

THE
PREACHER'S MANUAL:

LECTURES ON PREACHING,

FURNISHING

RULES AND EXAMPLES FOR EVERY KIND OF PULPIT ADDRESS.

BY

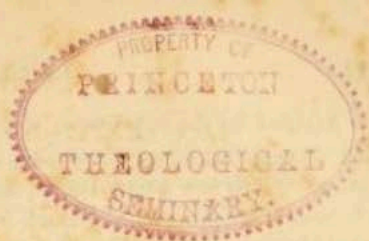
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*"Vive, vale! si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum."*

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INTRODUCTION.

THE gospel is of a restorative or remedial character, its design being to remove defects which once had no place either in man's body or mind. Our Lord opened his ministry in this precise view. He was moved with compassion for the diseased bodies of men, but especially for the ruin of their minds; hence his holy teaching and his opening the eyes of the blind, with its spiritual signification. Jesus saw the mind all confusion, "waste and wild."—"Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." The mischiefs that were perpetrated in this state of darkness constitute the subject of history, and the foul blot of that record. The darkness that prevailed at the first creation (Gen. i. 2) was original, and light was to be created; but the darkness of men's minds was not original but incidental, for man was created in the image of Him who is eternal light. It is, however, an undoubted fact that the perfect intelligence with which man was originally endowed passed away with his innocency: his understanding became in a great degree darkened, and all the faculties of his mind enfeebled. In his present state, indeed, there is a kind of after-light remaining, like that which continues after sunset, and he is still blessed with the power of thought and reflection, which he can exercise upon various subjects; he is able to consider their nature and ascertain their tendency to produce good or evil; he can trace consequences back to the causes which produced them, or compare one thing with another, or with some real or imaginary standard of excellency. This process of the mind, to which the moral sense lends its powerful aid, supplies in some measure the place of intuitive knowledge. To divine revelation he is, however, wholly indebted for just ideas of his present character and for all his knowledge in relation to his future destiny. Guided by this unerring standard, his investigations are preserved within the boundaries of truth, and a wide range is presented for the exercise of his mental powers. Possessing these advantages, he is able to enrich, improve, or correct, his thoughts. Thus he becomes more and more rational, recovers something of his loss by the fall, acquires more extensively the pleasures of imagination, and, by a divine blessing, becomes increasingly fitted to enjoy intellectual and heavenly contemplations.

Assisted by the contrivance of art, he is, moreover, enabled to record his thoughts for future inspection, or to publish them for the benefit of others. This is a happy circumstance; for, as all do not possess equal degrees of information, the more intelligent may thus convey many valuable ideas to their less favored brethren. Thus man becomes extensively a greater blessing to man, by communicating that which brings them more on a level in the knowledge of the things of God and of virtue, thereby being instrumental in bringing many into a social, godly, and happy state, who were before lost to such enjoyments.

But it is the power of speech, with which man is blessed, that furnishes the most effective means of communicating instruction. By this he can make known his thoughts to his fellow-men instantaneously, without the tedious process of writing or making signs. And here the pleasures of society, of social intercourse and sweet enjoyment, begin; here we take sweet counsel together, by an immediate interchange of thought and sentiment. Thus also instruction may be imparted, not only with the greatest facility, but in the most interesting form. This is particularly the case with regard to religious instruction, in which oral communications possess a decided superiority over all other human means. Hence infinite wisdom has appointed the public proclamation of the gospel *vivâ voce* as the grand engine for evangelizing the world. Other means are undoubtedly employed. Early education, pious example, religious tracts, and especially the perusal of the written word, are, under the blessing of God, rendered valuable auxiliaries in the dissemination of truth; but it is the *preaching* of the cross which is more especially characterized as "the power of God unto salvation."

Here then the intelligent preacher stands confessedly distinguished as the most important character on earth: imbued with the spirit of that gospel which he is commissioned to declare, and replete with capacity for thought and ability for utterance, he pours upon the waiting ear the treasures of wisdom and knowledge drawn from the fountain of eternal truth, by Christ's own appointment: and what is so uttered, in the purity of the "truth as it is in Jesus," there is reason to trust will by his Spirit be made effectual for saving purposes. This, I hope, is a just view of the scheme and importance of public preaching.

Preaching, then, it appears, becomes the unchangeable province of the Christian minister, but not his only duty, not even when combined with his pastoral office; as ever, so now especially, he is to be "ready to every good work" that presents itself. There were times, now happily gone by, when penal statutes imposed restraints upon the full range of ministerial exertions. The minister then concentrated his care upon his immediate congregation, like the mariner in stormy weather, who takes in his sails and just bears up to the wind. In this position they waited and prayed

for better times. Answers to their prayers were long in coming, but they came at last : and we now enjoy the benefit of their fervent petitions, and of many excellent works which they have left on printed record. But now the peculiar character of the age requires us to enlarge our solitudes, to spread our sails, and push our purposes more extensively. The times then had a tendency to contract the minds of God's servants ; but now expansion must ring in your ears. Now you must cherish a truly catholic spirit ; for, besides the love of God and your immediate church-membership or parochial charge, you owe universal love to all mankind. Let your regard to your own religious society be only a part of your universal love. This affection will be cherished by considering the benevolent design of human redemption, the personal labors of Jesus to publish it, and the humiliation and sufferings to which he submitted for its accomplishment—by reading the travels of St. Paul, and tracing his arduous and successful labors—by perusing missionary documents—and by your attendance at our public religious meetings. This spirit, when acquired, will lead you in your public prayers to intercede very earnestly for all and each of our religious societies, now, happily, so numerous ; and this again will kindle a like spirit in the people among whom you labor.

The cause of foreign missions, now assuming an aspect so interesting, can not but insure a portion of your attention, while objects nearer home will not be lightly regarded. You will be led particularly to cherish a very affectionate feeling for poor Ireland, both in public and private, a great majority of whose inhabitants are under the dominion of an infatuated and infuriated priesthood. You will pray for your active brethren there, who are exposed to the chief force of this priestly fury ; nor will you forget the persecuted who dare to listen to the gospel. It is indeed pleasing to reflect that evangelical religion and the cause of education, both in Ireland and England, are making great progress, “ though with much contention.” It is hoped that the papacy in the former country will not be able to counteract or impede such powerful efforts, and that her boasted majority of Ireland's population will, in a few years, be exchanged for a minority. The truth is great, and must prevail.

The benevolent spirit now recommended will induce you to take a lively interest in all Sunday and other schools throughout the district you occupy. These are the nurseries of our churches. The plants, being young and much exposed, require the tenderest care and protection.

The same spirit will also prompt you to use all your influence with your people to unite in every Christian undertaking. You must aim to infuse into their minds a public spirit, that they may be “ ready to every good word and work,” and thus become your auxiliaries ; for by multiplying means you produce increased effects.

It is, however, impossible to state in detail all the objects to which you

should direct your attention, for in every six months a new scheme of benevolence commences its course. While I am writing, Christian instruction societies and city missions rise to view, the agents of which are employed in making domiciliary visits—giving, or rather lending, tracts—conversing with the ignorant and wretched poor, and endeavoring to lead them to the long-neglected house of God. The city mission in fact promises to become the most powerful aid of the public ministry. The idea was started some time ago by Dr. Chalmers, then of Glasgow; and already the cause is proceeding in London and its vicinity, as well as in other places. Even before you will be able to read this introduction, other plans may commence to engage the attention of Christians, and in which your exhortations will be very needful. It is worthy of remark that, in the multitude of different designs, the general effect is not weakened. God does not suffer one plan to destroy another,* but all are evidently under his divine favor, and receiving the seal of his approbation.

As the ministers of Christ, you are justly expected, not only to preach the gospel, but also to be leaders and patrons of benevolence in its universal sense. Is not this love “the fulfilling of the law”—the first of virtues? Does it not bring us into the nearest point of resemblance possible, in such weak and frail creatures as we are, to “HIM who is love?” This principle, therefore, will carry you comfortably through all your labors, give the tone to all your public services and co-operations with your beloved people, and shed a lustre over all your other qualifications for the Christian ministry.

Again, this universal love must be associated or blended with a **LARGE** and **COMPREHENSIVE MIND** for your own good government. Not such a mind as directed Alexander to conquer the world, but a mind under the highest influence—I mean a *gracious mind*, a mind that is renewed in all its faculties (Eph. iv. 23; Col. iii. 10); for however great and excellent man's powers once were, or however much of that greatness is left since the fall, we know that by nature they are all depraved, and not adapted for God's work. It is, then, a gracious, a renewed mind, that we are contemplating, renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: this is termed a *creation*, or the renewal of our holiness lost in Adam. But still this is too general a term, as this belongs to all believers as such. The Christian ministry requires such a mind as that of Paul, the prince of preachers; we see everything in him that was gracious, large, and comprehensive, yet correct in government, superior to difficulties or sufferings. Here is an adaptation of the mind to the work, formed upon fixed principles and set upon great objects. It is true you are not called to such extraordinary services, nor are you so highly gifted; but a share of Paul's

* There is no rule without an exception: in a few instances weaker societies do seem, in some degree, to suffer by such as are stronger and more highly patronized. What are called “sick societies,” for instance, are cramped very much in their exertions for want of better support.

spirit will fall upon you as the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha. If we are not called to foreign climes, let us extend our labors at home. We ought no longer to wait for unconverted sinners to come to our churches and chapels. We have waited too long: we should follow them into the fields, their places of resort; and, as to the indolent and the infirm, we should carry the gospel into their very houses, and thus compel as many as possible to come in, that God's house may be filled.

We see that the energies of the mind, even when unassisted by that influence which the gospel preacher is warranted to expect, are capable of wonderful exploits: the histories of our military and naval heroes afford numerous instances; and the perseverance of many travellers in exploring the very interior of barbarous countries is truly astonishing. The discoveries of a Newton show us what the human mind is capable of. The poet of Stratford-upon-Avon "exhausted worlds, and then imagined new." The conceptions of Homer and Milton transcend all ordinary bounds. The persevering application of men to obtain wealth has in many instances been most wonderful. How much more, then, will the mind expand and strengthen, under *divine influence*, with such amazing objects to excite its diligence as eternal things present to it! But we must all confess that we have not yet attained to this excellence. "What do we more than others?" We are all guilty; we have not fulfilled the ministry which we have received as we ought. There are weapons sufficient in the gospel armory; but we have not used them, and perhaps not even applied for them. The Holy Spirit is promised to strengthen us, and to give success to our warfare; but we have not properly sought his assistance. Motives abound on every hand, but we have not felt their influence. Examples have been left, but they have not been followed. The command of Christ stands upon record, but we have disregarded his authority. The promise of his presence has been vouchsafed to assist us, but we have not depended upon it. Souls perish for lack of knowledge, but we have no compassion upon them. We have consulted our ease, our secular interests; we have lived too much to ourselves; we have ourselves escaped the pit of destruction, but have been criminally inattentive to those who are daily sinking into it. O God! the residue of the Spirit is with thee. O send out thy light and thy truth! let them lead us to live and act as men and Christians, that we may do all that we can to promote the salvation of men and the glory of the Savior, who designed by his being lifted up to draw all men to himself! Still I am most ready to acknowledge that we have many happy exceptions, who fall not under any censure of this nature.

The usual routine of the ministerial office does not change with the age. The stated duties of a minister call for the exercise of great wisdom, a strong and piercing insight into human nature, through all its labyrinths, and all the varieties under which it appears. Every minister should be a

discerner of the spirits of men, that he may beneficially adapt his discourses so as to take a fast hold of every variety of character—to show to each his own image—to reprove, correct, or comfort, *pro re nata*, thus becoming, not only a preacher of the gospel, but also a casuistic divine. Persons so skilled have often so described the heart of the hearer, and spoken to him or her so effectually to the purpose, as to raise suspicion of previous secret communications. This is excellent. This province of the ministry will be well understood by reading Blackwell's *Methodus Evangelicæ*, and Baxter's *Saint's Rest*. Mr. Walker of Edinburgh has many searching, discriminating discourses, well worthy attention, particularly his sermon on 2 Cor. vi. 1. Owen on Ps. cxxx., and Jameson's *Sermons on the Heart*, are also in this view highly valuable. Some ideas may be found in the following lectures, under the index words "Casuistic divinity."

I may be allowed a few concluding sentences to this short address before we enter on the ensuing lectures. I will not write of my anxieties, of my love, of my hopes and my fears for the rising ministry, of my prayers every day that the world may be benefited by more efficient servants than we are and have been, who are ready to leave active service, either as invalids or to give account of our stewardship in the unknown state, "from whose bourne no traveller returns." I shall be permitted to hope that thoughts or sentiments unseasonably elevated, or habits of indulgent ease, will not obstruct our junior ministers in the acquisitions necessary to make them successful preachers.

The general scheme of these lectures is developed in the first nine of them. The several kinds of discourse are placed as nearly as possible in an ascendant scale—the easiest first, and most difficult last; the lowest is not to be despised, the highest not to be despaired of. The closest attention to the nature and quality of subdivisions will be well repaid, for the strength, beauty, and propriety of a discourse, are seen here.

The topics are auxiliaries to our nine kinds of discourses, and form a magazine of rich treasure, a mine which can not be exhausted; and the classified examples of exordiums and perorations, selected from the highest names in our language, can not fail to afford valuable instruction. After these, we arrive at a lecture on *Comment*, the study of which will, I trust, tend to promote strength and efficiency in pulpit discourses.

In the appendix will be found three short treatises, which will well repay an attentive perusal: one on *Plain Language*, a second on the *Connexion between Theological Study and Pulpit Eloquence*, and a third on *Extemporaneous Preaching*. It may not be improper to add, that my attention was directed to the *American* articles by very competent judges of their literary and theological value, and I can not but hope that their publication in this country will be productive of salutary effects on the present and rising ministry.