Caroline established his fame as an advocate more securely than any thing else of equal length that he ever wrote. That conclusion he wrote and re-wrote twenty times. Probably with no thought of rhetorical art as such, these men achieved these triumphs of oratorical genius through the mere concentration of their whole mental and moral being upon the attainment of their objects.

The fact, then, which such examples suggest to our present purpose, is, that, under the evangelical theory of preaching, the pulpit ought often to exceed such oratory in the power of its applications. Those applications ought to be more studiously premeditated, and more profoundly inspired, than those of secular speech, by as much as the themes are more weighty, and the resources of appeal to the sensibilities of men are more intense. With no consciousness whatever of oratorical aim as such, and specially none of oratorical ambition, preachers may reasonably be expected often to exceed the eloquence of the senate and the bar, through the mere intensity of the oratorical instinct, aroused and swayed by those immeasurable forces which are found in the elements of our theology.