

SUCCESSFUL PREACHING :

ADDRESSES

BY

**REV. DRS. JOHN HALL, T. L. CUYLER, AND
H. W. BEECHER.**

TO

THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS.

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AN ADDRESS

BY REV. JOHN HALL, D. D.

TO THE STUDENTS OF THE UNION THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

DELIVERED MARCH 21, 1870.

GENTLEMEN: It is with great pleasure I come here among you to say a few words to you as brethren looking forward to the great work of the Christian ministry. There are a few of you whom I have the pleasure of knowing personally. If I may judge of all the rest by their attainments and character, I cannot but think of you and speak to you with very great respect. I cannot but understand—from having been myself a student, and having a very lively recollection of the days of my own study—to some degree the kind of feeling with which you are likely to listen to the informal sort of address which I am about to

make to you. I shall try to say to you what would have been of some real use to me when I was in about the same stage of preparation for the work of the Christian ministry. It has been suggested to me that it would be satisfactory if I would make "preaching" the subject of what is now to be said, and to that theme, therefore, I shall now direct your thoughts and my own.

WHAT ARE WE TO PREACH?

The first question that presents itself to us is, What are we to preach? Generally one may answer, The truth. I presume no one will allege that every part of the inspired Word is to receive the same amount of attention in our preaching. There are some truths more important than others, and upon these truths we should concentrate our attention, and that of the people who hear us.

"THE BODY OF DIVINITY."

In the human body there are some parts vital; some non-vital; so in the whole body of truth there are the vital truths. We shall

probably be safe if we endeavor to fix the attention of those who hear us very much in the same proportion in which these truths have a place and a prominence in the Word of God itself. At the same time your own judgment will naturally suggest to you times and occasions when particular portions of truth are needed, and applicable.

PRESENT TRUTHS.

There are truths particularly necessary, and called for at a particular time, because they are assailed, doubted, or questioned; because erroneous notions are promulgated in regard to their substance. I presume at this moment the questions of the natural and supernatural, the person of our Lord, and collateral doctrines, have a place among these present truths. It seems to me wise and right upon the part of the preacher, when these truths have an interest for the public mind, to dwell upon these, and to endeavor to give the people clear and correct thoughts in reference to them, and so to fortify them against the errors attempted to be associated with them.

GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF THE
CHURCH.

The question is of some interest in our preaching, What importance should we give to preaching about matters of church government and discipline? Give to these things about the same proportion of prominence that they have in the Word of God itself. Here again, however, the *present truth* will sometimes demand a little special attention at our hands. For instance, should it be assailed, or affairs take such shape in the world as to result unfavorably to the church, then it seems to me here is a proper theme, so as to secure the intelligent and conscientious approbation of those to whom we minister of the system of church government with which we are identified. Sometimes I think we here in this land will have occasion in a few years to call attention to the fundamental principles of the government of the church. In various places one sees loose thinking upon this matter; sees strong demonstrations being made on behalf of a hierarchy, which

seems out of sympathy with the civil institutions of this land, which, I am perfectly sure, is out of sympathy with the genius and character of the New Testament institution. I cannot help thinking we shall be none the less spiritual for keeping close to New Testament simplicity as to church organization.

CONTROVERSIAL PREACHING.

The question also is one of interest, What place should controversial preaching have in our labors?

Here, also, one must be determined in part by a conjoint view of a variety of circumstances. Upon the part of a great many people there is great prejudice against the discussion of principles. They think it is dry. Sometimes when a heresy is being carefully explained, a certain class of hearers will think "this is a waste of time." It is possible that in some instances this will be the case; but in very many instances, from your study of church history, you will know the present errors are the reproductions of old mistakes, old errors. It sometimes happens that a

man may give the right theory of some modern divergence from the truth, without raising prejudice, by giving a clear statement of how that thing was regarded in the days gone by. Men, generally speaking, will hear an argument divested from merely local jealousies. I cannot help thinking we shall need also in the next ten years a little more controversial preaching. All over the world it appears to me there is proceeding at this moment a real struggle between the New Testament and popular principles, and what I think are the heathen and hierarchical principles—the principle of church authority as against individual conscience. You have it exemplified in this Council at Rome, and in the exaltation of diocesan bishops as distinguished from the working clergy. All ritualism; all high churchism; all these efforts to combine Anglican prelacy with the Greek and Eastern churches; all these things seem to me indications of the gradual advance of that principle in its endeavors to enthrone itself in the churches of the world, to say nothing of the efforts of Romanism in this our own land.

Now upon this point it is due, if the ministers are to be effective witnesses of the truth, that we should be able to deal with those questions in controversy between Protestantism and Romanism—for Ritualism in its ordinary forms is only Romanism diluted. I have known many people who supposed themselves perfectly competent to deal with Romanism in discussion. They had read some of the controversial books. They thought Romanism was a bundle of disjointed mistakes and errors thrown together in the course of ages. And yet when these men fell into the hands of some trained and competent Jesuit, they found themselves at sea, to their own discomfiture. I tell you, brethren, Romanism would never have stood through these centuries if it had been but a loose bundle of errors. It is the "mystery of iniquity." It is, from the devil's side, the counterpart of the way of life. It is a concatenated system with a certain logical accuracy. We must start with that principle clearly before our minds. When you want to be competent to deal with it controversially, you must have

mastered the principles of this Bible thoroughly, and the philosophical principles in its system of doctrines, to expose the fundamental mistakes, corruptions, and errors upon which that whole system rests; upon which it has built itself up in a very logical, close, and firm manner.

HOW ARE WE TO PREACH?

Of course that might be put in such a way as to suggest various answers. I shall answer it as to the *temper* and *spirit* with which we should go about the work. That is not to be overlooked. A man may preach a sermon in such a temper as to spoil the ministry of years; in such a temper as to leave but little effect. As to the sermon, it may be an admirable discourse; but the look of his face, the tone of his voice, may indicate something entirely opposed to the spirit of what he has been saying.

One may speak to the unconverted and lost in a tone of voice which is as much as to say, "Brethren, I am indignant against you; I have been at great labor to make this way

clear to you, and you wont let me have the satisfaction of converting you to Christ." Don't you see that temper in a sermon will mar the effect of the whole thing? Then again, a man's ministry may go on for years in a bad temper. If I am doing a thing, not because it is to be done, as being important in itself, but because in my mind it is subsidiary to something else, I shall be very likely to do it in a loose manner.

Young ministers commence often in a small church, among plain people, in an obscure place. Well, all of us rate our own abilities, at least, fairly! The young man is likely to say to himself, "I have taken a great deal of pains, and I am fit for something far higher than this; in the meantime I have got to pass through this thing here, to something beyond greater and nobler." The man who feels so, will be sure to do the duties of the place in a listless and perfunctory way, and the people will find it out. I tell you they are very shrewd. It is not necessary for them to go to college to acquire considerable insight into human nature. The old women with wrinkled

faces have looked through the boys, and know pretty much what is in their minds often before the boys do. So when you go into the ministry, wherever God casts your lot, whether among a poor people in a poor place, or a rich and intelligent congregation in a rising place, never you mind. Do the work to be done there with all your might, as if it were your post for life. Do it so, and the temper in which you do it will give value to your teachings. The temper will tell upon the people, although the sermons you preach may be none of the best, and sometimes you will not be able to keep from despising yourself and the offering which you have made to the Lord. Yet the people will believe in you; and because they believe in you, God will use that belief that they have in you so as to bless it in enabling you to get into the hearts and minds of the people. That is what I mean by having a right temper.

HOW SHOULD WE PREACH?

That may be answered in another way, in reference to the *manner* in which we should

do the actual work: that again divides itself into two forms. There is the business of making oneself ready to preach, and then there is the deliverance of what we have prepared. How should we prepare? There are many answers to be given to this, but no absolute rule can be laid down that will apply equally to the whole body of men. Our minds are not made to work exactly in the same way all round. One man will work well in one form; another will in another form; but the great thing to be done is to get the largest amount of mental training that we can, and then let the mind work in the way natural to it. One of the best preachers I have known, not in the sense of a merely rhetorical perfection, was the professor under whom I had the advantage of studying pastoral theology. He lectured us thoroughly on his own principles, and trampled upon every one of his rules practically. He was in the habit of walking in his garden to and fro when the weather permitted, and while thus walking around used to think out and compose, literally, his sermons. Not only the

line of thought, but the sentences were then constructed. As a rule he could not reproduce that thing at another time. I suppose there was not a man in his class that could do it. It was an extreme case, but it shows that no one absolute rule can be laid down. The thing is to get knowledge, information, and then use the materials you thus have in accordance with the natural peculiarities and facilities for work in your own mind.

ADVANTAGE OF WRITTEN SERMONS.

I think it is settled that all men who mean to be good preachers, *should write*. There are good reasons for that. It often enough happens that a man thinks he has got a thought while it is floating like a cloud through his mind, but when he is asked to put that same thought into black and white, oh, how it shrinks and shrivels into the smallest proportions.

It is good also to acquire condensation. It is a comparatively easy thing for a man to produce "words, words, words," but the thing to do is to get thoughts expressed in just

enough words to make them plain and clear. No more. Of course if a man is intent upon extreme beauty and elegance of composition, then writing is absolutely essential for every point. In the church there are two ways of letting in the light. You can let in clear light through plain windows, or you can get beautifully stained and painted windows, and thus the light coming in will be beautifully variegated with all the colors of the glass. Thus can you represent two different classes of public preachers: those that give clear light, and those that give the light through stained glass. I do not quarrel with the latter. Stained glass is very beautiful, but I think it will be best, upon the whole, to set out upon the plan of giving to the people clear light. I do not take to myself any credit that I have kept, all through my ministry, as near as I could, to letting the people have clear light; telling them the truth and leaving it to their own imagination, their own tastes, to apply the ornamentations. I am not to be supposed to look with contempt upon ornament. There are some men to whom it

is natural to speak in an ornamental way. They have strong esthetic tendencies, and they have cultivated these. In some instances they are born poets; in some instances things strike them in such a way that they cannot help putting them forth graced in the highest style of poetical and ornamental expression. So much the better for them. So much the better for the church. Wherever men have these gifts they will color their style of preaching. But it seems to me to be childish for any man, especially a Christian minister, to set himself, as the plan of his life, to giving forth his thoughts in this highly ornamental manner.

There is at this moment a certain fashionable style of writing, in newspapers and in magazines, for which Carlyle, and in some degree Emerson in this country, are to be held responsible. Its peculiarity consists in putting things in a strained way, sometimes with the head foremost, sometimes with the feet foremost. It has been called the magic lantern style. Well, this style in which things are put with very vivid coloring in a way very

pleasing to children, grows tiresome to grown-up people. I would advise you to be simple and straightforward; to be perfectly sure in your own minds that you have got a thought, and then say that thought in the plainest and most straightforward manner in which you can say it. Of course that is opposed entirely to all those magnificent rhetorical performances in which a man is not supposed to have any particular ideas or any particular meaning, and does not have.

One of the greatest preachers that I ever knew was a man of real eloquence, Dr. Cooke of Belfast. There were times when that man did soar, when he did lift up his hearers with him. But he used to have many imitators who did not get up. I remember one of the young fellows who passed through the seminary; he was never distinguished among his classmates for any large supply of brains. Some one said to him, "How do you get along with the preaching?" "Oh," answered he, "I am not a bit afraid now, and I am able to take flights like Cooke." I remember also one of these flying preachers whom I knew,

who at least had intense satisfaction with himself. He was on one occasion engaged in one of those discourses where his wings were in active operation; he had his voice at the highest pitch that he could reach, his hands at the highest elevation, when all at once the thread of his thoughts fell out of his mind. There was a long, awkward pause; there the man stood with his hands up—spread out at full length, as it were. In the midst of this pause some individual with creaking shoes rose out of his seat in the gallery and walked toward the door. Lowering his hands gradually, he exclaimed, "Stop that noise in the gallery," and thus relieved himself from his embarrassing position.

MODES OF DELIVERY.

The next question to be asked upon the same general subject is, When we have made our preparation, when we have selected our particular topic, and taken up all the light which can be thrown upon it, put it upon paper, with such a satisfactory examination of the matter as is possible for us to make,

then the question is—How shall we put this before the people? There are three ways of doing this: Read closely: speak without the use of the paper at all; and use a paper with an abstract of what you have written. I can say for myself, that there are many times when I hear my brethren read sermons to their people—as I listen to the periods perfectly constructed, to those nice felicities of language observable in the thoughtful completeness of their style, and I think of my own defective language, then I say to myself, How can any one expect people to listen to him when he stands up before them without this paper to guide his careless delivery? Some men read with a power inimitable. The Rev. James Hamilton of London was a remarkable preacher in many respects. He had rather poetic tastes, and his sermons are gilded with the products of that taste. He read very closely, slavishly so, and yet there was so much of charm and beauty in a sermon of his, and the spirit in which he said it, that every one was constrained to listen. Dr. Candlish was another reader, of whom the

late Dr. Alexander has written so appreciatively, affording the interesting spectacle of one really great man trying to take the measure of another great man. Henry Rees was also in many respects one of the greatest preachers. I suppose he never wrote out one sermon from the beginning to the end. He was naturally a man of singular gentleness and softness of character. Pathos was natural to him; his mere reading a hymn was sufficient to impress you profoundly; the reading of a chapter in the Bible by him had the same effect. It was said of him, that the people where he was preaching had got into such a habit of weeping at his sermons, that when he stood up to preach they began to weep at the beginning.

There is a deep philosophy underlying such a fact as that. The sight of the man recalled what he had said before, with all the tender emotions that he had produced. A great deal of our power will be of the same kind. The pastor pays many a visit to the sick-chamber where the look of him, the tone of his voice, recalls years of teaching, years of

religious thought and feeling, although the poor sufferer upon the bed cannot tell how the good has come. It is in our very nature, and according to the laws of it; and a wise minister will strive always to work in harmony with the laws of our nature. Dr. Chalmers, who enjoyed a world-wide reputation as a preacher, was a slavish reader, with very little gesticulation. They have a story about him in Scotland where there was a strong prejudice against reading sermons, where they called a minister who reads "a paper-laddie." At a kirk there on one occasion he read his sermon as usual. An old Scotchman and his wife walked away from the place after the service; for a little while neither said a word; they were thinking; at last one of them broke the silence: "And is yon the great Chalmers?" "Yes, yon is the great Chalmers!" "Why, the mon reads!" "Yes! but yon was fell [awful] reading." Some have the power of reading with such impressiveness, forcibleness and completeness that it would be a very great mistake for them to put their paper aside. Each man must try

to find out the best way in which he can do his work, and in a simple, straightforward way bring forth the most fruit after his kind.

WHAT HELP CAN ONE HAVE TOWARDS PREACHING?

I have tried to answer this question to my own mind, and I am rather inclined to think more help is to be got (I shall speak of the help that comes from above, hereafter; I speak now of the help which we can ourselves use and lay hold of) from the careful study of the biography of those who have themselves been preachers, than from any similar source. I do not necessarily mean great preachers, I mean men like one in this land, whom it is a constant surprise to me that I have not heard more of, Dr. Payson of Portland, who must have been one of the greatest men this country has ever had. I take men like Nettleton, Brainard, Payson, and Chalmers. Let us read these men's lives, not so much to see just how they did their work, as to catch the spirit in which they did it. If you catch the spirit of men like these, and preach in the

spirit of men like these, the things you may say may not flash with brilliancy; but speaking the truth in love, God the Holy Ghost will reach through you the hearts of the people and do them spiritual good. I think, for myself, I have received more help from the study of the best kinds of religious biography than from any other study of that character, towards the work of preaching the gospel.

I need not say to you that all the general information you can get is of great value, and is to be used very conscientiously. There is a tendency with very many of us to be merely professional in our studies; the result is, we have comparatively little hold upon the general community. If we have a good knowledge of general matters and subsidize this, it will tell on those who hear us, and they may well say—that man has common sense, he knows something more than mere theology; if that man believes these things thoroughly, we may be pretty sure there is something in them. But after all, brethren, our strength is to have a thorough competent knowledge of this blessed Bible.

I think *sympathy with the people* is the next great help to good preaching. It is not pleasant for a man to speak of his own concerns, but I think I can say here what I have known and felt myself. If a man be out of sympathy with the people, his preaching is not likely to do them much good. A man having any worth as a preacher, *will always preach best to his own people*. He will preach sermons that are good *to them*, while hardly worth hearing anywhere else. A man in whom there is not very much sympathy with his people, is not a very good preacher to them, and had better be heard in a strange pulpit, preaching one of his "characteristic sermons" for the benefit of strangers.

PASTORAL VISITING.

Then *pastoral visitation* plays an important part in the discharge of the duties of the ministry. Pastoral visiting may be done in such a way as to be absurd. I saw a caricature the other day in one of our papers in reference to it: a Presbyterian minister going round with an elder, reading a chapter, cate-

chizing the children, etc. You can put that in such a way as to make it look supremely ridiculous, but the thing rightly done is not ridiculous. No man of sense would now go about it in that way. The charm, the essence of pastoral visitation, is this—that a man goes into the bosom of the family; he talks to them in their own vernacular. The children, perhaps, as they looked up at him in the pulpit on a Sunday did not realize very distinctly that he belonged to the human race at all. The language he spoke, even the box in which he stood, is peculiar to a church; but when the man goes into the family, it is a kind of pleasant surprise to the children to see that he is really a man of flesh, and in many respects something like their own father. He can bring down to the family the common tones and ordinary feelings of humanity, and they will feel themselves a little nearer to him than before. He asks them about the children, and if he has children they will ask about his own in return; then the sorrows come up; they perhaps weep, and if he is a true man, perhaps a tear will come into

his own eye. There is no studied ceremony about it; if he sees the family is not just then engaged, he will perhaps say in a quiet, serious way, "These troubles we can best get rid of by telling our Father of them. Had we not better pray together?" A simple prayer is offered, but it has linked in communion the hearts of these people to his heart. He knows them now. They know him now. They feel they know him. When he goes to speak to these people in the pulpit, it is a conversation to his friends, a talking to those who trust him. A bond of sympathy is one of the strongest helps that you can have towards thoroughly good preaching.

HOW LONG SHALL WE PREACH?

There is at this moment a kind of fashion, as it seems to me, in favor of short sermons. There are many people who seem to think that the less we have of the sermon, upon the whole, the better; and if there are two sermons, one long, the other short, of two evils they choose the least. I cannot understand why there should be this desire for brevity in

sermons. You do not find this in public things. Men at the bar, in any public assembly, do not as a rule feel themselves shut up to such a brief limit as twenty-five or thirty minutes in the discussion of a question. They do not feel that they can thoroughly go through it within a limit like that. It recalls the story I heard once of a man who went into a fashionable restaurant and asked for a mutton-chop. After waiting for a long time, after great preparation made by the servant around the table for the reception of that mutton-chop, at last in came the waiter with a plate upon which was deposited a chop done to the smallest dimensions. Sticking his fork into it, he put it, to the horror of the servant, into his mouth at a mouthful, and munching it a moment, said, "Yes, that is it; bring me some." I sometimes feel tempted to say when one of these diminutive sermons of five-and-twenty minutes is finished, "Yes, that's what I want; bring me some." I myself really do not feel that I have fairly got under way until five-and-twenty minutes have passed, and one who has got into sympathy with the subject

and with the people will feel the same thing. It is—depend upon it—it is because a great deal of the preaching has been rather poor preaching, that people have come to this conclusion in favor of short sermons. These men on Sunday feel uncomfortable if they do not hear a sermon, and *because it is not good* they want it as brief as possible—just long enough to satisfy their consciences. Brethren, a sermon is to instruct; it is to awaken the attention; it is to arouse the conscience; it is if possible to enlist the whole man in behalf of the truth of which you are the herald and messenger. If you will put your whole strength upon one of these great truths, you will be inclined rather to think, when you have done your very best in trying to put it in the clearest and most concise manner, in order to present it to the minds of your hearers, that thirty or thirty-five minutes is not time enough. Not that I suppose for a single moment that a man must put all the truth into a sermon on every occasion; but every man must use his own good and cultivated judgment in determining the form and shape

of his sermons, in order to carry conviction to the judgment and conscience of the people.

There is a great tendency to put a great deal into each sermon; too much perhaps. I suppose the story is an old one of the young preacher who preached in those times when long sermons were customary. A stranger from a distance who was going away the next week, heard this sermon. It was constructed upon the principle of beginning in the Garden of Eden and going regularly down. On the next Sabbath this stranger was observed to be in the church again; the curiosity of the people was aroused, and when questioned, he answered, "I heard that young man on last Sabbath, as it seemed to me, go over everything, and I remained another Sabbath to see what else he could find to preach about." Of course let us be thoroughly in earnest, thoroughly intent upon our work, and we shall not be afraid to lay out more strength.

One thing more. Our great real power for preaching must come, as you have been many a time told, from the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, working in our whole nature :

in our heads to make us clear and intelligent; in our affections, to make us love the people, love the work, love Christ; in our consciences, to deepen the sense of responsibility; in our hearts, to breathe a spirit of continual prayer, so that even while we preach we pray; in our whole nature, to attune us to the business we have in hand, to bring us into sympathy with it, and so to make us fit organs for communication to the souls of men of that truth which the Divine Spirit makes the way of life.

But we must not suppose that the Holy Ghost will work in us and through us in defiance of the laws of our own being. We must not think, brethren, that the Holy Ghost is a mechanical force, acting from without upon us in such a way that we should feel this force to be external. If we do so, we shall be making the mistake that some inquirers have made as to conversion, as if it depended upon an influence consciously felt to be working without us, whereas the Holy Spirit works as an internal force; it works through our minds, through our prayers, through our performan-

ces, through our experiences, through our sympathies, in complete and thorough harmony with the principles of our minds. We must be ready to lay ourselves at Christ's feet, to submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit's teaching, to be in subjection to the will of our Father, that this divine, quickening and irresistible agent may take hold of us, possess and saturate our spirits, work through our spirits, in them and through them, so that by means of us—his humble instruments—the truth by which he quickens and sanctifies may come into living contact with the hearts and consciences of the people, that thereby they may be saved and sanctified.

In conclusion, I have only to say to you, dear brethren, that I feel the liveliest sympathy with you in your preparation, as I have the deepest apprehension of the grandeur and magnitude of the work before you. Your spheres of labor will be very different; to some, comparatively obscure; to others, more prominent. Sometimes it may seem to some of you that are placed in obscure localities as if your life was being well-nigh thrown away.

Don't let the devil tempt you with such a thought as that. I suppose to-day Christ is looking down upon poor ministers toiling among poor people, with more favor and appreciation than upon many placed on the heights of ministerial fame and power. Christ measures our success by a very different standard from that which the world applies. If God uses you to bring sinners to Christ, and to build up souls in the most holy faith, your work will abide and stand beyond all the performances of some more cherished and rewarded by the world, but whose fruit will be swept away in the flames of the last conflagration. May God bless you, and make you true ministers of Jesus Christ.

AN ADDRESS

BY REV. T. L. CUYLER, D. D.,

BEFORE THE STUDENTS OF UNION THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

WHAT shall the man do who cometh after the king? And not only one, but after a royal family of "kings and priests unto God?" I feel that the eminent brethren who have preceded me have reaped the field; let me *glean* for you a few spears and kernels from my own personal experience. I congratulate you on choosing the poorest of trades, and the noblest of callings.

How shall each of you become, by God's blessing, a *successful minister*? To this, let me attempt a half dozen practical answers.

1. Put your whole soul into your work. Love it more than a hungry man loves to eat his dinner. Otherwise the manufacture of just so much sermon-matter every week, and the routine of calls from house to house, will soon become the dreariest of drudgeries.

Your chief aim must be, not merely to produce good sermons, or to make numerous visits, or to attract large auditories, but to *save souls from hell* and to *guide souls to heaven*.

Your prayer must be, "Give me *souls* or I die!" To the godly minister who knows how to handle his tools, success is the rule: utter failure is the rare exception.

2. In preparing your sermons, aim to preach

THE WHOLE BIBLE.

Some ministers ride hobbies—such as the prophecies, or popular reforms, or metaphysical systems. They commonly fall into *ruts*. To insure variety and freshness every Sabbath, explore the whole Word of God. Your own brain will soon run dry: but you can never exhaust the Bible.

Preach one Sunday a biographical sermon; then a thorough arousing doctrinal sermon; then a tender discourse of consolation; then an experimental discourse on Christian living, with illustrations drawn from daily life. By going over every part of the Scriptures, and every phase of human experience, you

will escape the wearisome fault of monotony. Whatever you do, pray keep clear of *monotony* in themes, and monotony in style, and monotony in delivery. That was a sharp criticism which old Dr. Emmons passed on a certain sermon when he said that it was "like Seekonk plain, *long and level*." Rich preaching should be as varied with mountain, vale, and running stream as a picturesque landscape. But never take your auditors where they cannot see the cross of Christ.

3. In selecting your topics for the pulpit, choose the

GREAT THEMES,

such as the attributes of God, the Divine Love in redemption, Sin and its roots, Repentance, Faith, the Atonement, Conversion and its evidences, the Resurrection, the Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Yet as daily life is made up of minute acts, do not overlook the minute points of duty or of danger. If Paul was inspired to say "be courteous," then you may preach on Christian politeness; if the Bible says that "wine is a mocker," then you

have a right to break every decanter you can reach from the pulpit. Set forth every grace that beautifies a Christian; and wherever you see a sin *hit it!*

Choose your texts where you can find them. Christ gathered his off of fig-trees and in cornfields. If you are in an orchard, you grasp any stone or club that will bring down the apples. What you are after is—*the apples*. So wherever you find a passage that will defend a truth, or kill a doubt, or awaken a sinner, or relieve a human trouble, seize it and use it. Always get your *text first*, and plant it, and let it grow up into your sermon; and let the main idea of your text be the trunk-thought of your sermon. Out of this central trunk let the limbs expand, and on its branches let the “fruits of the Spirit” grow. Never commit the absurd folly of building a sermon and then perching a text on top of it. Never attempt to cheat your people into the belief that they are hearing a new sermon by swapping off an old text for a new one; for the decapitation of its text ought to be as *sure death* to a good discourse as would be the

stroke of your own head from your body. The sap of the text should reach the farthest twig of the sermon.

It is a happy thing to find sometimes an out-of-the-way passage, and get a new and fresh truth out of it. I always thank the ingenious and diligent preacher who drives his pick-axe down in an unexpected spot and opens up to me a gold mine. Spurgeon often excels in a novel selection and handling of Scripture passages. But never stoop to the sensational trick of choosing texts for their mere oddity. When Mr. Spurgeon began to preach he indulged in puns and drolleries, but the grace of God and the grandeur of his work have *sobered* him in later years.

4. In these days I fear that good, sound, old-fashioned, stout,

DOCTRINAL PREACHING

is going out of vogue. I beg of you do not yield to this unhappy drift—no! not for an hour. Sound doctrine is the backbone of truly successful preaching. The mightiest discourses that have shaken vast assemblies,

and sent sinners trembling to the Cross of Christ, have been vitalized by some stupendous "*doctrine*" or revealed *teaching* of Almighty God.

If you are ever dry, never be dry in your doctrinal sermons. Always preach doctrine with intense emotion. Heat your argument *red hot*. Introduce all the lively and picturesque illustrations you can into your doctrinal discourses; it will make them interesting, and the truth will become pictorial to the mind's eye and to the memory. This was our Saviour's method. What a matchless discourse on the doctrine of God's mercy to the sinner is the parable of the Prodigal Son! A good minister is nourished in the words of faith and of good doctrine.

The successful preacher must always have *a method of his own*. Find out your *forte* and then stick to it. Study Lyman Beecher; study Griffin, and Addison Alexander, and Spurgeon, but don't try to be either. Be yourself. The worst form of plagiarism is to attempt to stand in another man's shoes. As to the methods of preparation for the pulpit,

no rule is the best rule. God made some men to write, and made some men to extemporize. Dr. Chalmers wrote every syllable of his sermons, and then delivered them like a tornado. Spurgeon never writes a single sentence for the pulpit. Both these men used the best method. If I may be allowed to refer to myself, my own custom is to use *all* methods. Sometimes I use no manuscript; sometimes I write two-thirds, and sometimes only one-half of the sermon. The remainder I deliver under the heat of the moment. I change too the *words* of my manuscript as I go on; I make them shorter and sharper. If in my study I wrote the word "avocations," when I come to preach I say *business*; if I wrote "this commercial metropolis," I shorten it into "this great city;" and never either in writing or speaking do I use two fashionable words, so puzzling to the common people—*objective* and *subjective*.

Always preach to the plainest part of your audience. If you elaborate your discourse for the most cultivated portion, they alone can understand you. But if you have the rich

man in your church and also his coachman or gardener or servant, then preach to the coachman and the gardener, and you will sweep in the whole audience to the door. Even the most cultivated lawyer or collegian will be best pleased with *simplicity* and *earnestness*. The profoundest men do not come to church to have their brains taxed, but to have their hearts made holier and their lives made better.

Do not begin your sermons in a slovenly or stupid manner—expecting to recover your audience afterwards. People will endure a prosy introduction, when their curiosity is piqued to hear a distinguished preacher; but the great mass of preachers are not distinguished. If you let your auditors wander off to “their farms and their merchandise” or drop fast asleep at the outset, it will be difficult to bring them back to you. Put the strength of your sermon into the first ten minutes, and the last ten minutes. *Begin* to preach in such a style that you shall nail every ear to the pulpit; *end* your discourse with an appeal that shall clench the truth and

send your hearer home with God's Word ringing in his memory.

Preach *positive* truths. Negations never touch a sinner's heart. Unitarianism has no *push* in it, because it is a mere loose aggregation of negatives. Confirm your auditors; give them tonics! Pray do not be a discouraging or disconsolate drawler; do not be everlastingly bemoaning and bewailing everything. It is something indeed to give a man a very poor opinion of himself; but it is a far better thing to lead him to a warmer and loftier love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and to strengthen him with the positive power of a stalwart faith.

Let me remind you in the next place, my young brethren, that the successful preacher must always be a *fearless* preacher. I know well the temptation which we have to say popular things instead of true things; and when a pastor is sore pressed to maintain his family, he is even tempted sometimes to put salary above souls. The evil one whispers to him, "You get only \$1,000 a year, and you must not drive away Judge A—— or Col.

B——, your best supporters.” To such subtle whispers say evermore, “Get thee *behind* me, Satan!” The moment you begin to tremble before an auditor, you are gone! Fear God always; but man *never!*

In dealing faithfully with popular sins, you must expect opposition; but it will come quite as often from timid Christians, as from wrongdoers themselves. Sometimes you really please those whom you expected to offend. On a certain Sabbath in my early ministry, I preached pretty plainly and emphatically against the sin of making and vending alcoholic poisons. I *do* allude to that subject *occasionally*. A prominent trustee in my church, who had made all his money by the manufacture of liquor, sat during the sermon and nibbled the head of his cane under the gaze of the whole congregation. After service, some people said, “That sermon will drive the squire off *sure*.” But when a friend said to him timidly, “Squire, how did you relish *that?*” he very nobly replied, “If the little man believes it, *let him say it*.” Years afterwards he sent for me to come fifty miles to his dying bed.

Another temptation is to write "splendid sermons," and to covet popular applause. To be told after preaching, "You gave us a magnificent discourse," may be a curse to you; but to be told, "That sermon cut me to the heart," or "sent me to Jesus," is a blessing beyond measure. It is the seal of the Spirit. You may toil all the week on an elaborate, ornamental discourse, and polish it with the pumice-stone to the last syllable, and say to yourself, "There! I fancy that is a great sermon." But it is probable that God will *not* think it a very great sermon, and He will smash your pride and self-conceit, by making it as barren of results as the east wind. On the other hand you will sometimes deliver a plain, simple sermon that you are almost ashamed of, and you shall afterwards learn that it drew some poor sinner to the Saviour.

The year after my licensure, I preached at Saratoga. The next day a baker in the village said to me, "Young man! you are a stranger here, and yesterday I pitied you when you began, for you did not know what a critical audience you had to address. But

I have noticed that if a minister can only convince his congregation during the first five minutes that he cares for nothing but to *save their souls*, he will *kill all the critics in the house.*"

I have always thanked that baker for the best practical hint I ever got. Old Dr. Alexander never said a truer thing to us in the Seminary.

6. This leads me to say that the highest element of power in the successful preacher is

HEART POWER.

At the outset, aim to win the affections of your people. Love them, and they will love you. You can do but little good to your auditors if they do not like you, and none at all if they do n't think enough of you to come and hear you. Give full play to your own heart while writing, and while you are preaching. Touch the tender chords. I very much doubt whether the man who has no pathos in his nature was ever called of God to the sacred ministry. Beecher's highest power is in his pathos; so is Gough's; so is Dr. Guthrie's. Remember that your people have cradles in

their houses, and sick-beds, and are all of them men and women "of like passions" with yourself. If you can't help weeping, then weep; if your feelings overcome you, then *break down!* It may break some others down too, and reach the fount of their tears. President McCosh lately described to me a wonderful scene in the Scotch General Assembly, when Alexander Duff spoke two hours to an audience, who for the most part were opposed to his views, and yet he so completely broke them down by his overwhelming pathos, that every man in the multitude was weeping; and the member of Parliament who went around to "lift" the missionary collection afterwards, walked with his handkerchief to his eyes, and the tears dropping from his cheeks! The vast assembly was a perfect *Bochim*.

The two most successful ministers in this city are not men who preach splendid intellectual discourses, but are possessed of this heart-power both in the pulpit, the prayer-meeting, and in their pastoral work.

PASTORAL WORK.

7. Young brethren! aim from the start to be thorough pastors. During the week go to those whom you expect to come to you on the Sabbath. In the morning of each day, study books; in the afternoon, study door-plates and—*human nature*. Your people will give you material for your best practical sermons. After an effective Sunday work, go around among your flock, as Napoleon rode over the field after a battle, to see where the shot struck and who were among the wounded.

In pastoral visiting, go where you are needed the most. If you neglect anybody, neglect the strong, the cultured, and the godly. Go to the unconverted; go to the suffering; and go to those houses where the world comes the least. Get acquainted with everybody, and don't forget to recognize everybody in the street. Always have a good tract or two in your pocket and a kind word on your lips. Be sure of this, that every person, high or humble, likes personal attention.

There are two requisites for a successful

minister that I must just allude to before I close these rambling remarks. The one is—and a very essential one too—that he possess

VIGOROUS HEALTH.

The men who have produced the greatest effect in the pulpit—Chalmers, Lyman Beecher, Spurgeon, Guthrie, etc.—have been men who had great volumes of animal heat. To preserve health, secure *sound sleep*. Never touch a sermon on Saturday night. Eat nourishing food, and use tea and coffee “as not abusing” them. However jaded you may be, never touch any such treacherous stimulants as port wine and ale. When I cannot utter the message of the Holy Ghost without putting a bottle to my lips, I shall be quite sure that the Lord has *demitted* me from the Christian ministry. The weak point with many ministers is the throat; and they get bronchial diseases by reading in the pulpit with their chins dropped down on the breast. Hold up your heads! Auctioneers and Methodist circuit-riders seldom have bronchitis.

In these days it is quite indispensable to

success that a pastor have administrative ability. Common sense is a part of the *divine* call to the ministry, and you must use discretion and zeal in the direction and development of your church activities. Aim to keep everybody at work. Set the new converts at some work straightway. One great element of a pastor's success is the development of his flock in laboring and giving. But when you have done your utmost to spur on your people to work for Christ, you will have drones enough left to vex your souls beyond measure.

Study the best models; read carefully the lives and the methods of such men as Robert McCheyne, Payson, Chalmers, the elder Beecher, and the apostolic William C. Burns. Work for RESULTS. Preach for RESULTS. In your audience nearly every Sabbath will be some immortal soul who is hearing *his last sermon*. When I preached once in Grant's army I said to myself, "Yonder is the man who will soon be carried wounded and dying to the rear!"

And now as you look out from the windows of the seminary upon the vast field white to

the harvest, and much of it perishing for want of reapers, let the view only quicken you to redouble your diligence, and to make your sickles sharp by study and by prayer! Do not go until the blade is keen; and then grasp and wield it until your hand is stiff in death! Yonder waits your pulpit. Prepare to enter it in the love of Christ. When you are in it, remember that you will always have Almighty God as one of your auditors, and that the sermon you are then to preach may possibly be your last.

I thank you for your patient attention, and wish each of you a God-speed heavenward!

AN ADDRESS

BY REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER,

BEFORE THE STUDENTS OF PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

You must not think that I have come to deliver a set speech, either about theology or about the preparation for the ministry. They are your daily discipline, and I am sure that you are not lacking in counsel upon them. I could wish that I had a more select audience, that I might sit in your class-room and talk with you; but as it is, I accept the audience and the occasion, and will try to say something that will be of service to you.

There is a vast difference between the old way of training ministers and the present way. Formerly a young-man put himself under the care of some good minister, and not only pursued theological studies, but also was kept busy in working among the people. He had to try his powers under the eye of a master, just as the young physician and the young

lawyer must work under their guides. Nowadays, however, the student, shut up in his theological seminary, sees nothing of the work until he is thrown into it, and then he must depend upon himself. I do not mean to disparage studying from books: all of it is good and necessary, and the more of it you can get the better; but it is not all that is necessary. You must besides know men and their ways. The parish is very different from the seminary, and you must suit yourself to it. Our blessed Saviour said to his disciples, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," and these words belong to you as much as to them. You are to be **FISHERS OF MEN**, and therefore you must know all about **MEN**. Men are in danger of eternal death, and you must catch them with your hook and draw them from destruction. For this work you must have a vigorous life in you, and you must be in earnest. And then this life is to be brought to bear on men. Your living power must be brought in personal contact with men; you must catch them and compel them to come with you. For getting this needed power

there is but one way. Man cannot give it to you, books cannot give it to you, and even knowledge of men cannot give it to you. It only comes from Christ; it is by union with him that you get this new force. And with Christ in your soul, you will succeed in catching men. This union with God is the only true manhood for you, and the only true manhood for the men around you, and you must catch them and win them to it. So much then is determined—that you are to be fishers of men.

Now let us look at some of the limitations and hinderances in the pulpit. Ministers seem to have a professional ignorance of men. They are fishers of men. Yes, but they must fish *where the men are*. What would you think of a fishing smack, which sailing from Yarmouth in search of fish, should steer for Madeira. It is a lovely island, a nice place to go to, but why should a fishing boat go there? Just so nowadays we see a young man start out, and instead of looking for men, for the population where it can be caught, he wants a parish, a comfortable place! Did you ever see a dan-

dy fisherman? He has the correct suit on, his pole is a beauty from Conroy's, his line is of the best gut, his book is full of artificial flies—plenty of artificial flies—his fish-basket hangs behind him, and he is a fisherman. May be. Let us go to the stream. Standing with a knowing air, he throws his fly, but the fish do not rise at it; and he throws again, and again they do not rise. And all the while a barefooted, coatless boy on the other side of the brook is catching fish as fast as he can pull them in. He just has a rough hook on a bit of string, and a worm for bait, *but he gets the fish.* And off goes our dandy in disgust with the vulgar fish who will not bite at his nice flies. You must go where you will find men to be caught, free fish that are ready to bite, and you must know their habits. That is one thing in which a theological seminary fails: it does not teach enough about men. The chair of pastoral theology might do more of this than it does. Systematic, didactic, and polemic theology are good, but for you they must become operative theology. Otherwise you will be like a carpenter with

fine tools, but who does not know how to use them. Here lies the chest, this is an auger, a chisel, a plane, a pair of dividers, a mallet, and all new and clean. But ask him to make a table. Oh, no, he has not learned how to do that. Well then let him put up a house. No, he knows nothing about architecture; he just has a box of tools, and that is the end of it. In like manner a preacher might leave the seminary and preach ideas, discuss theology, and never touch the secret springs of the people, never catch a single man.

Some of these men fall into what we may call the idolatry of the sermon. They think the sermon is everything. Christ's words for them are "I will make you fishers of sermons." If they can but write good sermons, then their work is done, there is no need of visiting the people or of doing anything further. They grind out the sermons week after week, but there is none of that active Christian life which is so much needed. In two years a man's ideas have run out, and what then? Well, as the ladies turn their dresses, he be-

gins to turn the old sermons and preach them over again. Instead of running solely on ideas, his life should run upon *men*, and grow and move upon them. He should know his people, and preach to suit their wants. If a man preaches simply a system of morals, simply a system of theology, yes, even the Bible itself in this lifeless way, his ideas will come to an end. He must preach to men, and try the sermons on men. It is said of Whitefield that he would preach a sermon half a dozen times, each time changing it according as he had marked faults in its last delivery. Preach to a certain person's needs and see how you can hit him. Thus you will write good sermons, yes, *good* sermons, for sermons are only good when they do the work. The most elegantly finished discourse would be a bad one if it did not do the work.

Preachers are sometimes in sympathy with the divine government and with theology in its various branches, more than they are in sympathy with men. This is a great pity. Men with great learning, and even with earnest feeling, fail altogether to catch men

because they do not stoop to sympathize with them. This was not the way Christ and his apostles wrought. Hear Paul's words to the Corinthians: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you." Paul, the strict Pharisee, the learned and accomplished man, knew that to win men he must sympathize with them; and if you will catch them you must do the same.

Whatever else you do, do not preach poetry and sentiment merely, for these will not save and will not catch men. Do not make

essays and dissertations upon the beauty of the universe or the charms of good morals: I mean, and I may as well say it plainly, UNITARIANISM. This is not good to catch souls. Give me a religion with a righteous, a just God in it, with doctrines of sin, of retribution, of a hell to be avoided. These are the things which men need to hear of, and it is these alone which will meet their hearts. When I was a boy and went out after chestnuts, I used to gather a motley assortment of clubs, and then begin throwing at the nuts. One club would fly away over the tree, another slip harmlessly through the branches, but at last one would hit fair on the bunch of chestnuts and down they rattled. That was the club for me. So in preaching, I want a doctrine that will hit and bring down people. The best preaching of morals never made more than a dent. It is shooting with blunt arrows; and more than that, the ends are padded. To fish for men, you must preach the truth of the Bible.

Do not be in constant fear of your reputation.
Be sure to catch men, that is your work. If

you have a terror of a presbytery or a school of theology ever oppressing you, you need not expect to be much. You must live, breathe, speak freely. It is wrong to confine yourself to a certain set kind of sermons, to demand from your pen an exact style; to think constantly of some neighboring orthodox theologian, and all the while forget to try to catch men. Write in good taste, according to the best models, and in the purest theology, but do it all from habit and with your thoughts bent on the men you are fishing for. Many men make the advance of their sect the aim of their work. They deify the church. You would think that these people had a quaternity instead of a trinity. They say the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, *and the church*. You hear nothing, first, second, and last, but **THE CHURCH, THE CHURCH**. They make the means an end. All this is wrong. The church is good, but the church is not first, and is not to be preached. The factors for our preaching are God and man, and whatever else comes in must hold a lower place.

The next head is to *avoid class preaching*.

Ministers are clannish, they go with each other a great deal, they discuss their theology and their sermons together, and they run in ruts. The minister must shun all class feeling. He must be a common man among common men. There should be no hierarchy: we are all, in apostolic language, brethren. Further than this, however, not a few fall into the habit of preaching to certain classes; our churches become class churches, and these churches are weak. A strong church must have all classes in it: each has his place and his work before God. You will find a minister preaching a deep, acutely thought out sermon. Mr. B—— the lawyer waits at the door to say that he liked it. The man strains all the week to write just such another for the next Sabbath. And so he preaches to the educated, at the expense of the poor, over whose head he passes unheard.

Another great hindrance is want of breadth. And first, I would call your attention to pulpits. I consider them devil-invented obstructions to the gospel. When a congregation

builds a church, the question is, How can we do better than others? "That hateful church over the way, we must beat it." And so the architect may build the church anyhow, so that it is ten feet longer, five feet wider, and has a spire twenty-five feet higher than the rival church. It is next to impossible to ventilate it. You would think it very dirty to sleep in a bed where a stranger had slept, or to eat off a plate that had been used, and it is far dirtier to breathe air that others have breathed; but this last you will do sixteen times over in your church. And then for the pews. Well, we must have pews, I suppose, and pews are put in; and then the pulpit, what for it? The architect makes it so as to match the rest of the house, and puts it away off from the pews. Why see here, I am "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." In speaking, a great deal depends on the personal, magnetic influence. The people should be so close that you could lay your hand on them all around. When you speak to men earnestly, you draw near to them. There would be fewer marriages than now, if court-

ing could only be done with the lover at a second-story window and his lady on the ground. Words chill quickly in crossing empty air. And you know that pulpits box a man up till he is but half a man. Many a minister falls into careless ways of standing and speaking just because he is so shut in. No, no, you must stand free and clear, and talk like a man. One of the most finished preachers I know, when boxed up and stowed away in a pulpit, drew comparatively few people; but when in altering his church he was driven to a public hall and a platform, and came to talk to the audience freely, he drew many to hear him.

Again, ministers do not dare to put their whole selves into their sermons. They are afraid to let themselves out. On the other hand they should give themselves wholly to the work of preaching. They should draw on every faculty they possess; anything—only catch men.

As well do they fail in the selection of sermons. To give a connected theological system is only part; you must pick up and make

use of every point of life. Like a chart-maker, it will not do for you to point out a few big rocks and let the little ones go; you are bound to lay out all the ground as well as you can. *Strike each man at least once.*

This is a moment of profound solicitude for every friend of his country. You go out to a great work. This last matter of universal suffrage is to be tried, and you will have an important influence in educating the whole people to their duty as citizens by teaching them their duty to God. For honor, for joy, and for purity, there is no profession like the ministry. The sweetest moment possible for a man is that in which he hears a soul confess that it has been led to Christ at his hands. Nor is there any overwhelming responsibility in the work. And besides, a minister has more sympathy than any man in the community. In all your work, live with Christ, and he will bless, guide, and crown you.