

trons taken from others are not the product of our experience; often they lack the seal of truthfulness and personality. He reminded his hearers that many sermons by Grotius, Brueckner, and himself were preached by others, and once while on a journey he heard one of his own sermons from a stranger. Even a poor sermon that is original is preferable to the memorized sermon of another. He also opposed the repetition of old sermons, common in the rationalistic period. Frequently then ministers had two courses of sermons on the Gospels and two on the Epistles, which they would repeat, some indeed taking the trouble to prepare new introductions to them. These sermons were then handed down from father to son. When he entered the ministry his father, a carpenter, expressed regret that his son could inherit from him no sermons. The very best rule in homiletics is found in the words of Paul: "I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." This testimony does not dispense with most careful preparation. Ahlfeld himself wrote every word and memorized it, and he urged students to do the same. He advised them to begin the sermon for the next Sunday immediately after preaching, the mind then taking especial delight in the work. The text should be studied, paper should be placed at hand for noting thoughts as they occur during the week, and particularly is prayer commended as a means of preparation, without which holy things are touched with impure hands. Essential for the preparation and delivery is the right state of the preacher's own soul. The context should be carefully considered, together with the historic, dogmatic, and ethical significance of the passage. Often minor matters are found to be of importance, which he illustrated by referring to Acts vi. 11, where the Jews mention Moses first, then God. All the fine points in the text should be brought out, parallel passages should be weighed, and practical exegetical commentaries consulted. But there may be too much reading, so that originality is interfered with. Every year, at least, a number of sermons should be prepared wholly without foreign aid. Above all, the preacher must guard against an ingenious mosaic made by stringing together beautiful thoughts selected promiscuously. The congregation must always be kept in mind, and this rule should be adopted: Away with all fine thoughts which transcend the comprehension of the audience. The disposition should be simple, taken from the text itself, if possible in the very language of the text, taking care to make the division such as may easily be remembered. But it is more important for the hearer to retain the leading thought of the sermon than the division. He himself formerly put the division in rhyme in order to aid the memory, but afterwards abandoned that. Besides, the division of the introduction merits particular care and should lead directly to the sermon. It should contain facts

and truths unconditionally admitted by the hearer, so that the process of construction may win their approval. Hints may be taken from the context, former sermon, the season of the year, personal or congregational experiences; all must, however, be brief and living. Two considerations should control the entire preparation: the Lord and the congregation. God's glory is supreme; and the preacher should not drag mere personal affairs into his sermons, as his birthday, his children, his home, his illness, and his grievances. "If, perchance, the minister was robbed during the week, no mention should be made of it in his sermon." Neither personal honor nor fear is to be the motive. "All faithful preachers have been subject to persecution." If the souls of the hearers are to be benefitted their lives must be known, and the preaching must be from the life to the life. "Diligent pastoral work is the best aid to the pulpit. The more we are in the congregation, the more can we be in the pulpit." Much benefit may be derived from the biography of godly persons; but great care must be taken to make the impression of truthfulness. Suitable and familiar hymns and the catechism may also be used to great advantage in the sermon. The substance of the sermon is thus to be taken from Scripture, from the life of the Church, from literature, hymnology, and the catechism. At the close the substance of the sermon should, if possible, be compressed into a brief sentence. As to style, the periods should not be long, short ones being more easily comprehended. Scripture is written in brief sentences. Respecting the length of sermons various practices have prevailed. Those of Chrysostom were very long; short ones were common in the Middle Ages, those of Tauler, for instance, though Berthold, of Ratisbon, preached both short and long ones; and the same is true of Luther, though the most of his were long. The law limits sermons in the garrison churches of Prussia to twenty minutes. "Claus Harns was no doubt right when he said of the quantity or quality of a sermon: There are three classes of sermons; the first consists of such as are short and good, which are the best; the second, of such as are long and good, and they are passable; the third class consists of those long and bad, which are the worst of all." Speaking of delivery, Ahlfeld said that the preacher should not ascend the pulpit as a dancing-master, but leaning upon the Lord. God deliver us from a pulpit tone, from frequent emphatic exclamations, and from excessive stress on passages even insignificant. The gestures should neither be learned from an actor nor practiced before a mirror, but should be natural and spontaneous, the outward expression of the inner man. "He who aims at the truth, which consists in a correspondence of the outer with the inner man, will give correct expression to his thoughts in the tone of his voice and in his gesticulation."