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I. LITERARY.

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MAJOR JAMES MORTON\*

Was a native of Prince Edward County, Virginia, where he spent the greater part of his very long life. He died at the age of ninety-two, at High Hill in Cumberland County, the family seat of his son, Dr. William S. Morton. He was one of a family of eighteen children—twelve sons and six daughters.

\*The following sketch of Major James Morton, of Willington, was written by my Father during his later years, while he lived with me in Jonesborough, N. C. (I being at that time pastor of Buffalo and Euphonia churches in Moore county, N. C.), about 1880, and published in the *Central Presbyterian* in two or three numbers. I had so often when a student in the Seminary heard "Aunt Rice" (Mrs. Anne S. Rice, widow of Rev. Dr. John Holt Rice) and Mrs. Wharey with whom I boarded (a lady of singular simplicity and sincerity of character and of pure and lovely piety) speak of their Father, Major Morton. And when during those last sweet and precious years of my Father's life, he spoke of the old hero, of Dr. Rice, of John Randolph of Roanoke, of William B. Giles, of Dr. Alexander, and his Father Rev. Drury Lacy (him of the "silver flat and silver voice"), of Dr. Moses Hoge, of Benjamin F. Stanton, and the evangelist Rev. Asabel Nettleton, and others, I begged him that he would commit some of these reminiscences to paper. This is the only one that he prepared, and I have copied it carefully from his manuscript, spelling and all. So many who read it in the *Central* more than ten years ago have asked me to furnish it again to the press, where it might appear in some form more likely to be preserved, that I send it to the UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE. Major Morton's connection with the Hill, and with Rev. Dr. Rice, the founder of the Seminary, and his deep personal interest in the Seminary and daily prayer for it, make it eminently appropriate.

W. S. L.

## HOW TO PREACH.

EXTRACT FROM "*The Evangelist.*"

BY REV. EDWARD O. GUERRANT, D. D.

We come now, young gentlemen, to one of the most important matters that will engage your attention. I need not say to you that there are many ways to preach, doubtless you have seen this illustrated many times. But I would have you to learn to preach like Paul and Barnabas at Iconium, who "so preached that a great multitude, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks believed." (Acts xiv.1). I have known men to "so preach" that nobody believed. I need not say to you that such preaching is not apostolic nor profitable, nor successful.

Study that word "so". They "so preached that a great multitude believed." If you will preach that way now, multitudes will believe yet. The Gospel has lost none of its power, nor has God lost any of His love. The Gospel is preached to be believed. If men do not believe it, your preaching is vain, so far as their salvation is concerned. It becomes a "savor of death," instead of life, to them. I see no reason why men should not so preach now. Certainly there is no reason on God's side. We have still the promise of His presence and His power. The Holy Spirit is given to all who ask. (Luke xi.13.) Surely we cannot lay the blame on God, if men do not believe our preaching.

I do not propose to write a book on Homiletics or Oratory, but I want to offer a few plain suggestions, the result largely of my own observation and experience.

To "so preach" that men will believe, you must preach like you *believe it yourself*. I have sometimes heard the Gospel from men who preached like it was a fable or a speculation or a dream. They convinced nobody. Such preaching had better been left undone, or better done. Paul and Barnabas did not preach that way. They were dead in earnest. They moved multitudes, because they were moved themselves. Read Paul's sermons and epistles, which are moving the world yet, and you will learn the secret of their power.

Do you hear him cry, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!" (I Cor. ix.16.) Do you hear him say, "Neither

count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God"? (Acts xx.24.) Do you hear him pleading with his countrymen, saying, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"? No wonder such a man turned the world upside down; no wonder a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed when he preached. The reason they do not believe now, is because we do not "so preach."

The Gospel has to do with the most tremendous facts in the Universe. God alone can comprehend them. All eternity is at stake on the result of this preaching, Heaven and hell are the dread alternatives of believing or disbelieving. Two worlds are moving to save or destroy the soul. How can a man deal with these tremendous facts in a lifeless, formal way! He has never felt the powers of the world to come, who fails to make others feel them. Pray God to baptize you with the spirit of earnestness, of zeal, of love; the spirit of John the Baptist, of Peter and Paul; above all with the spirit of Jesus.

Then, you must not only preach earnestly, but *plainly*. Paul said, "I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." (I Cor. xiv.19).

Young gentlemen, a good deal of preaching is in an "unknown tongue" to a large part of the congregation. All preaching, not understood by the people, had as well be in Latin or Greek. You observe, Paul puts a very low estimate on such performances. Five words with the understanding are worth whole series of sermons in language unknown to the congregation. He calls that kind of a preacher a Barbarian (I Cor. xiv.11), because he does not know the meaning of his voice. Do not be Barbarians by speaking in an unknown tongue the great truths of the Gospel. "Except ye utter by the tongue, words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air." (I Cor. xiv: 9). And such preachers generally "speak to the air," for people desert the pews where they hear only a dead language from the unknown tongue of a Barbarian. Remember Paul's admonition to all such. "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God." (I Cor. xiv:28.)

I have heard many a sermon which needed an interpreter to be understood by the people, if indeed, it were worth it. In what marked and sublime contrast is the sermon on the Mount by the Divine Preacher! How simple, how plain, how pointed, how practical! Let that be your model. I beg the pardon of the intelligent children of my church, if I ever preach so unlearnedly and barbarously that they cannot understand it. And remember that the great mass of people are children in understanding when it comes to religion. They may be wise in everything else, but are blind and deaf to spiritual things. Therefore it is the more necessary to use "words easy to be understood." It was the Divine Preacher who spake so the "common people heard Him gladly." In our ignorance and conceit we often speak so they cannot understand us at all, and leave us gladly. Let us learn of Him who "spake as never man spake." To this end it will be well to study the plainest language and the purest style. And, young gentlemen, your Mother's Bible will furnish you the best model of that style. "Search the scriptures" for that as well as for every other good thing. Learn to speak the English language, not a mongrel of Greek and Latin and English. I would leave out long words generally, and words which people do not easily understand. Do not preach in theological or ecclesiastical phraseology. It is not the language of the people whom you wish to instruct. Nor is it the language of the Master who sent you to preach His Gospel. I believe very much of Mr. Spurgeon's great power lay in the strong and simple Anglo-Saxon in which he preached. Read his sermons and compare them with some others you have heard from learned men who "speak into the air." And then compare the results of such learned preaching with the results of the work of the great London preacher.

Then, I would recommend the *judicious use of illustrations*. The Gospel deals with great truths, but they are spiritual and invincible. We cannot see God or Christ or the soul or angels, or Eternity or Heaven or Hell, or faith or hope or repentance. And these themes constitute the great burden of our preaching. But Jesus taught us how to bring them to the apprehension of men by His wonderful parables and miracles. So frequently did he use them that it is said, "without a parable spake He not unto them." Now these parables were illustrations of spiritual truths, "heavenly diagrams," as dear Dr.

Stuart Robinson used to call them. While we may not know how to make parables, He has placed in our reach many illustrations of these great truths of religion. Your own reading and observation and experience should furnish you with many, and obliging authors have compiled many more of easy access. Do not be betrayed into excess of use, and smother your meaning beneath flowers and figures, or divert your audience with smiles and stories. Use illustrations only to throw a side light on the great truth you wish to impress. For you must remember that the object of all your preaching is the glory of God and the good of men. The sermon that does not accomplish this is worthless, though it be eloquent and logical and learned. For this reason do not let your *sermon* engross your attention either in its style or delivery, but seek first and last the great end of the sermon, the salvation of men for the glory of God.

Maybe I had better caution you about the *length* of your sermon. A good sermon is never too long. If it is, it ceases to be good. Therefore, stop while it is good. I have no sympathy with the popular cry for short sermons from those who enjoy long speeches and operas. But I have known the effect of a good sermon destroyed by unnecessary length. Preach for effect and not against time. Some sermons of twenty minutes are long, and others of an hour are short. But men are human, and it is best not to weary a congregation by a long discourse. And do not suppose that a sermon is to be measured by the yard. It is better to weigh it. I have heard a twenty minute sermon which outweighed hours of empty exhortation. Let yours be weighty with great truths and earnest words. Such sermons need not be long, and ought not to be. Never weary your congregation. Whether your discourse be long or short, it should have the earnest attention of the people. When you lose that, it is time to stop or do something else.

Probably you would like to ask if you should use a manuscript. That depends on several things. Some "peculiar people" prefer it. As we must be "all things to all men," I suppose it is best to read to such, unless you can teach them a better way. Then some preachers are peculiar. They can read better than they can speak. Well, such should read their sermons, if they cannot learn a better way. President Ed-

wards and Dr. Chalmers read their sermons, I believe, but that was a good while ago, and they were great enough to read. If you are that kind of men, you can use your manuscript. Not being of that kind myself, I had to learn another way, and an easier way for most of us to preach with effect. I never liked to hear a man read a composition, and most people, I find, are very much like me. I never heard a lawyer read his argument before a jury, though he spoke a whole day. He would probably lose his case if he did.

I think we can all agree that reading to an audience is not so effective as speaking—and we preach for effect, and ought to do it in the most effective way. Do not misunderstand me to say that your sermons should be extemporaneous. Very far from it. Generally, I would recommend that every word be carefully written and re-written, and if necessary, memorized. But you will find that it is not necessary, nor best to confine yourself to the words of your written sermon. Master your subject, and let it master you, and you will not need a manuscript and could not use it if you had it. I had the misfortune to lose my valise containing the manuscripts of my sermons, at Eufaula, Ala. Some of my people were glad of my misfortune, for they thought I got along better without them, though I never used them in preaching. Better depend on God and your subject and the occasion than on the lifeless epistle of a written sermon. I have heard some very fine sermons read from manuscript, but I have been moved and melted by others, not half so fine, which were spoken from the heart. Let me recommend you to try it.

It may prove helpful in the beginning of your ministry to make a brief or skeleton of your discourse, with the principal divisions and illustrations and references, and keep it near to refresh your memory. But you will soon learn to dispense with even this help. I need not stop to point out the many and great advantages of preaching without manuscript. You will find them set down in any good treatise on public speaking, and you will discover them in your own efforts. Believe me, young gentlemen, you will not find it so difficult to tell what you know, as to know what to tell. There is no trouble in getting water out of a full barrel.

And this suggests the importance of being able to teach the people. That is your commission: "*Go, teach all nations.*" From the exercises of some preachers, you would suppose

their commission read, "Go, exhort all nations." Teaching is the communication of knowledge. People soon get tired of platitudes and barren exhortation. Truth is the food of the soul. It cannot live on the husks of sentiment or excitement. Your duty is to feed the sheep. They will soon quit coming if you quit feeding them, no matter how loudly you may call. The veriest sheep knows corn from shucks, and soon deserts the fold where it is not fed. So if you would fill your pews and fulfill your mission, feed the sheep on the rich spiritual food God has so abundantly provided in His word. Then you will see the people growing in grace, because they are growing in knowledge under your ministry.

