

not esteem preaching as the blessed ordinance of God, sermons as keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, as wings to the soul, as spurs to the good affections of men, unto the sound and healthy as food, minister of Christ, then to spare no labour to fit and prepare himself for the efficient discharge of this duty. It is indeed a solemn, nay a most awful position, which the ambassador of Christ occupies when he stands before the people to deliver to them a message from his Lord, upon the reception or rejection of which their eternal desecular depends. Placed in such a position, how careful should he be to speak as the oracles of God, not to waste the precious moments which he spends in the pulpit upon the vain display of fine speaking, or fine writing, or upon the discussion of subjects of mere worldly interest, or upon foolish and unlearned questions which gender strife, and which are after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. I shall now offer a few remarks as to the manner and matter of our sermons, not with the hope that I shall be able to add any thing to what has already been written, upon subjects which have exercised the minds, and engaged the pens, of some of the most pious and devoted men in every age of our Church since the Reformation, but that these things may be more solemnly impressed upon our souls. As to the manner of preaching, much difference of opinion prevails. There are some who think that sermons read to the people are not calculated to produce any striking or lasting effect upon the hearers. That, however sound they may be as to their doctrine, and however accurate in their style and composition, and however well and logically arranged, they fail to reach the heart, and to affect the consciences of the great mass of the people. They argue that it requires all the appliances of the eye, voice, and action to arrest and retain the attention of men, who, for the most part, are unaccustomed to fix their thoughts, for any length of time, upon subjects of a purely intellectual or spiritual character, and that therefore the reading of sermons from the pulpit should be altogether forbidden, or, at least, discontinued as much as possible. On the other hand, there are those who equally condemn the practice of what is commonly called extempore preaching, who say that sermons delivered without book, must, of necessity, be always crude and ill-digested. That those who adopt this habit are strongly tempted to give way to sloth, and in all probability will continually varied, will substantially always preach the same sermon. Experience convinces us that truth lies between these extremes; we have known preachers who invariably wrote and read their sermons, who were eminently blessed of God in their ministry, and who were made the instruments of turning many sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

While we have known others, and these not a few, who always preached without a written sermon, upon whose ministry the Divine seal has been most abundantly set, and to whom many souls have been given for their hire. If there is, upon the part of the preacher, much study, meditation and prayer, if he draws from the resources of a mind richly stored with Divine truth, and enlightened by the Spirit of God, his sermons, whether written or not, will be acknowledged of God, and the Divine promise will be fulfilled, which says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of My mouth, it shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it." In speaking of extempore preaching, I would not be misunderstood, as though I used

the word in the literal sense. It can only be regarded as irreverent in the highest degree, or as most awfully presumptuous, in any man to stand up, as an ambassador of Christ, and to trust to the impulse of the moment, or to a natural fluency of speech for the message which he is to deliver to the people. I would warn you, my Brethren in the Ministry, against such an irreverent and unbecoming practice. There may be some who imagine that, because they possess much self-confidence, and are not affected by that constitutional nervousness and timidity, which often render the truly pious and humble man embarrassed before the people, they may trust to a natural readiness of expression, and neglect laborious preparation for the pulpit. It should ever be borne in mind that there is such a thing as a vicious fluency of speech; that sound without sense cannot benefit the hearers, and that the tongue may often run rapidly, because it carries no weight either of thought or reflection. Such preaching is unworthy of the name. And while I would encourage my younger Brethren to cultivate the habit of preaching without a written sermon, as the mode most likely to render their ministry acceptable and profitable to their hearers, I would impress upon them the necessity of "being diligent in prayers and in the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh." Upon this subject, an eminent writer of our own day thus expresses himself, "A most erroneous notion prevails of the easiness of this attainment. A collection of words is often mistaken for a justly defined sentiment, and fluency of utterance is considered to be either indicative of solidity of thought or a fair amend for its deficiency. Now, such an extemporaneous faculty can bring no substantial instruction to our people. Our subject must be studied till it is understood, digested and felt. For a well conducted habit we need not impulse or fluency merely, but a furniture of solid knowledge, combined with simplicity of style; solid as well as animated matter; and—instant omnium—a mind deeply enriched with the unsearchable treasure of Scripture. This resource will supply the place of many secondary qualifications, while nothing will compensate for the lack of it." In the discharge of this duty of preaching, the minister of Christ should employ such language as will be most intelligible to all the members of the congregation. There are many in every Christian assembly who have not enjoyed the benefit of a liberal education. The language of the preacher should be such as would easily be understood by them. But is it not often the case that the sermons of our Clergy appear to be intended for the educated alone? and are nearly as unintelligible to many members of the congregation as the Latin mass is to the illiterate members of the Church of Rome? Archbishop Whately says concerning a fault in speaking and writing akin to that of which I have just spoken, "Young writers and speakers are apt to fall into a style of ponderous verbosity from the idea that they are adding both perspicuity and force to what is said, when they are only encumbering the sense with a needless load of words. It is not indeed uncommon to hear a speaker of this class mentioned as having a very fine command of language, when perhaps it might be said with more correctness that his language has a command of him; that is, that he follows a train of words rather than of thought." When we ascend the pulpit let this thought be always uppermost in our minds, that we are the bearers of a message of mercy to sinful men, and that the present may be the last opportunity we shall have of delivering our message to some of those who hear us. Under the influence of such a reflection

as this, the minister of Christ will be careful not to waste the precious moments in the pulpit, and so to clothe his ideas in plain speech, that all who, in the Providence of God, are brought within the sound of his voice, may clearly understand the message of mercy which he is commissioned to proclaim. It is indeed a distressing thought that one benighted fellow creature should leave the house of God after listening to Christ's ambassador delivering his message without any clear comprehension of the purport of that which has been spoken in his hearing.

I now pass on from the consideration of the manner of delivering the gospel message to some reflections upon the matter or substance of it. And here, my Reverend Brethren, the word of God is clear. In whatever way the Minister of Christ delivers the message which is entrusted to him, whether by written or by unwritten sermons, by reading God's word, or in any other way, still the message is ever one and the same, the substance of our preaching must be Jesus Christ and him crucified. The Christian minister should ever bear in mind, that his great aim should be, not to improve the intellects, or gratify the taste of his hearers, but to convert sinners unto God. In our mixed congregations there will always be many who are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, and it is only by exalting Christ and proclaiming Him as the Saviour, that they can be raised up to newness of life. We may set before such the terrors of the Lord, His judgments against sin as denounced in His holy law, but if we fail to exhibit Christ, as the only and all sufficient Saviour, our labour will be in vain. The following passage from the writings of an eminent author of the last age, puts this in a striking light: "Had you the fullest acquaintance that ever man acquired, with the principles and duties of natural religion, both in its regards to God and your fellow-creatures; had you the skill and tongue of an angel, to range all these in their fairest order, to place them in their fullest light, and to pronounce and represent the whole law of God, with such force and splendour, as was done to the Israelites at Mount Sinai: you might perhaps lay the consciences of men under deep conviction (for by the law is the knowledge of sin,) but I am fully persuaded you would never reconcile one soul to God, you would never change the heart of one sinner, nor bring him into the favour of God, nor fit him for the joys of Heaven, without this blessed Gospel which is committed to your hands." Our blessed Lord declared, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," and again, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." For the conversion of sinners, for the edification of Saints, for enforcing holiness of life upon the people of God, and for preparing them for that eternity to which we are all hastening, we should know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, all our discourses should so centre in Him, that the minds of our hearers should be continually directed to Him. Archbishop Secker, speaking of the falling away of members of the Church to dissent, thus warned his Clergy, "We have in fact lost many of our people to sectaries, by not preaching in a manner sufficiently evangelical, and shall neither recover them from the extravagancies into which they have run; nor keep more from going over to them but by returning to the right way." And Bishop Horne remarks, "Many well-meaning Christians of this time thirst after the doctrine of the Gospel, and think that they have heard nothing unless they have heard of salvation by Jesus Christ, which is what we properly call the Gospel. And if they do not hear it in the discourses from our