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ARTICLE I.

A FEW MORE WORDS ON THE REVISED BOOK OF DISCIPLINE.

From recent indications we are inclined to think that the tide of prejudice which, at first, set so violently against the Revised Book of Discipline, has begun to ebb, and that the current is now changing in its favor. Objections are daily losing their force, misapprehensions quietly subsiding, and the propriety of the changes becoming more obvious; and although the mind of the Church is not yet fully prepared to adopt the book, yet, the estimate which is now formed of it is very different from that which prevailed a year ago. Even the tone of its assailants is significantly changed; instead of the bold shout of confident defiance with which they at first rushed to the assault, as if victory were as sure as the attack, they have come at length to perceive that there are weapons on the other side as bright and as keen as their own, and that if they succeed in achieving a triumph it will be after a hard conflict, and with strong misgivings as to the inherent righteousness of their cause. In this posture of affairs we have thought that

the true children of God as the objects of their faith, veneration and love. Like the pillar of fire, they illumine the pathway of Israel, but shed thick darkness on Israel's foes.

As the ancient mysteries were carefully shrouded from public gaze, and none but the initiated were permitted to behold their awful secrets; or by a more fit comparison, as only he who was appointed of God, could enter the Holy of Holies, where dwelt the dreadful Shechinah, so, "no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Thus it is that that marvellous thanksgiving fell so naturally from the lips of Him who stood with little children in his arms, caressing and blessing them, but spurned from his presence the lordly Sadducee, the sanctimonious Pharisee and the haughty Scribe: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."



ARTICLE IV.

PRESBYTERIAN PREACHING AT THE SOUTH.

The Presbyterian Church maintains its ancient repute for the soundness of its doctrines, the excellence of its polity, and the learning of its ministry. Its attention to education, and its adaptedness to the religious training of the young, now as formerly, commend it to the favorable consideration of all intelligent persons. Its firm conservatism in these days of novelties in politics, morals and science, gives to it a strong hold upon the sympathies and the judgment of the public. It is still a bulwark against error, and a standard against iniquity. Its government still illustrates the dream of civil perfectibility—strength in administration, with popular representation. It rejoices still in its historic renown. It still points without ex-

ultation, yet with inoffensive pride, to its long roll of patriotic civil reformers, profound theologians, and eloquent defenders of the faith. Its ministry is eminent for piety and learning. Among them are a few who, in all the elements of ministerial greatness, compare favorably with the most distinguished of any previous epoch. Its membership love it with ardent affection, and wait upon its ministrations with profound veneration. Whilst these things are true, yet it does not exert the power that is due to its pure faith, its admirable system of government, and the numbers, wealth, intelligence and other gifts of its membership. It does not lay as strong a hold, apparently, upon the masses as is laid, for example, by the Methodist Church. It does not perform its proper proportion, therefore, of the work to which, in part at least, all Church organizations are called, viz: the salvation of individual souls. If these statements be true, and our inference from them legitimate, no one will question the propriety of an inquiry into the causes of this state of things. If, indeed, affection for the Church, and zeal for its honor, fail to move such an enquiry, the good of men and the glory of God imperiously demand it.

We do not propose to examine into all the causes which hinder the usefulness of our Church. This would be to assume a task for which we are not qualified. They are numerous; we venture to discuss but one. That one lies outside the range of theological or constitutional discussion. We propose to leave the doctrines and the constitution of the Church intact. We have no fault to find with them. What we have to say is offered with a humility that shrinks from dictation, and yet, with a hope that aspires to usefulness. The cause to which we refer is found in the *manner of Presbyterian preaching*. It is deficient in earnestness, and this deficiency is attributable mainly to the habit of writing and reading sermons.

We are aware that we present no new topic for consideration, and freely admit it to be one which has long occupied the mind of the Church, and elicited frequent and able discussion. Indeed, it is not unfrequently claimed to be no longer an open question; and it may be conceded, that a majority of the able

men of our ministry and our judicatories, seem to acquiesce in the idea, that strength in matter, logical arrangement, and scholastic finish are the properties in a sermon which are best adapted to usefulness ; and that these are secured most easily by writing and reading. It will be seen, that this article makes no especial war upon the former of these propositions, but denies the truth of the latter. Not a few, however, of the most able, conscientious, and observing men of this day, Lay and Clerical, condemn the views of the majority. They think that Presbyterian preaching is too cold and didactic ; that it is addressed too exclusively to the intellect ; that it fails to move the heart and arouse the sympathies ; that earnestness of manner is quenched in the abounding waters of formalism, and as a necessary result, men are not converted, and the Church makes no adequate progress. And they go farther, and say that these objectionable things are the result, in great part, of the habit under review. If, indeed, the habit is in the judgment of the Church, engrafted upon the pulpit, then we do not hesitate to say that the time has arrived when that fixed fact should be unsettled. It is unsuited to the exigencies of the times, and to the genius of our people and our institutions. Let no one be alarmed at the idea of innovation. We are not persons "studious of change." Our doctrines, we trust, are to remain immovable as the foundations of the eternal Throne, from which they emanate, and our beautiful constitution as stable as the truth which it upholds. As to forms, habits and usages, they are wisely left to the varying necessities of times, occasions, popular conditions, and localities, although even they are to be touched with caution and forbearance. But it would be a slander upon the Presbyterian system to deny to it a power of adaptation. Such a power is inherent in its fundamental principles. If that were wanting, then indeed it would soon be but the monument of a by-gone glory, a wreck stranded upon the sands of an already receded sea.

It would be more curious than profitable to enquire whence came the reading of sermons. Is it according to the old ways ? In our country it is rather an ancient usage, it is true ; but

still an innovation. Our Saviour gave no literal instructions as to the manner of preaching. His example certainly gives no countenance to written discourses. He wrote nothing, but orally taught a system of religion that has confounded all human philosophy, and triumphed over all human resistance. He had the eloquence, as well as the wisdom and power, of a God, and, therefore, it may be said that his example is not, in this particular, a guide to men. We, however, must believe that infinite wisdom would have adopted just that mode of promulgating the truth of its own revelation, best adapted to the end. And although He caused them to be recorded for propagation and perpetuation, yet now, as then, men are converted by the foolishness of preaching; that is, the foolishness of oral instruction. The old way was to speak out the grand truths of redemption with the plainness, boldness, directness and fervor of one awfully in earnest; the mind filled with conviction, the heart glowing with love, the eye kindled with a holy enthusiasm, the hand raised in emphatic warning, the voice attuned to the varying demands of persuasion, and the whole person instinct with light and life. Such, I imagine, was Noah, great primal type of the true minister, when he preached righteousness and a coming deluge. Such was Peter, when Pentecostal triumphs crowned his ministry, and Paul, when he made to tremble the governor at Cesarea, or shook alike the Mythology of the Greeks at Athens, and the Paganism of the Romans in the Imperial City. Such was Apollos, when he watered the Churches, and the amiable John, when he led the untaught Gallileans to the foot of the cross. Such was Luther at Worms, the Scottish Reformers on the hill-sides, Whitfield, Wesley, and the Blairs and Tennents of our Church Colonial History. The historical argument, we have no doubt, is demonstrative of the fact that those who have done the largest amount of good in all the Churches, have preached the Gospel without the aid of manuscripts. It is not our purpose to trace it. If it be said that the example of the Apostles proves nothing, because they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, we reply that if the manner of their preaching was inspired, about which we presume

not to speak, that manner was given for our instruction. Human nature is the same now that it was in the days of the Apostles, and the means that were effective then, to subdue it to the obedience of the Cross, we have a right to conclude, will be effective now.

To avoid misconstruction, let it be understood that no censure is intended to be cast upon those who read. They act from a well-considered sense of duty, and are among the best men of the ministry. Their praise is in all the Churches. They are trained to a habit from which it is difficult, and in some instances, impossible to depart. Those who are but entering upon the work of the ministry, and others who can preach with equal facility upon either plan, but read from choice, as being more useful and less exacting, may and ought to review this whole subject. The suggestions of this article are intended for Presidents and Professors in Colleges and Seminaries, and others who are, in the providence of God, advisors of students of Divinity—for students themselves, and those who have but recently donned the ministerial harness. We crave the indulgence of grave and learned fathers and doctors. It can do no harm, if no good, for them to know the views of one who does not wear their cloth. Nor is it to be understood that every thing is repudiated as the preaching of the Gospel, except unwritten discourses. Far from it. Various are the agencies ordained of God to draw his erring creatures to Himself. The sacred volume, religious literature, exposition, dissertation, the trials and the triumphs of the Church, providence, nature, art, science, all commend and enforce the religion of heaven. And various, too, are the agencies of ministerial service. The true minister is, in his life and character, a continuous appeal, a perpetual discourse. His daily walk, his private conversation, his whispered councils, his closet labors, the air and attitude of the man, are eloquent testimonials of his fidelity to the injunction of his great commission. Certainly there are times and occasions when written sermons are appropriate. Upon the opening of Presbyteries, Synods, and Assemblies; when peculiarly important subjects are to be

presented to peculiarly intelligent audiences ; whenever and wherever it becomes necessary to defend the doctrines of the Church upon authority and with argument ; when pastors find it desirable to instruct their people in the tenets of their own communion, and upon all like occasions, the manner of preaching may be safely left to a wise discretion. What we insist upon is, that in the ordinary services of the pulpit, for the edification of saints, and particularly when the claims of the Gospel are presented, and men are to be wooed and won to the allegiance of God, the manuscript should be laid aside, and the herald of heaven should blow the trumpet with unobstructed breath. Writing is a valuable disciplinary exercise, and conduces to accurate thinking and logical reasoning. But writing, even without a purpose to read, should be occasional only ; otherwise it might stand in the way of what I propose to show is far better—a habit of thinking, reasoning and speaking, without the aid of pen and paper. If one must needs write, then it seems to me that the need is equally urgent that he burn what is written. With cheerfulness, and, we will add, with gratitude, we concede that earnestness and eloquence are not always incompatible with reading. Some of the most successful servants of the Church, wise, good, and great men, always read. What then ? Why, they are eloquent and successful by reason of singular gifts, in spite of the manuscript. But you, O Brother, that have not these gifts, if you would add daily to the Church of such as shall be saved, and multiply the stars in your own crown of rejoicing, and swell the anthem of the redeemed which shall roll around the Throne forever, discard the manuscript !

The following form of words, perhaps, as well as any other, embraces the great theme of all evangelical preaching : Man is a fallen creature, and has by sin incurred the just condemnation of God, yet is recoverable, and can only be recovered through faith in the incarnate Son of the Father. This is the life-time text of the minister. It is wide in its range, as the entire scheme of man's redemption, and awful as his eternal

destiny. Its capacity for amplification is boundless. He is its expositor, its advocate, and its exponent.

Salvation through the mediation of Christ, is the central truth of the Gospel. The Cross is the sign in which humanity conquers. Around this revolves the glorious machinery of redemption. To the Cross all truth and all morals converge. Go where he may in the fields of theological enquiry, if he is called of God, the minister will return ever and anon to the Cross. In it all the mysteries of revelation find, if not a full, a sufficient solution. In its presence, creeds, and dogmas, and formularies, and distinctions, are as nothing. O, the power, the glory, and the mystery of the Cross! Great, too, is the mystery of conversion! A soul saved, through an agency so simple as to be denounced by the wisdom of this world as foolishness. A word, a text, a tear, a sigh, may, by grace, achieve that which all the rhetoric of all the schools is impotent to accomplish—conviction of sin; and then follows, again, by grace, repentance, faith and rejoicing. A sinful man stands confessed a new creature—radiant with the joys of Heaven. The first, the paramount obligation of the ministry, is to preach Christ and Him crucified—to rear the Cross in the vision of all men. He is a swift herald to announce good news—a messenger of mercy, tendering terms to a revolted world. His leading objects are to convince men that they are lost sinners, that they may be saved, and that, among the declared possibilities of God's omnipotence, there is no salvation but in the blood of Christ. We stop not now to illustrate the ineffable solemnity of his vocation. Would that all who read these lines might realize the extent of obligation, the labor, fidelity, responsibility and sacrifice expressed in the exclamation, "Who is sufficient for these things?" We recognize the received opinion that the ministry are called of God, set apart for the work of preaching the Gospel. How called, whether especially, or under that general Providence which appoints alike the fall of a sparrow and the fall of an empire, it is bootless to enquire. It is sufficient to say, that every minister who does the work of his place, is there by Divine appointment.

It is the *sacred* ministry, because his work is sacred. It differs from all the professions among men in this, that he who enters it is, by that act, dead to the pursuits and the good of time, and consecrated to the affairs of eternity. This is the Gospel theory of the responsible status of the preacher. Terrific, beyond all imagining, will be the accounting of those who pervert it to secular purposes; who make the desk a license for licentiousness; who convert the temples of the living God into theatres for the exhibition of profane wit, the agitations of politics, the propagation of a spurious philosophy, and the display of pride, vanity and malevolence. With us it is free from such desecration. A practical construction of this *death* is not that he shall hold no connection with the things of time, that he shall not partake in its innocent joys, in the pleasures of literature, society, and family life—that he shall not regard the high obligations of master, parent and citizen; but this, that all he does, or declines to do, shall have for its paramount object the salvation of souls. To require more, would be to exact of humanity impossible perfectness; and to require less, would be to lower the standard of ministerial obligation prescribed in the Word of God. Although called of God, no one will venture to affirm that he is inspired—in the sense of a Divine communication as to acts, words, attitudes, locomotion, and mode of utterance. Faith is, we know, the gift of God. Conversion is from the Spirit—not from the preacher. Yet, as to the mode in which he shall fulfill his trust, he is a responsible free agent. How the agency of the pulpit co-works with the sovereignty of God is a mystery, in the presence of which it becomes human knowledge to veil its face. Nor does Presbytery interfere to control it. Whether, then, we look to his commission from God, or the Presbytery, he is at liberty to read or not, according to his convictions of duty. The choice is personal, and so is the responsibility. By all the obligations of his high calling, by the sanctions of God's word, by the wants of a dying world, at the peril of his own soul, he is constrained to address his fellow-men just in that way which promises the accomplishment of the largest amount of good.

What is that way? What is it at the South? This question cannot be settled by an appeal to usage, however long continued; to the opinion of departed worthies, however venerated; to convenience, aptitude, taste, or reputation. We live in what is called an age of progress, characterized by new conditions of society, brought about by changes in industrial pursuits, social habits, and modes of thinking. Improvements in Science, and discoveries in Art, have made ours an epoch unlike all others. Society, to one familiar with its state twenty years ago, wears the aspect of a new creation. *It invokes the adaptation-power of the Church.* It calls upon its ministry to determine whether a style of preaching adapted to a world in repose, may not be unsuited to a world in motion.

Dealing now in generalities, the business of the preacher is to defend the truth, to edify believers, and to persuade men to repentance. Whether he addresses himself to one or to all these objects, so far from being an aid, his manuscript is a hindrance. He is to defend the truth against the assaults of infidelity; against the interpolations and false constructions of sectaries and schismatics; against ancient error and modern reforms. To do this effectively, he must bring to his work learning and logic. He must be furnished with the material of successful controversy. He must be an educated man, and skilled in the art of discussion. Suppose that he is all this: is it necessary to an available use of his resources that he write out his argument? Can he not prepare without the intervention of writing? The assumption is that he cannot—or, at least, that he cannot so prepare as to make his preparation reliable when he appears before the people. This enquiry should start at the right point. It should begin at the beginning. It may be conceded that when the habit of writing has grown to be inveterate, he cannot trust to any other preparation. But may not the Student of Divinity, or the recent Licentiate, so accustom himself to merely intellectual preparation, as to make it not only available, but comparatively easy? There is no magic in the grasp of a pen—there is no inspiration in goose-quills or steel-points. But we are told that wri-

ting is an aid to memory. An aid to memory? It destroys the memory, and is made a substitute for it. No faculty is more improvable than memory by use, and none more easily impaired by desuetude. It may be made almost miraculously retentive, or impressionless as water. No wonder that the student, taught from the beginning that writing is indispensable, and following up the instructions of the lecture-room by rigid adherence, when he would preach *extempore*, finds that his memory is weak, that his argument is loose and confused, and his services unimpressive. No wonder that he so covets the confidence and repose of a manuscript. He is comfortable upon it, and his hearers are quite at ease under it. If, on the contrary, he is taught to believe that it is not necessary, and wholly inexpedient, and is instructed persistently in the art of mental preparation—and when he enters the ministry inscribes his thoughts on the tablet of his memory, and by practice acquires the habit of oral argumentation; he need not fear failure. He reposes upon the fidelity of an exercised mind; he is free to display the legitimate attractions of the orator; he has scope and verge for the occasional creations of the moment; he feels the power of intellectual affinity, and with imperial sway he rules his audience. The preparation necessary is not a composition in words. He who is master of his subject, who thinks clearly, is, as to words, already prepared. What we conceive strongly, we are most likely to express intelligibly. Strong thoughts are the parents of apt words. When the mind is thoroughly imbued, and the soul aroused, expression is, with many, almost an involuntary process. A great fact, a grand truth, an ardent desire, an eager hope, or a disturbing fear, does not labor for utterance. The labor of unwritten composition renders it impracticable. Whilst verbal preparation is neither necessary nor desirable, yet exception to this general proposition is to be recognized. Passages of great strength, with a view to the greatest effect, are often increased in brilliancy and power by a studied garniture of words. Let no one under-estimate the power of words. Appropriateness of language is more than a grace—it gives

impressiveness to thought. That preparation, except as above indicated, which seems to be necessary, is a thorough acquaintance with the subject—a natural classification of heads of discourse—arrangement of reasons and authorities under each head, and apt illustrations. Are not all these things possible without writing? They certainly are, in the absence of a preformed writing habit. If writing is indispensable in the Pulpit, why is it that it is repudiated at the Bar, in the Senate, and at the Hustings? It is undeniably true, that the greatest triumphs of eloquence have been achieved without it. Revolutions in opinion, in government and in manners, have been most generally effected without it. When some great truth is to be demonstrated, or right vindicated, or wrong redressed, the orator cannot afford to be encumbered with a manuscript. He demands the full play of reason, imagination, memory, attitude and action. He cannot abide the formal elaborations of the closet. Experience, the uncompromising test of truth, has demonstrated that men are led to conviction and moved to action, so far as the agency of the orator is concerned, by extemporary speaking. It is not opposed to close reasoning, logical analysis, or the skillful handling of facts. If it were, the usage of the forum would be sadly at fault. No class of men deal more in solid argument, nice distinctions and subtle discriminations, than the legal profession. And, whatever may be said to the contrary, none, except the ministry, are called to the discussion of more majestic truths. They use briefs, but rarely manuscripts. Neither Demosthenes nor Pericles unrolled the scroll before Athenian audiences. Cicero wielded the senatorial powers of Rome; Pitt controlled England and the Continent; Webster expounded the Constitution, and led the American Bar; and Patrick Henry precipitated Virginia upon the issue of liberty or death. Yet they read no speeches. When the edification of saints is the object, it would seem that writing is still less desirable. Logical demonstration is not now so much required. The precepts, promises, hopes and rewards of the Gospel are to be exhibited. The conscience is now to be quickened—faith is to be stimulated into greater

activity, and the life to be guarded with increased vigilance. Grace communicated, love bestowed and reciprocated—charity, meekness, humility and good works—are the themes to be considered. The virtues and graces of Christianity belong, in common, to the speaker and his audience. He speaks from the heart, to the heart. He and they are confessed believers. He communes with them in tender expostulation, or grave rebuke, or guarded commendation. In this mingling of the spirit of the teacher and taught, the manuscript has no place. Here, surely, preparation need not assume the formalities of a recorded argument. Suppose it does: then we know that it breaks the chain that unites the hearer and the preacher, chills the sensibilities of both, and leaves the former, it may be, intellectually edified, but religiously unimproved. It proves nothing to reply that Edwards and Chalmers read. Let no man claim them as examples, until he is conscious of having reached their mark in endowments. We are treating of common men—the ministry as a class, not of exceptional giants.

The relative importance of the several kinds of ministerial service, it is not difficult to determine. As already intimated, the chief is the invitation and warning of sinners. Neither the instruction of believers, nor the defence of doctrine, is unimportant. But in our country, doctrinal discussions are relatively less necessary than either the edification of the Church, or appeals to the impenitent. The doctrines of the Bible are to be defended, but are they not better defended through the Press—especially, now that the Press has become almost ubiquitous? The infidel, and the metaphysics of semi-infidel philosophers, are to be met by learning, research and genius, equal, if not superior to their own. This is an imperious obligation, which Christianity imposes upon all her votaries. The pulpit cannot escape from it. And, although with us there are times and localities which call for the vindication of her essential truths at the hands of the living preacher, yet it is our peculiar distinction that this is not often necessary. We are satisfied that there is less infidelity, and less of what might be called perverted Christianity, at the South, than in any part

of the world. There is abounding iniquity, and haughty irreverence, and criminal passivity; but open repudiation of the Scriptures is rare. The business, therefore, of the preacher, is not so much to defend, as to enforce the doctrines of the Church. It is not so much to explain, as to exhibit them—not so much to correct errors of opinion, as to awaken attention to acknowledged truth and obligation—not so much to demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God, as to induce men to accept the terms of His salvation.

The fact that a majority of hearers prefer it, may fairly stand for an argument in favor of extemporization. Of the truth of this there can be no reasonable doubt. Accustomed, as our people are, to the discussions of the court-house, the legislature and the canvass, and to the popular oratory of the Baptist and Methodist ministry, they do not relish Presbyterian reading. It is immaterial whether this preference is founded in good taste, or is the offspring of ignorance and prejudice. We have to deal with the fact. We need not be told that educated men must be interested in an able discourse, whether it be read or extemporized. We know this to be true. Yet we believe that the larger number of even that class of hearers prefer to listen to an able discourse delivered without the manuscript. Were it otherwise, it would seem to be expedient that the minister accommodate himself, in this regard, to the views of the larger number. It is very important for the Presbyterian Church that the people be brought under the influence of its ministry. Unless it can command the ear of the world, it is in vain that its doctrines are pure, its polity unobjectionable, and its preachers able. To do this, our ministers should become all things to all men. Large congregations are not often homogeneous. The majority are neither savans, professors, nor even graduates, and adaptation is due, not to the few, but to the many.

Irreligious men are not predisposed to listen to the instructions of the pulpit. The enmity which they feel towards God extends to the messages of His servants. They repel the moral overtures, even when they entertain the intellectual demon-

strations of the pulpit. They hear with the mind, whilst the heart is deaf. With wonderful facility, they distinguish between the argument and its moral application to themselves. Few feel as David did, when the prophet said to him, Thou art the man. Now, therefore, it is indispensable that the moral sensibilities of the hearer be aroused. He must be constrained to view both the preacher and himself from a new standpoint. The *attention of the heart*, as well as of the mind, must be secured. This necessity will exist just so long as it remains true, that with *the heart* man believeth unto righteousness.

To awaken and retain attention, it is not only necessary that the speaker should believe what he delivers, but that he should feel it, and appear to feel it. Nothing so conciliates an audience as a perception of the sincerity of the orator. More unequivocal demonstration of this is required of the preacher than of other persons. The idea that preaching is a profession merely, obtains but too generally. When it becomes apparent that he is moved, as by constraint, to preach the Gospel—that his convictions are deep and solemn, and his anxiety for the salvation of men earnest; *when he is seen to feel his message*, then it is that their attention is awakened, and he holds them in command. The mind lies open to conviction, and the heart expands in sympathy. Something of sensibility to divine truth is lost in writing and reading. The fervor of composition cannot be carried into the pulpit. Whilst writing, the mind glows with the heat of its own action, and the writer is keenly alive to the beauty, and grandeur, and adaptation of the word. In the very nature of his organization, this cannot last. Protracted tension stiffens or breaks the bow. When his work is done and laid aside for Sabbath use, exaltation sinks into depression, and he meets his audience with close reasoning and finished rhetoric, it may be, but with the dullness of a professor lecturing upon mathematics. Is it at all wonderful that they listen unmoved?—that they yield the attention of the mind, but feel no consciousness of a sacred relation to the place, the occasion and the subject! Not one hearer in fifty needs to be convinced of any essential truth of Christianity. They are

convinced already,—not *convicted* of sin, but intellectually acquiescent, in the revelations of the Bible. It is a prevalent error to assume the contrary. If they were not, the road to the intellect is in the direction of Calvary. Conversion begins at the Cross. When the preacher addresses sinners, he is a witness, rather than an expounder. He testifies upon the vision of his faith, and he should exhibit, in his solemn emotion and subdued enthusiasm, the fact that he is himself a subject of regenerating grace. No one expects of me to give, upon philosophical principles, a solution of the mystery of faith coming by hearing. Reason cannot account for it. It is enough to know that it is so ordained of God. It is the *tale of the Cross* that wins the heart and takes captive the mind. Who can tell that tale without a heaving breast and a tearful eye? It is through the emotion of the speaker that the Spirit very often visits the soul of the hearer.

Again, the written discourse is, in the judgment of the preacher, the best presentation of his subject of which he is capable, and it is penned with a view to the customary time allowed for its delivery. He has prescribed its exact boundaries. These he may not transcend, and he cannot, therefore, avail himself of such new thoughts as the occasion may require. Irrespective of the condition of his audience, he follows out the previously constructed sermon, and thus he loses, perhaps, the most favorable opportunities of making salutary impressions. If he undertakes to read, and at the same time depart, when he believes it proper, from his manuscript, both the reading and the departures will be weakened. He cannot do both.

If a pastor should read a sermon of Dr. Dwight or Robert Hall, surpassing in ability any thing that he could produce, the exercise would meet with the condemnation of nine out of ten of his people, and repetitions would soon remove him from his place. This result, we all know, would not be brought about by the absence of sound doctrine, an evangelical spirit, logical arrangement, or “pure English undefiled,” but by an universal demand for the living preacher. The people expect not the teachings of the dead, but of the visible minister, enforced

by exhibitions of *his* genius, *his* learning, and *his* love. Now is not something of this dissatisfaction, the same in nature and only less in degree, felt when he reads his own composition ; the thoughts and illustrations of a past week, or month or year ? Is he the preacher who, with spiritual and intellectual vitality, freshly anointed with prayerful preparation, and wrought to a strange capacity by the solemnities of the present occasion, stands before the multitude the pleading advocate of men, and an ambassador for Jesus Christ ? The judgment of the masses is that he is not.

With unfeigned deference we venture to suggest that the strength of the ministry is wasted upon rhetorical elevation. Point and pungency are sacrificed to elegance of style. Admitting, for the sake of the argument, that a finished style is unattainable without writing, the enquiry still remains, how far is that necessary to successful preaching ? It certainly is not indispensable. So far as it is made a substitute for directness, clearness, and vigor, it is decidedly objectionable. And if attention to style ripens into a habit of easy and graceful presentation of commonplaces and platitudes, it is a positive vice. We know that the ministry are the recognized standards of correct taste and elegant scholarship, and that they contribute more to the formation of a sound common judgment of these things than any other class of men. This is as it should be. Yet they are not professors of Belles Lettres. They are the consecrated ministers of the Word of God. Literary execution is, therefore, of secondary importance, and should be subordinated to the master purpose of declaring the glory of God in the rescue of men from the thralldom of sin. In itself, it is not unfriendly to impression upon cultivated minds. The Gospel is not the less acceptable to such persons, because presented without offence to good taste. Nor would we be understood as being willing to dispense with the power of the ministry over education and literature. The abuse, only, of what is in itself good, is what we venture to censure. What is the most enviable literary reputation, compared with the value of a single soul ? It is as the fresco-finish of St. Peters to the

magnificence of its dome. The application of these remarks is, that written discourses assume the form, too frequently, of labored literary productions—and writing involves the sacrifice of ministerial strength to rhetorical finish. The scholar in the closet is naturally prone to perfect, according to the standard of his own taste, the productions of his pen. They are often above the level of the majority, whilst the attention of the educated minority is absorbed in their literary attractions. But the reason chiefly why writing conduces to elaboration of style, is found in the fact, that in writing this is practicable, nay easy, whilst in mental preparation, it is neither easy nor practicable. Finish in detail is scarcely possible without a record. The memory cannot retain innumerable figures, pencillings and carvings.

The most serious objection to reading is, that it is a restraint upon eloquence. It will not do to ignore the arts of the orator. It will not do to fall back upon the sovereignty of God, and say, His truth and His Spirit convert men. They are, indeed, the primary source of regeneration; yet, in the general administration of His government, the Almighty works by means. Preaching is the main agency of conversion, and eloquence is an element of preaching. To expect miraculous interposition, without the use of means, in the work of evangelizing this world, is to entertain a mere superstition. It may be well questioned, whether any one merely human agency has ever contributed, or will ever contribute, as much to the conversion of men as an eloquent delivery. In all the affairs of men it is an engine of prodigious potency. Emphatically is this true in our country. We are a nation of speakers and listeners. We are so by virtue of our free institutions. To deny eloquence to the pulpit, when it rules the court, the camp and the field, is simply absurd. Not assuming that reading is always, and to every intent, incompatible with eloquence, but in fact admitting that it may be sometimes consistent with it, our proposition is, that it always weakens the impression which it is the object of the preacher to make. It does this in various ways. And first, it prevents that excitement of mind which

an eloquent speaker and a large audience reciprocally produce on each other. The waiting, expecting audience stimulates the orator into a pleasurable, self-reliant, creative mood, whilst the visible, earnest, equipped and furnished speaker awakens and fixes their attention, and concentrates their thoughts. They are mutually aroused and attracted. Now, call this relation between the orator and his audience what you please—call it sympathy, or moral electricity, or what not—it is still a potent reality. It is that which every great orator has felt, and every audience experienced. When the Speaker announced “the gentleman from Virginia,” as Mr. Randolph himself relates, he felt that, for a season, he was master of the House—the members were his vassals—they could not, if they would, escape from his wizard power—and genius, and fire, and strength, at once sprang into exercise. And they!—why, they waited and listened, as if they were bound by a spell! “Why,” said a friend to one of the most brilliant and resistless orators of this age, “Prentiss, you mesmerize us.” “Well,” he replied, “it is an affair of reciprocity, for an audience always electrifies me.” These anecdotes illustrate what we mean. And we hold that this thing, just the relation that we have described, speaking after the manner of men, is the truest inspiration of the orator. Does he lose this inspiration by reading? In great part, without doubt! He begins in formality, he proceeds in routine, and he ends in cold propriety. His manuscript comes in contact with the calm intelligence of the house, instead of the visible workings of his intellect. There is no vibrating chord of attraction between them. He is didactically dull, and his audience is freezingly appreciative.

Farther: the reader is obliged to be wanting in those personal attributes of the orator, so attractive to the people of this country, and so influential over a mixed audience—such as attitude, gesticulation, voice, and expression of the face. The effective use of these is acquired by training, but generally, when effective, their use is spontaneous. Their happiest effect is wrought when they unite in adaptation and ap-

propriateness; and this union grows out of the strong conception and strong emotion of the moment. Such union is next to impossible in a delivery from the manuscript. The person is stiffened, the eye—beautiful telegraph of thought!—is fixed upon the paper, or raised, when reading convenience permits, fitfully, upon the congregation; the voice is monotonous, and the hands are engaged in holding, turning and adjusting the voluminous sheets. Gestures there are none, or else tame and awkward, or spasmodic and inappropriate. The speaker looks a puppet, worked by strings and a child's hand, rather than a man, standing between avenging wrath and its victim. His logic may be faultless, his lips may drop pearls of rhetoric, and his words may excite the envy of Trench, but his hearers are unmoved. His argument flows, it may be, in a wide, deep stream, but it is a river of oil. One may gaze upon its placid current, pleased with the dreamy quiet that it inspires, whilst sin is not rebuked, the conscience is not alarmed, death has no sensible proximity, the grave is a misty reality, and the judgment terrorless. Conscious of dullness of manner, there are those, but not here, who seek to supply the want of eloquence by a discussion of sensation topics, and who read a farce whilst they perpetrate a desecration.

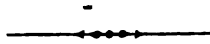
By *extemporization*, speaking *ex abrupto* is not meant. It is a vain presumption to rely upon what is sometimes called the inspiration of the moment. The most painful infliction which a people are ever called upon to endure, is to be "broken with words." Nothing can be more ridiculous than for a preacher, however eloquent and learned, to expect to sustain himself without unremitting study, without specific preparation for every occasion. Without it, the originating power of the mind fails, knowledge grows dim and unavailable, memory loses her hoarded treasures, and superficiality marks the man. The lamp must be replenished, or the light grows dim, flickers, fades, and is extinguished. Already has all this been sufficiently urged. Preparation being assumed, these personal attributes are all at the command of the orator, untrammelled

with a manuscript; and who shall say that, to the extent that they are influential, he has not the advantage of the reader?

To all of these views the reply is, that writing is necessary to guard against loose doctrinal statements, mere declamation, and vulgarisms in the use of words and in grammatical constructions. The two first go upon the assumption that accurate preparation is impossible without writing. That assumption, as a mere fact, is denied. If this assumption is not made, then it is said that the preparation involves an amount of labor which will consign the preacher to an early tomb. Again, this assumption is denied. But be it so. What then! Is not the sacred ministry a consecration to martyrdom, if need be! If, in ten years of life, a preacher can do more good without reading, than he can accomplish in twenty with it, by the conditions of his mission he is not at liberty to read. This may be a hard saying in the light of sense, but in the light of revelation it is true. A guarantee against the evils suggested is found in the thorough education and discipline of the Presbyterian ministry, and the general conservatism of the Church. Much of that antagonism to unwritten discourses found among us, is generated by their abuse, in the hands of clergymen of other denominations. Let us make the experiment upon our own ground.

Bad grammar and bad pronunciation are, of course, to be deprecated. A thoroughly trained speaker is not likely to make a lapse in either. Suppose, however, that an able, accomplished man should, in the heat of his great argument, or in the obliviousness of his fervid appeal, perpetrate an error in syntax or pronunciation, is it to be supposed that, on that account, he is to be set down as an ignoramus? Will he be even subjected to criticism? No: his established scholarship would blight the cavil in its germ. He can afford to commit a lapse. He is safe from criticism when he succeeds in fixing attention upon the matter of his discourse—righteousness and a judgment to come. No preacher is so obnoxious to criticism as he whose sermons have no merit but unimpeachable style. No congregation is more prone to be fastidious than

that which is fed with the dainty provisions of literature. The man whose attention is awake to nothing else, is wide awake to small departures from the standards of correct taste. If invited to a literary banquet, he expects the courses to be served artistically. If invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, he is not likely to employ his imagination with the viands of earth.



ARTICLE V.

The Ancient Church: its History, Doctrine, Worship and Constitution, traced for the first three hundred years. By W. D. KILLEN, D.D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Pastoral Theology to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O City of God."—Ps. lxxxvii: 3. New York: Charles Scribner, 124 Grand Street. 1859; pp. 656, 8vo.

This work is distinguished from all other modern contributions to Church History known to us, by the attention which its author gives to the polity of the Apostolic and Primitive Church. Fully one-third of the whole volume is devoted to the direct discussion of these topics, and they are also incidentally referred to, very often, in the other portions of the volume. The Father of modern Church History himself employs far less than a tythe of his large first volume in the elucidation of these themes. Schaff, in his *Apostolic History*, gives to these topics about one-sixteenth part of the whole volume; in his elegant first volume on the *Christian Church*, he despatches these questions in about fifty pages. But when we take up, for example, Gieseler or Guericke, Waddington, Milman or Robertson, all they have to say upon these points is contained in a very few pages, or even paragraphs.