

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 1—January, 1890.

I.

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF DECREES.

THE proposal to revise the Westminster Standards has brought the doctrine of the Divine decrees into the foreground. The controversy turns upon this pivot. Other features come in incidentally, but this is capital and controlling. This is the stone of stumbling and rock of offense. If election and reprobation were not in the Confession and Catechism, probably the fifteen Presbyteries would not have overtured the Assembly. It is for this reason that we purpose to discuss the *Meaning and Value of the Doctrine of Decrees*, so plainly inculcated in the Scriptures, and from them introduced into the Westminster symbol. We are certain that the Biblical truth of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners, and of His just liberty to determine how many He will save from their sin, and how many He will leave to their self-will in sin, is greatly misunderstood by many who profess the Presbyterian faith, and who sometimes describe it in much the same terms with the anti-Calvinist, and inveigh against it with something of the same bitterness. The conservative and the radical reviser meet together at this point, and while the former asserts that he has no intention to make any changes respecting the doctrine of decrees that in his opinion will essentially impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system, he nevertheless practically coöperates with the radical in bringing about a revolution in the sentiment and creed of the Presbyterian Church concerning one of the most distinctive articles of its belief. Because revision, be it conservative or radical, contends that there is more or less that is *un-Scriptural* in the tenets of election and reprobation as they are formulated in the Standards, and that

II.

ON PREACHING.

ADDRESSED TO THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS.

THE pulpit is rightly made the prominent thing in Protestant Churches. The New Testament warrant for the ministerial office determines the function of the office. If we believed, as some do, that the ministerial office is simply an outcome of the principle of the division of labor, we might still have ministers just as we have lawyers and doctors. But it would be easy in that case to lay emphasis upon the administrative side of the minister's work and let the preaching function fall into abeyance. Or if we held the sacerdotal view of the ministry, we should conceive of the minister as carrying about the keys of the kingdom of heaven, as exercising peculiar prerogatives as a dispenser of grace, and especially as administrator of the sacraments. Under these circumstances it would not be strange if preaching were assigned to a subordinate place. But we hold to neither view. We believe that the ministry exists by Divine appointment, and that men are called into it in order that they may preach the Gospel of the kingdom. We remember that our Lord commanded His disciples to go and preach; that Paul counted it the glory of his ministry that unto him that was less than the least of all saints was this grace given that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. We know that though God might have saved men by heredity, by sacraments, or for that matter, by magic, He has not been pleased to do so, but on the contrary that it has pleased Him by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. We do well then, I say, to exalt the pulpit. The nature of the ministerial office implies that preaching is the chief function of the office. The nature of salvation involves the same conclusion. For what is salvation but a legal change of *status* on the one hand, and an ethical change of character on the other. And how are these changes effected? On the Godward side through expiation and regeneration. There might have been a Godward side and no manward side; but there is a manward side,

and salvation comes by faith. We are justified by faith; we are also sanctified by faith. The fact that we are saved by faith implies that we should be addressed as rational beings. There is an obvious relation between salvation by faith and the supremacy of the pulpit, recognized alike by history and Scripture. Affirm the doctrine of justification by faith and immediately the pulpit, and not the altar, becomes conspicuous. For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? The Jews had a Temple, and its proportions were grand, for it enshrined the visible manifestation of Deity. The Roman Catholic has no *Shekinah*, but he has the mass. His ritual and his architecture constitute a system of symbolism in keeping with the central doctrine of transubstantiation. We, on the other hand, have no altar. Our churches are conformed to the genius of Protestantism, and are more commonly built with reference to the demands of public speaking. We put the minister into the pulpit and expect him to preach. Preaching is the word which emphasizes his work and defines his mission. This is the work to which Christ calls His ministers. No other calling sets before us such an adequate end. Men go into business, and get rich; enter politics, and rise to honor; choose other learned professions, and achieve eminence; devote themselves to science, and wear the laurels of fame. The rewards differ, and there is a scale of values by which we judge them. But the reward to each man, principally, is that he pleased himself. There was One who pleased not Himself, and while I believe that the ministry can be charged with a fair share of selfishness, I do not know who follows more closely in the footsteps of the Master than he who spends and is spent in the preaching of the Gospel. You may engage in Christian service and even in ministerial work without making preaching the main duty of your life. You may be editors or agents; professors or secretaries: but there is no work that so enlists our entire manhood; no work in which all our powers of intellect, feeling and will so harmoniously cooperate; no work that so promptly marshals all our acquisitions for immediate use; no work that subsidizes so many and such varied gifts and graces; no work in which the consciousness of immediate service so sweetens the act of service; no work in which the act of doing good to others is so attended with the feeling of benefit to ourselves; no work which, done in the name and for the sake of Christ—as that of preaching the Gospel. And let us not doubt it, this is the work that God gives His ministers to do.

We may have fallen upon evil days. Times may have

changed. It may be that the power of the pulpit has declined and that interest in preaching has waned. It nevertheless remains true that it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe. We cannot change Divine ordinances to suit altered conditions of things. And whether men enjoy preaching or not, it seems to me that there never was a time when they needed preaching so much as they do to-day. Look at them. The god of this world has blinded their eyes to everything beyond this world. They look at the seen and temporal. They are under the tyranny of the present. They know the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. They glorify the senses. They believe only in natural law. They treat nature as fact and God as fiction. This life is the only one they know, and without money it is not worth living. Therefore they say, Make money. They slave for money; they wear themselves out for money; they work through winter cold and summer heat for money; God is seldom worshipped as some of them worship money. Money means luxury; more money, more luxury: more plate, more jewels, more horses, more yachts, more servants, more wine, more entertainments, more grandeur, more chance to outvie the grandeur of their neighbors, and awaken the envy of those who have no grandeur at all. They lay aside every weight—burdensome friendships, affability that might make them otherwise approachable, nice sense of honor, strict constructions of the Decalogue, fear of God, if need be faith in Him, and they run with unflagging perseverance the race for money. Herbert Spencer may well say that we work too hard and are in need of rest. What he said was true, but the gospel of rest must be preached under other auspices than those of an agnostic philosophy. There is need of a voice that will still the strife of business competition; of a medicine that will soften the pulse beats of a community frenzied with gold-fever; of a hand to rest in affectionate but restraining power upon greedy ambition until the lesson shall be learned, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth. But that voice must come from Heaven; that medicine is the Gospel; that hand is the nail-pierced hand of Jesus. The rich need the Gospel; and the poor need it. Are you not conscious of the operation of the social forces? Do you not see how class feeling is increasing; how the idea of neighborhood is narrowing; how selfishness is promoting social isolation; how the well-to-do and the ill-to-do are falling apart without sympathy and without sense of common interest—pride on the one side, envy on the other. We disapprove of premature and revolutionary efforts of labor for self-protection. We know how many alleged grievances are imaginary, and how often real grievances are

exaggerated. But we also see increase of wealth and increase of poverty going on together. It may be we cannot help it. Our brothers may be writhing in the grip of natural law; but if we cannot help we can pity. We have not power like Jesus, but we have tears like Jesus; and to poor, broken-spirited, breadless men and women struggling against destiny and mocked by the unsympathetic splendor of the great, pity goes for something. You say that there is a natural cure for all these ills; that legislation and philanthropy only arrest the kinder surgery of nature. So the philosopher says, and in this temper he looks upon the sad drama of tears and sorrow; utters his philanthropic formula about adjustment to environment, and passes on. Adjustments come, I grant; and so do earthquakes; but the cost of such adjustments is catastrophe, disaster, hate, passion and bloodshed. Natural adjustments may come through the struggle for life and the survival of the fittest; but there is a moral adjustment that might be speedier and less costly, if men were only filled with the spirit of Christ and would listen to the Sermon on the Mount.

I do not exaggerate the importance of the pulpit in our day. With the poor crying; with immorality increasing; with infidelity rampant; with anarchy raising the red flag; with apathy abounding; with *laissez faire* the motto of the well-to-do; with multitudes of men who were trained to believe in Christ drifting on to the other world without any concern for their own salvation or the salvation of their fellow-man: it is high time for some John the Baptist, scorning luxury and holding earth's honors and emoluments in light esteem, to stand between these pinched children of poverty on the one hand, and these enervated sons of wealth on the other, and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

But you ask, What chance have we for influence over these magisterial forces of society? Who is strong enough to hold back the tornado? What resistance can a straw offer to the whirlwind? Who can contend successfully against the logic of tendency? I grant that you will need the fullest and best equipments: your learning; your logic; your grasp of details; your power of thought; your ability to go to the root of great questions; your practical sagacity; your thorough knowledge of the Bible—its credentials, its contents in concrete form and in generalized statement; your mastery of expression; your literary acquisitions; your wealth of allusion; your power of invention; your memory; your imagination. You will need them all; your acquisitions will not be in excess of the demands made upon them. And even then I would have little faith in the outcome if I did not have faith in God. But I believe that the Gospel is power. It is the power of God, and being so it

has His energy behind it. It is the wisdom of God, and therefore meets the exigencies of the case. The root of all our difficulty—of the rich man's difficulty and the poor man's difficulty; the difficulty of the rich pessimist who is only *blasé*, and the poor pessimist who is broken in spirit—is wrong thinking. Both need to learn that the life is more than meat and the body than raiment. Both need to hear the soft words of the Saviour saying unto them, *μη μεριμνήετε*. Both need to say afresh and with enthusiasm, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son. Both need to be brought under the power of an endless life. "Men seek to effect reform by legislation," says a writer in the *Princeton Review*, "and police force, but there is no hope of moral elevation except it be founded on religion. The Church is the one only moral reform society." These are truthful words. Multiply conventions, associations, philanthropic institutions as you may, the pulpit is after all the mightiest agent of reform, and the message of the pulpit is the only remedy for human ill.

But it may be a question whether men will take this remedy. Will men listen to the Gospel? I do not raise the question for the sake of referring to the fact—no more true than in former days—that the natural man dislikes the Gospel; but because it has been confidently asserted by several writers of late that the pulpit is losing its hold upon the people. It would be a very discouraging state of things if there were a decline of interest in the minister's work. It is, however, confidently believed by some who are not out of sympathy with the Gospel themselves, that the pulpit has seen its best days. The signs of this state of things, and the reasons for it are set forth with a positiveness and an array of evidence that certainly deserve attention. I confess that the reading of Mr. Prime's paper in the *Princeton Review*, a year or two ago, left me with a feeling of sadness not altogether sentimental. It is true that with artist-like effect he had thrown the color of the autumn leaf into his picture of New England life, and you felt that the autumn breezes were blowing through his pages. But it was the averment of undeniable fact that was depressing. We hear about the metropolitan masses who never go to church, and the metropolitan classes who never go but once a day; but if we think that absence from church is peculiarly a city vice let us read what Mr. Prime has to say. This is one of the evidences of waning pulpit power. Here is another. There is a growing demand for short sermons. There is a restlessness under preaching that sometimes amounts to bad manners. The schedule time in some churches, according to the latest advices that I have received, is one hour and a quarter in the morning, and positively one hour only in the afternoon. The probabilities are

that before long these figures will be lowered and we shall be able to make the run from Invocation to Benediction in forty-five minutes. This, of course, does not include stops; though it may, by and by: for whenever the Presbyteries decide that reading the notices, like taking up the collection, is part of the worship, it will be very easy to reduce the time devoted to the sermon, and Presbyterian ministers will learn, perhaps, how to preach the everlasting Gospel in fifteen minutes.

Ministers wish to keep their people. We may be sure of that. They may be mistaken sometimes respecting the best way of doing this. But they ought to know what the people like. When therefore we see secular themes displacing the Bible, or the Bible used only as a literary convenience; when all sorts of devices are resorted to that are repulsive to good taste and dishonoring to truth; when sermons are preached that but for their poverty of thought might have been preached by Marcus Aurelius or Seneca; when the doctrines of the Catechism are so studiously ignored that the occasional stranger who occupies three-quarters of an hour in a simple presentation of one of the commonplaces of theology, will be complimented for having brought some strange thing to the ears of his audience, or else looked upon with the sympathetic and respectful pity, which we instinctively feel for everything that reminds us of antiquity—I think that there is some foundation for the conviction that the people do not have that respect for the legitimate message of the pulpit which they ought to have. Let the fault lie where it may, fault there undoubtedly is. Both pulpit and pew in all probability need reformation. I admit the difficulties with which ministers have to contend. Causes are at work that will weaken the pulpit's influence unless they are counteracted. Dr. Draper said some years ago, in his confident way, that the press has superseded the pulpit, that the eye is doing the duty that the ear used to perform. There is truth, but only partial truth, in this. The diffusion of printed matter makes men independent of the pulpit in a measure, by giving them the best thoughts of the best men in printed form; and not only so, but by raising the general level of intelligence, by bringing men into contact with forms of thought antagonistic to the utterances of the pulpit, the press is making it harder for ministers to carry their congregations with them in everything they say. This only means however that the pulpit can claim no exemption from the great law of competition which in other spheres is giving us better scholars, better mechanics, better doctors, better painters, better musicians, better lawyers, and more of them; and must give us better ministers, if the pulpit is to keep its power. Then the novelty of the Gospel is gone. And whenever Divine truth is presented in a dull, mechanical way, in ser-

mons that abound in pious commonplace, it is not strange that people grow weary. Mr. Mahaffy speaks of the decay of preaching evidently with a great deal of sympathy for the preacher. For the preacher, he says, is handicapped by conventionality. He is under the sway of King Nomos. He must not be dull, yet he must not resort to the ordinary methods of the orator to prevent dullness. His tones, his gestures, his terminology, his topics, and his treatment of them are all prescribed for him, and woe unto him who violates the unwritten law of use and wont. This again is another extreme. There is no doubt that some men sacrifice power to propriety.

Some years ago, a series of articles appeared in one of our periodicals on the bondage of the pulpit. When it was declared that ministers were afraid to say what they thought, the impeachment was denied pretty generally by the clergy. But there was some ground for this impeachment. More faithful, more fearless, more self-sacrificing men you cannot find than ministers of the Gospel. But they are human, and are subject to human infirmities. Ministers are not rich—as a rule; as a rule, they are not celibates. Aside from his congregation, the pastor has ordinarily no means of support. Let him be faithful and through fidelity lose his charge. Does his fidelity in one charge help him to get another? Not often. What was fidelity in the eyes of his brother ministers when he was fighting their battles has more than once become imprudence when they are asked to introduce him to a new congregation. Micah bargains with his Levite for a suit of raiment, and so many shekels of silver and his victuals. And the Levite is careful how he displeases Micah. Faithful enough in rebuking the sins of the people at Shiloh, he is careful how he says anything about the people at Mount Ephraim. Idolators have an easy time and thieves, for that matter, in the congregation where Micah is the leading man. Far be it from me to say that Micah and the Levite represent an existing condition of things. I only say that the conditions that seem necessary to the establishment of the relation between pastor and people contain elements that tend to weaken the power of the minister, and that we must be on our guard lest in making arrangements that are advantageous to ourselves, we do not barter our freedom as the ministers of Christ. Ministers are underpaid. I speak this to the shame of their congregations. But in the transition from *status* to contract according to the currently recognized evolution of legal ideas, we ministers have much to lose; and even now there is too much of contract and too little of the honorarium in the financial relations of minister and people. It is party of the first part, and party of the second: so many sermons, so much salary, and so many weeks'

vacation. I think the rich man gets preached about too much very often, and is often treated ungenerously. I do not wish to fall into this mistake. I do not forget what we owe to a few rich men. I do not forget the men who in our own day are enriching the world by their monumental beneficence. *O, si sic omnes.* And I would not have you think that the money power is the only one that may hinder your usefulness and cripple your strength. I have great respect for men who differ with me in matters of moral reform. But I must be allowed to defend the morality of my Lord. I must be permitted to read the epistles to Timothy. I must defend the sacramental cup, even though I give offense. Go you, however, into your quiet country charges with the idea that you are commissioned to preach the truth and that you take orders only from headquarters. You will soon be told that you need what is called prudence, tact, wise reticence—terms that denote concessions you will perhaps be forced to make to popular sentiment. You read the Greek Testament, your people do not. You have been trained in fundamental principles of Christian doctrine and morals. You see the rock upon which some earnest men are likely to make shipwreck of the faith once delivered to the saints; they do not. You see in this question how extremes meet. You see the Roman Catholic doctrine of the denial of the cup to the laity, as one extreme: you see the Rationalism that undermines the authority of Scripture by making a subjective standard take its place, as the other extreme. Your people do not. What will you do? What are men doing? Some are falling in, in a half-hearted way, with a movement they cannot check. Some are enthusiastic leaders of it. Some hold their peace, waiting for the movement to subside. You, with the boldness and ingenuousness of inexperienced youth, you will make a clear, honest, straightforward, discriminating argument, designed in a balanced way to set forth the truth as you think it to be set forth in the Word of God. You do well; but you will be fortunate if you do not discover that there is something in what is called the bondage of the pulpit.

But the fault is not all on one side. Mr. Prime says, in the paper already quoted from: "The standard of ability in the clerical profession is far from high. * * * A large majority of the sermons which the traveler hears are devoid of theological significance, and are utter trash." My first impulse, of course, in reading these words is to stand up for my class. I should say that the standard of ability in the clerical profession is as high as it is in any other. There are bright men and dull men. We have our share of both. Bright men are not always the most useful, and a dull man is not to be blamed for lack of talent. A man, however, is to be blamed who does not do

his best. We have ministers who are too indolent either to prepare for the pulpit, or conform to the ordinary conventionalities of life. There are ministers who have no lack of brains, but an utter lack of common sense. There are ministers whose libraries are well stocked with commentaries, lexicons and homiletical appliances, who should nevertheless be presented with a copy of Miller's Clerical Manners, and of Lord Chesterfield's Letters, containing a well-selected appendix of clerical "Dont's." There are men who have forgotten more Greek and Latin than some of their brethren ever knew, who have never acquired the dress, gait and bearing of gentlemen, and whose best thoughts are marred in their utterance by a miserable provincialism which they are too proud or too indolent to unlearn. When a man is negligent of little things—says what he ought not to say, and omits to say what he ought to say; when he forgets to visit the sick, and inquires after the health of the man's wife whom he buried a few weeks ago; when he goes to a funeral with a tennis-racket in one hand and a prayer-book in the other; and above all, when he winnows his intellectual harvest, putting the wheat into the REVIEW, and giving the chaff to the congregation: it is not necessary to go far in order to account for his loss of influence. And yet, notwithstanding all the abatements that have been made, the pulpit has to-day a magnificent opportunity; and the well-equipped minister occupies a most commanding position. But he must be in dead earnest; he must be full of the zeal that will make him single-eyed and persevering. He must have intense convictions. Negative men never work revolutions. He must be a spiritually-minded man. And if he come in the spirit of his Master, to his Master's work, he will have no lack of hearers. Does not Mr. Moody get hearers? Did not I see men stand in the crowded nave of Trinity Church, in New York, a few winters ago, while an earnest man, without sensationalism or clap-trap, but in the simple, strong speech that earnestness inspires, told them of their sins? That was a sight to make the angels glad. That to me was testimony enough that the pulpit still has a mission; that preaching has not gone into decay, and that the very men who do so much to cripple the preacher's power are hungry for the bread of life.

What then are we to preach? Let us be guided by two rubrics: Preach Christ; Preach the Word. If these directions are not inconsistent, it is clear that I may preach Christ even when I am not preaching about Christ, and that whenever I preach the Word the message of that Word must bear direct relation to the Saviour. Here clearly is a limitation: let us understand it.

It is not a limitation as to theme, though it clearly is as to the treatment of the theme. To preach Christ may require me to do all I

can to remove barriers that prevent the acceptance of Christ. These barriers may be in philosophy, or in history: and without pedantry, without parade, without claiming to be a specialist, it may be quite possible for the minister to pave the way for a reception of the Gospel. Christ is the centre of a system of theology, and preaching Christ may imply a discussion of His Divinity and an account of the moral crisis that brought Him into the world. Christ is our great master in morals, and preaching Christ may involve the study of fundamental ethics and an exposure of the systems that stand up to-day in rivalry to the Sermon on the Mount. We enter upon a great work when we preach Christ. There is nothing isolated in this world; everything is related to everything else; and God is over them all. It is the minister's business to interpret human conduct in the light of the supernatural. Name the action that is incapable of this treatment. You may throw the stone into the stream, but you cannot stop the shoreward movement of the ripples. Every human act leaves ripple-marks upon the shores of eternity.

Nor does the limitation referred to imply that the minister's function is simply declarative. He is to declare; he is a herald. But if men do not see, he is to show. If men do not believe that Christ is the Saviour, he is to prove it to them out of the Scriptures. This is the way that Paul and Peter preached; so that they might make all men see what is the length and breadth, and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

I will go further and say that if men do not believe the Bible there is nothing in the minister's commission that makes it out of place for him to give reasons for believing it. Men say that apologetics have no place in the pulpit, and there is reason for their saying it when we remember how few can handle apologetic themes, and when those who can are so apt to overdo it. But I stand upon the abstract right to defend the truth in the pulpit as well as to declare it. I will not put my faith upon the back of the elephant called the Church, and the Church upon the back of the tortoise called the Bible, and then resist all efforts to extort an answer to the question, What supports the tortoise? I will not consent that the exploded cosmogony of India shall find shelter in the Church under the guise of reverence for the Bible. I believe in God. I believe in the Bible. I believe in defending the Bible; in meeting bad criticism by good criticism; and I believe that bad criticism will be beaten in the end. If it should not be, I should not give up Christ. I have faith in an inspired Bible. I believe that the old craft will make good weather, no matter how hard it blows; but if the worst comes to the worst, we could still do as the captain of Paul's vessel did, and let her drive. I would lighten the ship by casting the

wheat into the sea rather than have her founder. And though after that disaster came I should still hope that, some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, we should get safe to land. But there is nothing in our present circumstances to call for remedies like these; and the minimizing methods of some of our apologetes are only evidences of bad seamanship.

Once more, I do not believe that the limitation of the minister's commission involves any denial of the rights of reason. A man makes a mistake when he sacrifices his reason to save his faith. Christianity, if it is worth anything, is rational, and can be rationally defended. If the Bible is the Word of God, there are reasons for believing it to be such. We have a right to exhibit these reasons; and on the ground of them tell men to believe it. We have a right to show that Jesus is the sum of all Scripture, the solution of all questions, the centre of all hope, the norm of all conduct, and in showing this, to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

I have considered the importance of preaching, the scope of preaching, and the influence of preaching upon the men of our time. Let me say something now about the form of preaching. If we disregard the ecclesiastical limitations according to which preaching is a term applicable only to the pulpit labors of ordained ministers and licentiates, I suppose we must treat it as a generic term that will really include several kinds of religious addresses. There is a wordy style of address, which is generally called a talk, very easy to make when you catch the true secret of it, taking in its way, and not an uncommon substitute for a sermon. I notice that men who have a certain fluency of expression and an earnest manner, think that facility in making "talks" is proof that sermon-making is easy work. They are wrong. Unction is good, but it will not make platitudes instructive. Then there is what is called a Bible-reading; very good too in its way, but a very poor substitute for a sermon. I suppose that the Bible-reading is a feature of the school of thought of which Mr. Moody is such a distinguished leader. With some of the theology of some of the members of this school I have no sympathy; and I particularly object to their arbitrary and un-historical system of interpretation. But we cannot too much admire the earnestness of these men; their reverence for the Divine Word; their profound faith in the blood of Christ; and their working familiarity with the English Bible. But few, I fear, know the English Bible as they do. I advise you to learn their secret in this regard, but not to adopt their shibboleths; and I warn you against supposing that you have given an adequate substitute for a sermon when, with the help of Cruden's Concordance, you have chased a word through

the Bible, making a comment or two on the passages as you go along. We do not hear so much as we used to of the popular lecture which, as it is ordinarily constructed, was once correctly but naively defined as a few superficial remarks on a long passage of Scripture. The lecture however has its proper place in the pulpit, but even it should not take the place of the sermon. I think that the production of sermons should be the minister's great effort. The sermon is a unique literary production. It is not an oration; it is not a lecture; it is not an essay. It is a rhetorical organism evolved by a genetic process from a text of Scripture, and standing in vital and obvious relation to it. It may have the dignity of the oration, the polish of the essay, the logic of the argument, the fervor of the speech, the analysis of the lecture; but it is none of these. It is not the text explained: that would be a commentary. It is not the text expanded: that would be a paraphrase. A good sermon is a very difficult thing to make. You do not think so now; you will agree with me by and by. We hear orations, speeches, lectures, arguments, essays and exhortations from the pulpit, but comparatively few sermons. And yet the outcome of ministerial culture should be the sermon. You cannot sustain yourselves if you undertake to preach orations. Themes will grow scarce, and you will fall below the level of your subject. Expositions, on the other hand, become wearisome; essays are cold. The best method of sustaining interest in pulpit instruction, from year to year, is that of the careful preparation of sermons. The reasons for this are found in the elements which enter into the definition of a sermon just given. It is an organism: it has a beginning, middle and end. The audience is pleased by the presentation of a completed line of thought, and the preacher is kept within bounds. It is genetically related to a text. It is legitimately deduced from a passage of Scripture, and is therefore an elucidation of the Word of God. It offers the freest scope for the rhetorical arts of division and invention, while the individuality of the text insures variety and prevents the minister from acquiring the habit of preaching the same sermon with only slight changes of expression. Being based upon a text, the discourse is more comprehensive in regard to the subjects it touches, and more flexible in regard to the style and method of its structure, than it could, or in all probability would be, were the minister to confine himself to the discussion of themes. In a word, as a work of art, the sermon lies between the pure oration and the pure exposition, and combines the advantages of both.

I shall not pretend to tell you how to make sermons. Let me only call your attention to some of the factors that enter into the composition of a sermon: Expression, knowledge, thought, experi-

ence. We need words to begin with. A man's thought does not always grow rich as his vocabulary increases. On the contrary, as Sir Francis Doyle shows, poverty of language and richness of thought unite sometimes in producing the finest poetical expression. Common words, through force of circumstances, are lifted unto the atmosphere of poetry and metaphor. This, however, is no reason why you should not seek to acquire an affluent diction. I have thought, sometimes, that some of you disdain the *labor limæ*, which is the price of all success in literary art. If you do not try to secure a mastery of expression, you are workmen that need be ashamed. You cannot make apt allusions without widening your knowledge; you cannot be lavish of fresh metaphors unless you have the poet's eye for analogies. I advise you to read poetry: not for the purpose of marking quotable lines, but to cultivate the imagination. No knowledge comes amiss to the preacher. You cannot have too much of it. But you should resolve here and now that you will at least know how to read your Hebrew Bible and your Greek Testament with comfort. You will wonder what use you can make of some things you will be taught in the Theological Seminary. Perhaps I can anticipate your difficulty. Knowledge is useful in giving us something to say; but it is often more useful in giving us something not to say. For example, if a certain divine had not forgotten his Greek, he would not have told his congregation that a certain opinion regarding the second advent of our Lord, commonly called Chiliasm, took its name from old Chilias who first promulgated it.

Very considerable knowledge of a subject is often necessary in order to make it safe to make a very slight reference to it. Ministers preach sermons against philosophy, while it is evident to instructed hearers, that a very crude philosophy and a very vulnerable metaphysic underlie all they say. If they knew more philosophy, they would probably have less of it, good or bad, in their sermons. Let me advise you then not to slight any department of instruction during your course of study in the Seminary. You may have tastes that will lead you to prosecute some studies rather than others, and you may think that you may safely neglect those which you do not expect to prosecute. Let me say—and I can say it with a good deal of earnestness—that the study you do not intend to prosecute in after life is the one beyond all others that you should attend to now. For the fact that you do not intend to prosecute it is proof that all you learn about it, you must learn now.

Your sermon should be a product of thought. It should be your measure as a thinker. Now a thinker, as a measurable quantity, may be spoken of in two dimensions—depth and breadth.

A sermon may have excellent qualities as a literary production, and still impress you as touching only the surface of the subject. Dr. Shedd would say, that the preacher has not the capacity of "cubic thought." The deep thinker is necessarily an analytical and logical thinker. Deep thinking makes rich sermons. The preacher of this class is not a goldsmith but a miner. Again, a thinker may be profound but narrow. In that event, his sermons will lack scope. They will show grasp, but want of breadth. The ideal preacher should be a broad thinker. If now you have this capacity of extensive and intensive thought, of thinking out and thinking down, whenever you approach a text you will show your power. You will not rest till you go to the bottom of it: your sermon will have depth. And you will see its central truth in connection with its ramifying relationships: your sermon will have scope and breadth. I have no difficulty in settling the boundary lines of plagiarism. Power of thought means independence. A well-educated man can read other men's sermons with the feeling that, however much he may enjoy them, he could not preach them if he would, and he would not if he could. A full man, with a fresh mind, after sufficient brooding over a text, will see down to the root of the text; will see what nobody else will see in the same light. For the thing seen, to use a Kantianism, will not be simply the text-in-itself, but the text-in-itself in relation to the man-in-himself, and this being the case, if the man-in-himself is a man, if he has outgrown his babyhood and rounded into a separate mind, the possibilities are incalculable respecting the sermon that may be furnished by any text. But there is above all, another element that must enter into a good sermon. I mean personal experience; and observe, there is a difference between our experience and our observation of the experience of other people. Deep religious life is the basis of effective preaching. The man of widest observation is not always the best interpreter of the human heart. It is one thing to know men; it is another thing to know man. It is the man who goes into his pulpit after brooding over his own guilt who will stir his hearers. It is the man who lives in communion with his Saviour, who will hold his audience with the old, old story of Jesus and His love. It is when he is describing his own mental state that his logic is incisive and his words are hot. If you would speak with power you must know the ins and outs of your own life. The man who knows himself, and speaks from deep acquaintance with the sins and sorrows of his own soul; the man who knows his Saviour, and has felt the pardoning influence of His love, will melt and move his audience, though he come from the cell of the anchorite, and speak to strange faces every week. Human nature is the same the world over. If you wish to draw

from the deep well of human experience, examine the contents of your own consciousness. The water in that bucket is a fair sample of all the rest.

And so, Gentlemen, I say, get powers of expression. Get knowledge; get power of thought; get a knowledge of the technique of your profession; get rich Christian experience. And, then, let your sermon be yours; let it be you; let it be an arrow shot from the tense bow-string of conviction. The river of your life should be the sermon. Into it, through all the valleys, and from the remotest hill-tops, are to be poured the elements that give it taste and character. It is a reflex of yourself at the very moment when it has least to do with yourself. Its waters must give back the color of the sky and reflect the shadows of the hill-side. Subjective your sermon must be; egotistic it should never be.

I turn, therefore, from the simple form of preaching, to say a closing word on the spirit of preaching.

I have emphasized preaching because the Bible does, and because the glory of our Church in times past has been her pulpit. I do not think I am a bigoted Presbyterian. I fear my *jure divino* polity would hardly pass muster in some quarters. I love the Episcopal Church. I see good in the Roman Catholic. But I love my own more. I want her to conserve the historic type of Presbyterianism. I want no saints' days, nor liturgy. I love music, and believe in letting all the people praise God. But when I go before the people as an ambassador of Christ, I do not wish to share my commission and divide my time with a *prima donna*. I believe, too, in recognizing the rights of individuality in preachers. Men are not alike. I make no stipulations in advance how a man shall preach, so he preach the truth and preach it in a proper spirit. Let him bring his whole manhood into the pulpit. Let the Gospel tingle in his finger-tips, and be seen in voice and eye and gesture. Let him bring his learning, his logic, his science, his philosophy, his literary taste, his wit, his humor, his pathos, his power of anecdote and description, and so he lay it all at the feet of Jesus, I have no word to say. But I tell you, brethren, you will never get into your sermon in an effective way anything that is not first in you. Christ will not get into your sermon, unless He first gets into your own heart. Save in a mechanical way, the doctrines of Christ will not get into your sermon until they get into the fibre of your moral and spiritual existence. You may be reticent on great questions, and then you lose your power. You may preach morality, feeling that you have a surer footing there and that men will surely listen to you then. But listen to Mr. Mahaffy: "If modern preachers come to believe that dogma is of little importance, provided a higher morality be enforced,

they make, in my opinion, a very grave mistake. For I take it to be historically certain, that the world has been reformed not by preaching morals, but by preaching dogmas. What converted the world was not the example of Christ's life; it was the dogma of His death. It was the assertion of His Divinity and His atonement which formed the real substance of Christian preaching, and it was this which reformed the world."

These are timely words. You cannot discard dogma and fall back upon a morality enforced by the Christian consciousness. The effect of your preaching will depend upon the spirit of your preaching. Want of fidelity is shown not so much in what a man says as in what he fails to say. When a congregation is looking for a minister they are not satisfied to know that their candidate believes in God, and can show that all men need some religion; that he can philosophize on the *summum bonum*, and uphold the manliness of Christ; that he will exhort them to exercise patience and will protest against cruelty to animals; that he can sum up the events of the week in a homily that will read like a leading article in a newspaper; that he sees the iniquity of labor-strikes, and can prove by statistics that the American people smoke too much tobacco. These things are well enough in their way: but what they wish to know is whether he believes in and has felt the guilt and power of sin; whether he sees the perils of an impenitent life; whether he is anxious to save men from everlasting death; whether he adores the Saviour; whether he preaches the blood; whether he lifts up the crucified One in the midst of this plague-smitten camp; and whether—all tenderness and love—he beseeches men to be reconciled to God. Dear friends, if you would preach well, keep near to God. Be frequent in prayer. Go hand in hand through this dark world with Christ. Let not your studies take off the fine edge of your religion. Do not talk flippantly about holy things. Do not lose the sense of reverence that you owe to early training. Set the harp of life where heavenly currents blow, so that the breath of the Spirit on its strings may make a music that will chasten, soften, sweeten your existence here and be a blessing to the world.

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