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ARTICLE VI.

METHODS OF PERPETUATING AN INTEREST IN
HEARING THE GOSPEL.

BY PROF. EDWARDS A. PARK.

ONE of the most suggestive criticisms on the preaching of Paul was made by Luke, when he said that Paul and Barnabas "so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." He preached with power. Another criticism made by the same historian on the preaching of Paul is: "When the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." He spoke not only with power, but also in such a way that his congregation desired to hear him again, and soon. How shall a man preach so as to retain the interest of his hearers in his discourses?

The design of the present Essay is to enumerate some of the methods in which we may perpetuate the interest of men in the preaching of divine truth. Several of these methods have been enumerated in a previous Essay on Power in the Pulpit.¹ The same qualities which make a sermon effective may also make the hearers desire to be addressed again, and yet again, in the same way. There are other qualities, however, which are more distinctively appropriate to the minister's perpetuating an interest in his sermons, than to his making them instinct with power.

The *first* of these methods is that of unfolding the peculiar doctrines of revelation. One of the most active desires of man is the desire of learning what is new. "Did the Almighty," says Lessing, "holding in his right hand *Truth*, and in his left, *Search after truth*, deign to tender me the

¹ Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. iv. pp. 96-117.

one I might prefer,—in all humility, but without hesitation, I should request *Search after truth.*” Goethe is represented as saying: “I must confess that I should not know what to do with eternal bliss, if it did not offer me new problems and new difficulties to be mastered.” Now, the doctrines of religion not only gratify this ever-growing desire to learn what is new, but they are fitted to retain their freshness of interest; they never become old in the sense of stale. The mind was made for these doctrines. It can never be at entire ease until it is in harmony with them. They exercise the reasoning faculty; they are, indeed, the profoundest themes on which we can task it. They lift up the imagination; for this is the power that delights in doctrines immense and infinite. They grapple with the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of man. They arouse his will, and start it on a course which it will pursue with grief or gladness forever and ever. All other sciences are but tributary to the science of the Bible. In illustrating it botany and geology, chemistry and natural history, have their main use. Matter was made for mind. Throughout the material world the same principles are developed which are seen in the spiritual. Physical analogies are ever shadowing forth religious truth, so that men may see and revere it in its symbols. Even astronomy, sublime as it may be in itself, is still like the star in the East, which, when noticed by wise men, directs them to him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It cannot be that doctrines like these shall fail to attract the regard of hearers; for they form the temple around which all other interests are but the scaffolding; and when this is completed for our view the temporary fixtures may be torn down. It is true that the will of man is by nature entirely sinful; but this does not benumb his sensibility to the truth which concerns him, and which rouses him partly because he is entirely sinful. He will cling to the very doctrine which gives him pain. He will press it to his bosom, though it be a fire-brand. If he could expel it from his view, he would feel no remorse; but so

long as the soul endures, it must drink in the truth as the lungs now inhale the air. This truth is the atmosphere of the world of woe. "The keen vibration of bright truth is hell." But, if wrong-minded men do for a time refuse to hear the word of God, right-minded men will continue to love it. They will love it as the aliment of their minds. They will cherish a zeal for every doctrine as it is in itself, and as it is in its relations.

We are often told that theological discourses are necessarily unattractive. Experience has proved, however, that such discourses, even when preached in a regular system, have a peculiar fitness not only to engage, but also to prolong the attention of men. Professor Trendellenberg, of Berlin, generally closes one of his lectures on logic in such a manner as to awaken the desire of his pupils to hear the next one. Dr. Bellamy often ended one of his doctrinal sermons with a sentence which stimulated the curiosity of his hearers in regard to the sermon which was to follow. The doctrines of the gospel are so intertwined with each other that a single thread will conduct an inquirer through all of them. A discourse on the humanity, on the childhood, of Christ prompts the question: "Was he not God?" It is followed by a sermon on the Divinity of Christ, which suggests the query: "How can these things be? Can a man be truly divine?" Then the curiosity of the hearers is gratified by a third sermon — one on the union of the divine and human natures in a single person; and this prompts men to inquire: "For what purpose was this incarnation?" This inquiry suggests a sermon on the atonement, which incites men to ask: "Why is the atonement necessary?" The question is answered in sermons on the sinfulness of man, his exposure to punishment, the nature of the divine justice; and each of these discourses, in its turn, leads the hearers to desire some correlated discussion. Dr. John M. Mason, President Griffin, Dr. Lyman Beecher, were indebted for their continued attractiveness in the pulpit to their continued presentation of religious truths, each one

of which was a link drawing after it various other links of the same chain. It is true that when they preached "some mocked"; but "others said: We will hear" you "again of this matter." Some of their hearers would resolve, when leaving the sanctuary, that they would never enter it again; but the next Sabbath found them in their pews, not so much because they would go there, as because they could not stay away. In one sense the early Methodist preachers, both Calvinistic and Arminian, of England and Wales, were not doctrinal preachers; but in another sense they were eminently such. Their sermons had the two things prescribed by George Herbert—"the one informing, the other inflaming." They reiterated certain great truths of the gospel with marvellous distinctness. They indeed awakened the opposition of ungodly men; but when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that the same doctrines might be preached to them on the next Sabbath.

A *second* method of securing a permanent interest in the preaching of the gospel is the rational presentation of such truths as are mysterious. There is in man an instinctive love of mystery. Every newspaper aims to excite the interest of its readers by tales of wonder. The popular legends of all tribes are the record of strange feats that arouse the curiosity of listeners. Almost every religion abounds with the incomprehensible. The demand for a theology somewhat mysterious is justified, and therefore strengthened, by reason. We are antecedently to presume that the science of the great God will be in many respects superior to our discernment; and were a system to be so contrived as to exclude all mystery, and reduce everything to the level of our indolent and contracted minds, we should say, at the first inspection, this system cannot be from Jehovah. It does not respect the relation between the infinite and the finite. It wants one collateral sign of truth; it also wants one element of continued power over our minds. That form of preaching which excludes mysteries will never retain the

homage of men.¹ The great principle of awe will not be touched by it. There is a doctrine that all our moral acts are foreknown from eternity. There is another doctrine that all these acts are entirely free. John Locke believed both of these doctrines, but confessed that he could not detect the mode of their union. Many a hearer dislikes to have these truths preached, because he does not comprehend them; but the very fact that he does not comprehend them will humble him, and quicken his desire to search further and to learn more. It is the policy of some physicians to invest all their modes of cure in mystery. Certain forms of medical treatment are indebted for all the efficiency they have to the magic associated with them. They excite the wonder of the patient, and the wonder excites the whole system, and the excitement of the system cures it. To divest, then, our remedies for the moral invalid of all the quickening associations which cluster around a mystery, is to overlook one of the widest avenues through which our influence can pass into the soul.

Still, here is danger of an extreme. We may mistake our own absurdities for incomprehensible truths, and thus, instead of retaining an interest in our discourses as rich with the word of God, we may awaken a contempt for them as idle tales. Doubtless the principle of curiosity should be gratified as far as it is healthful; and when we are eager to shut the door of inquiry, to pronounce everything mysterious which is merely difficult, to forestall investigation by the plea that it can never attain a good end, we overlook the free genius of Protestantism as distinct from Romanism, and we make that appear dull or insipid which ought to appear grand or profound. We should indulge in no such diseased fondness for mysteries as to represent *every* part of a doctrine as unintelligible because *one* part is so. If we are not per-

¹ Rev. N. L. Frothingham, D.D., an eminent Unitarian divine of Boston, while condemning a theory that all sermons delivered in the presence of children should be so plain that the children can understand them, exclaims: "Understand! I am almost weary of the word, when applied, as it often is, to that mighty theme in which the first step is the idea of the infinite God."

mitted to enter the city, we may still go round about her and number her bulwarks and count her towers and consider her palaces. A Protestant divine will make hearers *apprehend* all that *is* plain in the doctrine which as a whole they are unable to *comprehend*. He should make them comprehend some features which imply the existence of other features unintelligible. He will illustrate the difference between the fact which we do understand, in which we do believe, and the modes of the fact which pass our understanding, and with regard to which, as we have no specific apprehension, we have no specific belief. What if we cannot have an idea of a doctrine in some of its relations? That is no reason why we should abstain from preaching it in its other relations. It is a reason why we ought to preach it; for if men see that the veil is partly raised they are the more inquisitive to look behind it; and because they on one Sabbath do not take in all the truth, they will beseech that the same truths be repeated to them the next Sabbath.

A *third* method of retaining the public interest in the ministrations of the sanctuary is that of imparting a cheerfulness to these ministrations. Cheerfulness, not light-mindedness, gives health to the body and is health to the soul. By sorrow of heart is the spirit broken; but he that is of a cheerful, not a trifling, spirit hath a continual feast; for a cheerful heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones. The mind was made not for levity, but for joy, and can therefore sustain it as the body sustains the superincumbent atmosphere. But a querulous temper and objurgatory tones press like a pillar of lead upon the system, and wear upon it and weigh it down.

The substance of the Old Testament is the same with the substance of the New; but the form is varied, and so varied that while the Old Testament was read in the synagogue every Sabbath-day, the New Testament was not only read, but preached, not only in the synagogue, but on the housetop. Popular discourses were not unknown among the Jews, but they assumed a new prominence among the Christians;

and one reason for the change was, that the Old Testament adapted itself to the altar by its august tones, but the New Testament adapted itself to the pulpit by its glad tidings to the poor. In the Old Testament God is properly represented as a Lawgiver; in the New, as a Redeemer. Commands were fitly given by Moses; grace and truth come by Jesus Christ. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them"; thus wisely are we dissuaded from transgression by the prophets; but we are cheered to obedience by the apostles: "And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." The Old Testament exacts a duty of us, and allures us to the duty as a privilege; but the New Testament so far as it differs from the Old in this regard, allures us to the privilege, and in a less prominent form exacts it as a duty. Paul takes it for granted that "sin shall not have dominion over" us, because we "are not under the law but under grace." John assumes that we cannot sin, because we are born of God. Now it is always a comfortable mode of taking an admonition, to be assured that virtue is expected of us, and that we of *course* will walk as wise men. The apostles give the reason for the mandate which they impose; the prophets utter the inflexible statute often without assigning for its observance any other argument than "The soul that sinneth it shall die." True, the statute viewed in itself is holy and just and good; but we are enlivened by the reasonable words which recommend it, and by the promises of grace which diffuse a radiance around it. True, there is a *law* involved in the gospel; there is an *obligation* imposed by it, mightier than that imposed by the tables of stone; but where the mandate abounds, grace superabounds; and the atonement of Christ inspirits men who have heard something of it to long after yet more of it; for even the angels desire to look into it, and it no more fatigues the mind of an invalid than it enfeebles the mind of an athlete. We have read of a lunatic asylum in Europe, that its inmates were suddenly seized with a passion for cutting and bruising their own

bodies ; and their superintendent recited to them the narrative of their Redeemer's grace, and they yielded at once to their keeper, and, as if the old miracle of healing the demons had been renewed, they were clothed and seemed to be in their right mind. It is the soothing voice of Calvary, mellowed by the lapse of ages, that speaks peace to our souls maddened by sin. Frantic as the heart is, it opens to the insinuating influence of good will.

And what is true of the doctrines of the gospel is true likewise of its institutions. The Jewish day of rest was prescribed, and the profanation of the day was condemned in fearful terms ; but the Christian Sabbath is not hedged about with threatenings that we shall be stoned for violating it. The apostles assumed that one who is redeemed by the blood of Christ will be in the spirit on the Lord's day ; they took it for granted, that every man who has been honored by a union with the Son of God will leap for joy at the opportunity of keeping a high jubilee on the morning when that Man of sorrows rose from the tomb. We are often condemned by our trans-Atlantic brethren for insisting on the strict observance of the Christian Sabbath. We confess to no wrong in demanding this duty. The stillness of the day is needed for the efficacy of the word preached. Men must withdraw their minds for a few hours from secular associations before they will be prepared for the influences of the pulpit. On a day of still devotion the words of God have a power which they cannot have on a day of pastime. The merchant will not love the service of the sanctuary, if his warehouse is to remain open until the service begins, and to be opened as soon as the service ends. The votary of pleasure will become more and more impatient of this service, if he can pass from the church to the theatre, and if the chanting of the choir is the prelude to the performance of the opera. But after all, we should meditate more on the elevated joys of the Sabbath ; on its agreement with the nature of the soul and with the structure of society ; on its fitnesses to promote the earthly and the spiritual good of men, and to please him who de-

serves this memorial day of his resurrection, than on the fact that the observance of the Jewish institution was enforced by severe penalties. While we must not fail to insist on the *spirit* of the law which requires the observance of the first day, we must dwell and linger on the beauties of this type of the Redeemer's glory; on the graces of this emblem of our everlasting rest; we must make the Lord's day one of delight, and men will beseech that the same things be spoken unto them on the next Sabbath.

If the Lord's supper had been a Jewish institution, the mode of administering it might have been minutely described. The bread must have been of a specified quality; the wine must have been of a particular age or flavor; the attitudes of the communicant must have been after this particular fashion. But now we are invited to the festival; we are attracted to the hour of good cheer. "This do in remembrance of me," sounds like a kind permission to celebrate the love of our lost friend. The principle of the ordinance, the soul of it, is put foremost; and gives it a joyful aspect, and the ceremonials of it, which make it burdensome, are left in a large degree to the freedom of our choice. "You remember and admire," says Mr. Coleridge, "the saying of an old divine, that a ceremony duly initiated is a chain of gold around the neck of faith; but if in the wish to make it co-essential and consubstantial, you draw it closer and closer, it may strangle the faith it was meant to deck and designate."¹ The pulpit of the Romish church is monopolized by the enforcement of prescriptions; so it leaves the hearers like prodigal children pining away on husks. But the Protestant theme is the love of Christ; for the more we hear of that love so much the more do we long to learn of it, and it may be that on every communion Sabbath the angels of God are more curious than we are to comprehend the sacrament which shadows forth the atoning love of Jesus.

We should be glad to illustrate more fully than the limits of this Essay allow, the importance of making the Lord's

¹ Coleridge's Works, Vol. i. pp. 338, 339.

supper a *festival of joy*, of irradiating Christian baptism with a gladsome spirit, and of making the general services of the sanctuary as exhilarating as their fitnesses allow. It has been often asked: What is the nature of the magnet by which Mr. Spurgeon of London draws five or six thousand auditors to his Tabernacle twice on every Sabbath, year after year; two thousand communicants to the Lord's table once every month, and four or five hundred on almost every Sabbath. The secret of his attractiveness lies partly in the fact that he preaches the doctrines of the gospel; he holds up the hard as well as the easy doctrines; he leaves such relations of them in the realm of mystery as he thinks ought to be left there; and he seems to be in love with the work which the Lord has given him to do. He offers the opening prayer as a man who delights in communion with his Redeemer; he reads the introductory hymn from "Our own Hymn Book" with the glad tones which are appropriate to its well-nigh festive spirit; he comments on the scriptures as he recites them in the style of a lover; and he delivers his sermon as if the pulpit were what George Herbert says it should be — "his joy and his throne"; he ends his service with the hopeful prayer "That our feet may be like hinds' feet, ever climbing up higher and higher toward heaven." His Tabernacle is not a tomb for a dead Saviour, but a palace in which the risen Redeemer reigns; it is not darkened for the enactment of a sacrifice, but is cheering with the light of heaven; he can *see* the interest manifested by the men with whom he holds converse in his sermon, and they can *see* the smile on his face; they are not behind pillars nor at a frigid distance from him, but all around him, higher than he and lower, before him and behind him. Thousands of them blend their voices with his in song, and are gladdened with his silver voice as it utters one or another of his favorite sentiments: "Birds," he says, "extol the Creator in notes of overflowing joy, the cattle low forth his praise with tumult of happiness, and the fish leap up in his worship with excess of delight. Moloch may be worshipped with shrieks of pain;

but he, whose name is Love, is best pleased with the holy mirth and sanctified gladness of his people; daily rejoicing is an ornament to the Christian character, and a suitable robe for God's choristers to wear; God loveth a *cheerful* giver, whether it be the gold of his purse or the gold of his mouth which he presents upon his altar; 'I will sing praise to thy name, O thou, Most High.'"

We can do little more than allude to a *fourth* method of perpetuating the interest of men in the services of the sanctuary: the preacher should aim to produce an immediate and a visible result. Men are more affected by what is near than by what is far removed, and are more stimulated by the prospect of a visible good than by the hope for an advantage which they will never recognize. We have been condemned for adhering to the Puritan usage of drawing a line between the church and the world. The opposers of Puritanism do not classify the friends of Christ as a peculiar people. All their worshippers are baptized, all come to the communion table, all are addressed as heirs of bliss, all expect to be honored as saints at their burial. But the Puritan system distinguishes the open friends of Christ from his foes. The minister stands at the boundary line of the church, and cries aloud: "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him cross the line, separate himself from the world, contend for the faith. *Now* is the accepted time; choose *this day*, *this hour*, *this minute*, whom you will serve. *Hasten* to the city of refuge, linger not in all the plain; thy Judge will come quickly, and in the twinkling of an eye it may be too late." The effect of this biblical energy of appeal is seen at once. Men are interested in having something to do. They are inspirited in having something to do. They have an instinct for work, as well as an instinct for knowledge. In blessing men God in his sovereignty regards their instincts. The success attending the exhortations which he prescribes is the means of still further success. The renewal of one mind affects other minds by the power of sympathy. The growth of the church, as of a garden, gladdens the eye, and the sight of growth

exhilarates all the powers of the spiritual husbandman. Such was the enthusiasm enkindled by Paul. Not only did the Gentiles beseech him to discourse again on the same theme ; but “ when the congregation was broken up many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed ” him ; “ and the next Sabbath-day came almost the *whole city together* to hear the word of God.”

But a *fifth* mode of securing a permanent interest in the ministrations of the sanctuary, is to diversify the course of our teaching. While we should leave the hearers beseeching for the same things on the next Sabbath, we should be careful not always to give them the same things. We may give them the same things in the genus although not in the species. They ask for silver and we offer them gold. One man retains ten degrees of influence over another by not using more than eight degrees ; and a preacher retains the interest of his hearers in one truth by unfolding to them another. The most charming melody when repeated very often, begins to annoy us. Travellers are delighted for a few days with a landscape which becomes wearisome when they are confined to it for many weeks. Often does the voyager, after admiring the vastness of the ocean, begin to sicken at the dead waste of waters, and long for a tempest to break up the monotony of the expanse. No single muscle of our framework will endure a protracted effort ; but by varying the position of the burden we may continue to hold it up for successive hours. To the mind a change of employment is rest. The Sabbath-day becomes a relief, because it is a day not of idleness, but of a new kind of work. The differing sensibilities of the soul will be addressed in their turn by the preacher who desires to keep up the attention of his hearers. He will pass on from one feeling to another with an alertness which will give to each a healthful play. An excitement of the intellect facilitates a rise of the emotion, and any one emotion brings a different one in its train. By a quickness of transition we excite the hearer's surprise, and the one feeling of surprise *may* prepare the way for any

and every other. A preacher who was eminently doctrinal and argumentative remarked in regard to his method of preparing his discourses: "I read deep, well-written tragedies, for the sake of real improvement in the art of preaching. They appeared to me the very best books to teach true eloquence. They are designed to make the deepest impression on the human mind, and many of them are excellently calculated to produce this effect. A preacher can scarcely find a better model for constructing a popular, practical, pathetic discourse than a good tragedy; which all along prepares the mind for the grand catastrophe, without discovering it, till the whole soul is wrought into a proper frame to feel the final impression." Robert Hall says, "that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are perhaps too formal and mechanical; that in the distribution of the matter of our sermons we indulge too little variety; and exposing our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance. Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion derived from just and affecting sentiments be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address."¹

The inspired word suggests a model for us here. It breaks up a truth into numerous fragments; and as we look at them, they arrange themselves in novel forms like the brilliant figures of a kaleidoscope. It was designed to engage our life-long interest, and therefore has provided a large variety of notes and stops for our continued entertainment. We are no more tired in its perusal than we are tired in sauntering through the paths of an English garden, where the beds are not all shaped in parallelograms, nor the shrubbery all cut into triangles, nor every parterre the precise and fatiguing counterpart of every other. The same volume tells a man that he must honor his parents, and hate his father and mother; that he must not resist evil, and must turn the other cheek to him who has smitten one, but that

¹ Works, Vol. i. p. 140.

the warrior must be content with his wages, and the magistrate must punish evil doers. It asserts that God is not the son of man that he should repent; but soon it awakens our curiosity by affirming that he does repent. It declares that whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, but avers that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. It wakes up our flagging attention, stimulates us to compare text with text, and search for the common principle which underlies such varying statements as that one event happeneth to all; there is no knowledge, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave; man dieth and is not, but he is to live forever, and to be a king and priest unto God; that he is a worm of the dust, but crowned with glory and honor, and made a little lower than the angels; that every man must bear his own burden, but each one the burdens of another; that he must work out his own salvation, but must be saved without works; that he must worship God with external decency, but God regardeth not the person of man; that the dead body will be quickened into life, but not the same body; that after the resurrection man will stand and walk in the New Jerusalem, where are streets and trees, and yet he will be a spirit with only a spiritual framework; that man hardens his own heart, but God hardens it; that men act as they please, even when wickedly taking him who is "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"; that they are free but dependent, can but cannot; all things are possible to one man, everything impossible to another.

It has been objected to the inspiration of the scriptures, that they are too diversified in their style to have emanated from one mind. But it is rather an argument for their divine origin, that they were written for different countries, for different nations, through the instrumentality of different men, on different themes, and in different languages and idioms; so that every page unfolds some attraction not found on any other page. Our pulpit will become wearisome if it do not admit the fulness and the freeness and the freshness of the biblical style; if it be confined to a limited vocab-

ulary, one unbending form of statement, one narrow mould of instruction.

I have already said that the tone of the pulpit must be cheerful. This cheerfulness prepares the mind for the sombre truths of the gospel. Joy opens an inlet for the keenest sorrow; hope quickens the sensibility to fear; and we proclaim the decrees of justice with the more subduing force when we have portrayed the amenities of divine grace, as the thunder is the more alarming when it bursts forth from a clear sky. Mercy is not felt to be mercy when it is not set off against justice; and, on the other hand, justice is not seen in its real aspect unless it is illumined by the rays of mercy, as the dark cloud appears more portentous in the light of day than in the blackness of night. John Foster has written: "Dr. Watts, all mild and amiable as he was, and delighted to dwell on congenial topics, says deliberately, that of all the persons to whom his ministry has been efficacious, *only one* had received the first effectual impressions from the gentle and attractive aspects of religion; all the rest from the awful and alarming ones, the appeals to fear. And this is all but universally the manner of the divine process of conversion." Dr. Dwight makes a somewhat similar remark. But such remarks, if they be not exactly correct, would not have appeared plausible if the appeals to fear had not alternated with appeals to hope. The threatening words of our Saviour were the more terrible because he was the incarnation of mildness. The continuous power of his discourses has been analyzed by a Unitarian writer thus:¹ "He did not address one passion or part of our nature alone or chiefly. There was no one manner of address; and we feel sure as we read that there was no one tone. He was not always speaking of death, nor of judgment, nor of eternity; frequently and solemnly as he spoke of them. He was not always speaking of the state of the sinner, nor of repentance and the new heart, though on these subjects too he delivered his solemn message." His preaching "was not terror only, nor

¹ Dr. Dewey.

promise only ; it was not exclusively severity nor gentleness ; but it was each one of them in its place," and all of them always subdued to the tone of perfect sobriety. God is blessed ; the angels and saints in heaven are happy ; good shall prevail over evil at the last ; therefore our ministrations must be jubilant ; but God is serious too, and the spirits in heaven are serious, and many of the tones of nature are in the minor key ; and the pulpit cannot retain a rational cheerfulness unless it also respond to the plaintive cries or the appalling threats of justice.

There is one feature in the life of American churches that calls for peculiar variety in our ministerial service. These churches have been distinguished for special manifestations of grace at special times. The rain does not fall every day, nor the snow descend every month ; seed time and harvest, summer and winter run their alternate rounds ; and in our spiritual world there has been a like succession of influences. At one time the whole community are aroused to religious thought, the conscience of multitudes is quickened to a new remorse, their fears are impelling them to rush together for the narrow path. At such a time a new variety of discourse is needed, a fresh vigor of appeal, an unwonted pungency of exhortation, a novel boldness of rebuke. This change in the pulpit arouses men to look at truth in an unusual aspect, and though they had become callous to a doctrine in one relation, they are now sensitive to it in a different bearing. The occasional coming in of this peculiar style is one variety in the pulpit ; so its occasional going out must be another. It has been said that these seasons of special excitement may be protracted through life. But then they could not be special. Then they could not be revivifying, awakening processes. It is not in human nature to endure a long continued agitation of those sensibilities which are prominent in the simultaneous rousing of an entire parish to the work of pressing sinners into the kingdom of God. There need be no inequality between the degree of holiness exercised during a religious awakening, and the degree put forth when

there is no concentrated attention of multitudes on the one query: What must we do to be saved. But there should be a variety in the mode of manifesting that unchanged degree of holiness. As the farmer will not plant in the winter, nor reap in the springtime, nor always busy himself in breaking up the fallow ground, but must sometimes lift up the axe upon the thick trees, and sometimes gently train the vine upon the trellis, and sometimes may sit down in the cool of the evening and enjoy the fruits of his toil, and regale himself with the freshness of the new-mown hay; so the spiritual husbandman may be equally faithful in his service while he variegates the method of it. Forty years ago Dr. Channing remarked: "I have noticed that after a revival of religion in a church, the church becomes wearied with its minister and dismisses him;" so it was inferred that the Spirit of God was not in the revival. This is no logical inference. The logical inference may have been, that the minister did not follow the intimations of the Divine Spirit; he did not respect the law which God has written in the human soul that one sensibility be relieved by another. He became wearisome by the monotony of his addresses. His pressure of truth was so unvaried that it became a mere puncture. He plied his hearers so long with one motive that he merely pained them. He worked upon the sensibilities until he wore upon them. He penetrated them until he lacerated them, and they were wounded and inflamed. If the terror of men be too much protracted, it will petrify them into monuments of the fact that the law worketh wrath. If they are too continuously anxious, they will become sore vexed. It is grateful to see the clear shining of the sun after a rain, to feel the gentle fanning of the breeze after the winds have blown and beaten upon the house. It is not a change from truth to falsehood, which men need, but from one form of truth to another. Not necessarily is it a sign of the entire sinfulness of our hearers that they are pained by the unvaried iteration of one doctrine; the original make of the soul is adverse to such sameness of appeal. The office of the preacher is to

watch for souls, and therefore to watch for the times and the seasons, to find out the alternating wants of his hearers, to assimilate his words to these varying needs, to bring out from his treasury things new and old, to move whenever the Divine Spirit moves, to turn whithersoever that Spirit turns, to retain one substance of doctrine, and that substance a broad one, but to hold it up in all its forms, those forms as various as the hints of the divine word, or the promptings of the Divine Spirit. There is only one firmament above us; but there are sunshine and moonlight and starlight, twilight and thick darkness, and rolling clouds and rain and snow and hail and sleet, and tempest and hurricane and lightning and meteors; — so rich in the variety of its phases is the truth of God, which is as the firmament forever and forever.

These principles in regard to variety of style extend not only to a variety of themes and the modes of treating them; to the interchange of extemporaneous with written discourses and with those wholly or partially committed to memory; to the intermingling of argumentative, didactic, hortatory, historical, biographical, and expository sermons; but also to various minor methods, some of which have been but seldom adopted. There may be circumstances in which a pastor may appropriate one part of the Sabbath to familiar lectures on the Bible, perhaps on the Sabbath-school lesson of the ensuing week. He may come down from the pulpit, and deliver them from a lower platform. He may previously inform his hearers of the passage to be explained; may request them to present their questions to him; may read these questions and answer them; may thus make his discourse a kind of dignified conversation with his people, who thus become his scholars. If he be a man of quick thought and ready utterance, and if his hearers be sober inquirers for the truth, he may encourage them to present extemporaneous questions, and thus variegate the exercise by a rapid dialogue. But if he be a man of slow mind, and if his hearers be ostentatious and pert, he must remember that a

layman may ask questions which a clergyman cannot answer, and the grove of the academy may be perverted into a bear-garden.

It is true that the services of the Lord's house require a dignified stability, and a minister may give too great indulgence to the love of change. A wise man must make his own rules for his peculiar exigencies, and avoid an extreme either of uniformity or of variety. Alluding to Dr. Payson's diversified exertions for the welfare of his people, his biographer aptly quotes the well-known lines :

" And as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies ;
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

When this inventive pastor had lost the sense of feeling in his right arm and left side, and so had become incapable of making a gesture with his right arm, he preached one of his last and most affecting sermons. "On pronouncing the blessing, he requested the congregation to resume their seats. He descended from the pulpit, and took his station in front of it, and commenced a most solemn appeal to the assembly. He began with a recognition of that feeling in an auditory, which leads them to treat a minister's exhortations as if they were merely a discharge of professional duty, by one placed above them and having little sympathy with them. 'I now put aside the minister,' said he ; 'I come down among you ; place myself on a visible equality ; I address you as a fellow-man, a friend, a brother, and fellow-traveller to the bar of God ; as one equally interested with yourselves in the truths which I have been declaring.' He then gave vent to the struggling emotions of his heart, in a strain of affectionate entreaty, expressing the most anxious desires for their salvation . . . Though his withered arm hung helpless by his side, yet he seemed instinct with life,"¹ etc. One man can do at one time what he cannot wisely do again, and what another man cannot wisely do at any time. But every pastor can do

¹ Payson's Works, Vol. i. Memoir, pp. 395, 396.

much in so diversifying his services on the Sabbath as to make his audience expect a freshness and new life in every new service. Nothing repels so many from the sanctuary as the apprehension of tediousness. Dr. Johnson's remark on tediousness in an author is emphatically true of tediousness in a preacher: "It is the most fatal of all faults. Negligence or errors are single and local, but tediousness pervades the whole; other faults are endured and forgotten, but the power of tediousness propagates itself. He that is weary the first hour is more weary the second, as bodies forced into motion contrary to their tendency pass more and more slowly through every successive interval of space."

Each of the preceding rules may be explained and modified by the *sixth* and last one. In order to maintain a permanent interest in the services of the sanctuary, they should be appropriate.

They should be appropriate to the theme of the discourse. Every sermon should make some one truth prominent, and the style of writing and of elocution should be in harmony with that one truth. The spirit of it should breathe itself forth in the prayers and in the songs of the service; and every service will have a fresh interest because it is unique. An obvious fault of the Catholic worship is, that on almost every Sabbath there *appears* to be an unvaried routine of prayers and praises. Week after week, month after month, come the same tones, the same gestures; and the feelings of the hearer are not prepared for any peculiar utterance of doctrine. The priest of this Sabbath *seems* to be clothed in the same robes which were worn by the priest of the last Sabbath, although the two preachers are strangely dissimilar in form; and the doctrine, if there be any, held forth to-day is shrouded in the same formalities which covered up the doctrine held forth yesterday. The material and the spiritual clothing are made to fit everybody and therefore nobody, everything and therefore nothing. At length there rises a longing of the well-trained heart that the same things be not shown to them on the next Sabbath.

The instructions of the sanctuary should be appropriate to the hearers, as well as to the theme. In many denominations on the continent of Europe there is a pericope established by ecclesiastical authorities, and the discourses for every Sabbath must be founded on texts selected and prescribed centuries ago as the theme for that day. No peculiarities of the hearers, no casualties, no parochial or domestic joys authorize any deviation from the stereotyped order. Food is given where medicine is needed. But a doctrine has a *meaning* at one hour which it has not at another hour. It continues to awaken the reverence of men, if it be preached when it has its peculiar force. A word fitly spoken, how good is it. Some musical instruments give only a harsh noise when sounded alone, but in consonance with a full band they redouble its thrilling influence. If he who singeth songs to a heavy heart be as vinegar to nitre, much more does he who utters a truth to minds unprepared for it produce a needless confusion. We may injure the moral, as well as the physical, system by giving to either a stimulant when it demands a sedative. There has been a report, false we believe, yet once common, that Oliver Cromwell consoled himself on his death-bed with the hope that as he had been in his youth regenerated, so he would at last be saved, although he was aware of his having filled up the interval between the earliest and the latest years of his regenerate life with unmitigated selfishness. If this report were true, and if, relying on his old experience, he had been merely assured by his chaplain that all who have been once renewed will be reclaimed from their apostasy before they die, he would have been harmed by the assurance. It would have been truth at the wrong time, which is like food at the wrong time. It would have been one part of a truth separated from the other parts of it, which is like the alcohol separated from the wheat. Dr. Owen or Dr. Bates might have been refreshed by the same thought which would have enfeebled the man who encouraged himself in sin because he trusted in the mercy of God. Multitudes of unfaithful

men are reposing a one-sided confidence in the mercy of God, when they ought to reflect on him as a consuming fire. On the other hand there are multitudes who feel the terrors of a slave in view of his justice, when they ought to be soothed by the tones of his grace. When our Saviour was addressing the Pharisees, he did not condemn the open impiety of their Sadduceean enemies, nor in preaching to the Sadducees did he inveigh against pharisaical pomp. But when the Pharisees were before him he spoke of hypocrisy, the sin for which they were noted; and when the Sadducees were before him he proved the resurrection of the dead. In the hearing of the Jews he advocated a comprehensive benevolence, and praised the good Samaritan; for this benevolence was the grace which did not adorn the Jews, and the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. But in the hearing of the Samaritans he defended the Jewish orthodoxy, and said: "Ye worship ye know not what; but we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews." It was in this fitting style that he aroused the prejudices of selfish zealots; and they said: "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did." His words were like nails fastened in a sure place. His auditors expected from him something *opposite*, something which they could *remember*; and even when their wills rebelled against his truth, yet they had involuntary impulses to hear it again and again; for as cold water to a thirsty soul, so is an apt remark, even to the man who is chilled by it. "It is not," says Archdeacon Paley, "the truth of what we are about to offer which alone we ought to consider, but whether the argument itself be likely to *correct* or to *promote* the turn or bias of opinion to which we already perceive *too* strong a tendency. Without this circumspection, we may be found to have imitated the folly of the architect who placed his buttress on the wrong side. The more the column pressed, the more firm was its construction, and the deeper the foundation, the more certainly it hastened the ruin of the fabric."¹

¹ Works, Vol. v. p. 35.

But the services of the sanctuary must be appropriate not only to the theme and to the audience, but also to the preacher; to his character, to his office, to the time when and to the place where, he preaches. It is often difficult to make the preacher's words appropriate both to himself and to some classes of his auditors. His sphere of thought is higher than theirs. In coming down to them he may appear unnatural; but he must come down. When an educated man converses with operatives and mechanics, he talks, if he be a man of sense, not of *his* subjects, Plato and Homer; but of *their* subjects, mills and manufactories. So when he preaches, he must leave the plane of his own thoughts and move toward that of his people's thoughts. Our Saviour when on earth did not converse in the words which angels use, but he spoke of planting, fishing, trading, making bread, constructing houses and wine-presses. Hence "the common people heard him gladly," and his disciples requested him to speak *again* on the same topics. But while in some particulars it is not, in other particulars it is, easy for a man of culture to combine a style befitting himself with a style befitting his people.

It is appropriate to him that he speak with *authority*. Therefore he is to select those themes on which he is supposed to know more than his hearers know. These are the truths revealed in the Bible, with which, if he be a real minister, he is more familiar than laymen are. His themes are duties implied in *evangelical* truths, and his life is consecrated to the developing and enforcing of what men ought to *do* in relation to those Christian truths which they ought to *believe*. Now, the more nearly his words approach to a rehearsal of the divine mandates, so much the more authoritative may be his style. He is to rule over his church, because he is the representative of his Master, and fortifies his own utterances by the plea: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me;" "it is not I that speak, but the Father who speaketh in me." The preacher is to have a sway, but it is to be the sway of the gospel, the sway of

Jehovah. There are emergencies, indeed, in which he may advise and recommend and suggest a scheme with regard to which others may decide as well as he; but if he be accustomed to let down the authority of his ministrations, they will cease to command the homage of the people; and his pulpit, which ought to be the place where "thus saith the Lord," will sink to the level of a political rostrum. In the eighteenth century a German pastor discoursed on the danger of bearing lighted candles at night through the house and barn; but even the servants who heard him were more capable than himself of judging with regard to that practice. They did not crowd the temple of God to learn the truth with regard to that practice. In our own land, a very few years ago, a pastor discoursed on the importance of voting for James Buchanan as President of the Union. But if this pastor had qualified himself to speak with confidence in giving this counsel, he must have wasted on partisan newspapers the time that he should have consecrated to the volumes of theological science. He must have dissipated his mind on political details, when he ought to have concentrated it on moral principles. So far as he leaves the truths of the gospel, just so far does he leave his profession; and so far as he leaves his profession, just so far does he lose his authority, and, like the giant shorn of his locks, his strength will go from him, and he will become weak, and be like other men.

Again, it is appropriate to the minister that he so preach as to make the *principles* of goodness prominent in his ministrations. He is sent to establish *moral principles* which are eternal, and not to ferret out the fleeting appearances of each new day. He is a minister of God. Therefore his main themes must be the perfections of God, the government of God, the redemptive scheme of God. His hearers should flock into the sanctuary *expecting* to catch a glimpse of some new glories in the character of the Sovereign; to be quickened with some new impulse for praising him whom they ought to prize above their chief joy. Love to Jehovah;

submission to him ; the supreme desire to please him by obeying him ; trust in Christ ; union with him ; repentance for sin ; resistance to it ; self-denial for the welfare of others ; forgiveness of enemies ; patience under insult ; firmness in adhering to the right ; these, and such as these, must be so commonly the topics of the pulpit that hearers will be trained to *anticipate* them, and to be astonished if theories of political economy be substituted for them. The temple of God must be distinguished from the hall of a political caucus ; and if hearers are led to expect a political harangue when and where they ought to hear a religious appeal, they will ere long absent themselves from the house of prayer, and devote their Sabbaths to the perusal of newspapers. *If* they be drawn into the sanctuary, they will not be allured to it *as a sanctuary*, the eloquence *in* the pulpit will not be the eloquence *of* the pulpit, and *if one* minister should so fascinate his auditors as to retain them Sabbath after Sabbath in his lecture-room, he would still vitiate their taste, indispose them to hear a truly religious sermon, and prevent them if they should ever hear one, from beseeching that the same things be preached to them on the next Sabbath. It does indeed require a delicate tact to ascertain the line beyond which a minister should not pass in illustrating an evangelical truth by political movements ; but we may be sure that he has crossed over that line when his name has become associated first of all with political theories ; when every allusion to his discourses suggests first of all some questions of civil concern. This proves that he has not made the gospel prominent, but has made a secular scheme prominent.

The idea of the sanctuary ought to be an idea of holy worship, and as there can be no heaven, unless the Lamb be the light thereof, so there can be no real worship unless the *truth* of God shine through it and in it and around it. In many European churches the congregation are drawn together by the music ; it is the chant, rather than the large thought ; it is the concord of sweet sounds, rather than the harmony of truths ; it is sound, and nothing but sound, which

allures men into the house which is *called* the house of prayer; and as they have gratified their sense with the notes of the choir, multitudes leave the sanctuary as soon as the text of the sermon is announced; sometimes they go directly from the doors of the house of God to the beer-garden. A theatre on the Sabbath has in their mind the same associations as a cathedral. In England it has been proposed to dispense with the sermon in the church altogether, and confine the service to the chants and the liturgy. In our own country it has been proposed that the minister preach but once on the Sabbath, and that he substitute Bible-classes for his second sermon. But the minister knows or ought to know better than the laymen, *what* to say, *when* and *how* to say it; he can speak the truth more effectively than his choir can sing it; and so far as he abandons his pulpit, which is his throne, he ceases to rule over his people, and there is danger that the Bible-classes will fail to present the truth in its dignity and authority, and that the chants and the liturgies will sink into the ceremonies of a play-house.¹

Again, it is appropriate to the minister that he preach with the obvious design of promoting the divine glory by promoting the regeneration and sanctification of *his* hearers. His

¹ Dr. John Edwards, an eminent divine of the church of England, writing in 1705, says: "In prayer we make our addresses to God, and speak to him, whereas in preaching he vouchsafes to speak to us, which makes this performance the more honorable If we are heartily desirous that the Almighty should give ear to us when we pray, it is certain we shall be desirous and forward to hearken to his voice when he speaks to us by his ministers. . . . By the benefit of preaching we come to understand how we are to pray, and for what; by prayer we gain the divine assistance to enable us to perform what we hear. Hearing guides and directs our prayers, and prayer conveys a blessing on what we hear. In short, hearing without praying is of no use, as, on the other hand, praying without hearing is wholly insignificant, for an infallible author hath told us that 'he who turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination' (Prov. xxviii. 9). So that upon the whole matter impartially weighed, prayer and hearing must go together, and not be separated. . . . As prayer in some respects is preferable to preaching and hearing, so these in other respects have the preference of that, which is confirmed to us by what the wise man saith: 'Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools' (Eccl. v. 1)."

first office is not to influence a *political election*, but to persuade men to become more and more reconciled to God. If he exhort them to perform some external service, it should be a service obviously connected with the religious life, and the style of that exhortation should be fitted to quicken that life. If he urge them to erect a meeting-house, or to endow a college, or to form a temperance society, his conspicuous aim must be not merely to build up an outward institution, but to cultivate a benevolent temper among those who listen to him. He aids other parishes by nurturing the philanthropy of his own parish. There has been an American divine who would read of a strange sect in Europe, and at once proceed to disprove the tenets of that sect before his own congregation who would never have heard of such a sect save for his intermeddling. Whenever he heard of a new error in any remote section of his own country, he would devote an entire sermon to the refutation of that error, which would have remained hidden from his auditors but for his much speaking. Now a pastor is not called to be the shepherd of his flock in order that he may first of all benefit absent and distant folds, but in order that he may do good to those who are assigned to his keeping. If he write his discourses, primarily, that he may do good to a succeeding generation, he will be sure to lose his posthumous fame. If he write them primarily in order to instruct the nation through the press, he will stumble like the man who walks among pitfalls and keeps his eye fixed on the stars. He should say of his discourses as the Master said of his final prayer: I *preach* not for the world, but for them that are given to me out of the world, that the world *through them* may believe.

Once more, it is appropriate to the minister that he so exhibit the conspicuous features and the evident bearings of the gospel as to guide his hearers in the religious discharge of their civil duties. The temple should never be degraded into a forum; but every forum should catch the reflections of the temple. The pulpit should exhibit principles that will instruct men in domestic duties; but it should not busy

itself with the minute details of domestic life. It is a *conspicuous* feature of the gospel, that it befriends the poor. When preachers of this gospel have attempted to justify the practice of enslaving the African, they must have impaired the continuous influence of their pulpit by intricate and special pleading. If slavery could not be justified without recondite argument, it should not have been justified in the pulpit. It is the *evident* tendency of the gospel to nurture a *spirit* of peace, and of obedience to the powers that are ordained of God. When preachers of this gospel have attempted to inflame the passion for war and for rebellion, where the interests of virtue did not obviously demand battle and revolutions, they must have weakened the permanent interest of their pulpits by abstruse and sophistical reasonings. If the *patent* instructions of the Bible are not in favor of a civil strife, the pulpit is no place for commending it. The man lectures on politics when he is compelled to hide the plain bearings of the gospel in behalf of enslaved men, its palpable remonstrances against needless war. But he preaches religion when he holds up the prominent duties of the Bible, makes its conspicuous features stand out in bold relief, and so unfolds the tendencies of the Christian system as to regulate not absent men, but his own hearers, not in mere political action, but in their efforts to bring religious principle into that action. He must have a broad culture, or he will swing like a pendulum from one to an opposite extreme in his relations to the State.

On the other hand it is not uncommon for one minister to start from the axiom that he is set apart for the enforcement of *divine* truth, and therefore must abstain from all allusion to the affairs of the commonwealth, even in the most perilous emergency. He must imitate the Analogy of Butler, which, it has been said, would lead no reader to conjecture when or where, how or with whom, the author lived. One consequence is, that men do not care to have him preach the same things to them on the next Sabbath, when these things are sure to have no affinity with the schemes which absorb them; when

he refuses even so much as to *illustrate* the genius of the gospel by a reference to political duty, and discourses as if it were not a duty because it is political; when he excludes all the morals of statesmanship from the sphere of religion, as if religion could not rise so high as to control a commonwealth. He will indeed enunciate abstract principles; but these have no force unless they are so presented that they may be applied to particular exigencies. The gospel may be preached through the live-long year in vague abstractions, and no individual or national sin will be rebuked. David might have been *amused* for his life-time with unapplied parables, but "Thou art the man" was needed for pointing the truth to his conscience. More than one preacher has been so sensitive to the evil of disturbing the church by civil broils that, on the Sabbath after he has witnessed a slaveholder's tyranny, he has devoted his sermons to the proof that the atonement was *not* made for all men. On the Sabbath after he has listened to the turgid boasts of demagogues threatening to resist the government which they were under oath to sustain, he has merely filled his discourses with the proof that the sin of Adam *was* imputed to all men. It is not extravagant to affirm that our Southern States would never have adventured on their fratricidal war, if the clergy of these States had been faithful to the emergencies of the day; if they had preached the duty of a master's loving his slaves as himself, treating them as he would himself be treated; on the master's duty to be himself industrious, frugal, temperate, reverent in his language, not arrogant or high-minded, not a duellist or a gambler, not envious of superiors, not revengeful for the loss of office, but submissive to the powers that be, studying the things that make for peace: "if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Generations now unborn would have revered our Southern pastors if, instead of meeting the exigencies of their lot by discoursing on doctrines out of place and out of time, they had enforced such obvious principles as would have led every master to toil for the freedom of his slaves; if

they had condemned such obvious sins as lay at the root of the slave system, if they had reiterated such obvious rules as would have subdued into a meek temper those who were infuriated with the spirit of carnage. The very structure of the human soul is such, that for all deliberate refusals to speak his word in season, God will take away the *abiding* honor of his ministers. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman over the house of Israel: give them warning; if thou give him not warning, the wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand."

An evil of extremes is that one impels to another. There are preachers disgusted with the inanity of all vague discourses, who therefore plunge their Sabbath hearers into the mere details of politics. They pretend to be illustrating a moral principle, but their illustrations are voluminous, and the principle is buried under them. Religion is not their *apparent* theme. Piety is not their *conspicuous* topic. They may by dint of argument prove that there is some alliance of their teaching with the clear principles of the gospel, but it is *not these clear principles* which give the tone to their discourses. It is the sense of fitness, and not the successive links of argument, which must determine whether or not a sermon be evangelical. For example: this country is important for the cause of missions, for the preservation of civil and religious freedom throughout the world; therefore the pulpit which promotes the welfare of the world must plead for the welfare of the nation; certain politicians are sanctioning an injurious policy; these politicians must be denounced by name in the pulpit; the speeches of this senator and that representative must be dissected, their sophistries exposed in the pulpit. Certain schemes, sanitary, perhaps, were deemed essential to the welfare of our soldiers in the late war; these schemes were unfolded and the method of executing them developed in certain pulpits. Pursuing the same course ministers might have stood in their place and preached on the structure of the Dahlgren gun, as best fitted to defend our

army and thus to preserve our Union, and thus advance the welfare of the world. Now when a clergyman has bidden farewell to the sense of propriety, it takes but a little logic to turn him into a mere instrument of politicians. He can never retain the interest which belongs to a prophet of the Lord, if he allow himself to be used as an iron-clad ship, turned whithersoever the captain listeth. He is not a weapon of steel, but a soul; and his interest as well as duty is, not to be handled by statesmen, but to look for principles which should rule the statesmen, and to hold up truths which will aid men in searching out the details of their civil duties.

The preceding trains of remark suggest objections to various methods which are adopted for alluring men into the sanctuary. Some of these methods consist in substituting not only political, but also other kinds of secular disquisitions for the preaching of the gospel. But the question which we have now been examining is: How shall a minister present *evangelical truth* so as to perpetuate the interest of men in listening to it. It assumes that the Sabbath and the worship of the sanctuary were instituted for the presentation of this truth, and that both will be ultimately neglected if they be given over to secular themes. A sermon on the merits of Bismark, or of the Duke of Wellington, or of rival candidates for a lucrative office, may attract multitudes to hear it, but may indispose them for listening afterward to sermons on the doctrines of the Bible. Some of these methods consist in associating religious topics with fantastic or farcical trains of thought. But the taste for these grotesque relations of doctrine is a disease, and grows by what it feeds on, and will end in such a hankering after amusement as the preacher's ingenuity will be unable to satisfy. Some of these methods consist in publishing advertisements of extraordinary scenes to be enacted in the sanctuary on the Sabbath. But these advertisements will be overmatched by the placards of "spiritualists" and "mediums" and infidel lecturers, who will exhibit their arts on the same day. Other methods

consist in making the sermons easy and short. The rules for preaching are given thus: "This is the age of railroads and steamboats; therefore be brief"; Preach as if you yourself were obliged to telegraph your own sermon across the continent"; "Three words are enough for a sentence, and even a short word is better than a long word at that"; "Imitate the merchant who utters his monosyllable, and is off about his business"; "Some things may be now taken for granted, such as that there has been a flood," etc. But the rule should be, not make your sermon short, not make it long, but make it appropriate to the theme and the occasion. A sermon like one of Dr. Barrow's may exhaust the subject and the preacher and the hearer, and may prompt some persons who have been afflicted with it never to expose themselves to a similar calamity. So an easy and short and superficial sermon may induce other persons to remain at home, and read a sensible discourse, rather than hear remarks utterly inadequate to their theme. We need not wonder why so many members of our parishes disbelieve in "the flood," in the fact of creation, in the substantial unity of the race, in the truth of the Bible, when we shrink from all such topics in our sermons, and treat every doctrine as if it were too frail to be touched. Other methods consist in adorning the house of God, elevating its roof, darkening its windows making it majestic with pillars, introducing marble statues and statuettes, etc. Are all these attractions appropriate to the enforcement of religious truth? So far as they are not, they will cultivate not a taste, but a distaste for evangelical discourses. "Raise me but a barn in the very shadow of St. Paul's cathedral, and with the conscience-searching powers of a Whitefield I will throng that barn with a multitude of eager listeners, while the matins and the vespers of the cathedral shall be chanted to the statues of the mighty dead."