

(a) By the term preparation on its mental side, we mean the actual brain-work that is involved in sermonizing, that strictly inventive and productive process to which every preacher must commit himself in order to the best results in the pulpit. "Pulpitizing," as one has oddly called it, exacts what Matthew Arnold terms "straight thinking," close, consecutive, and prolonged mental effort. Nowhere more than in such an exercise are all the higher faculties of the mind, reason, judgment, and imagination thoroughly applied and unified. The sermonizer, to do his best work, must be at his best intellectually. Discourse, in any aspect of it, is the expression of thought, and, when assuming the sermonic form, is all the more thoughtful. What the older metaphysicians named original suggestion is demanded in pulpit preparation, and when such preparation is demanded, as it is in the ministry of to-day, weekly through the year, and generally twice a week, the work becomes simply enormous, and the marvel is that it is done by so large a body of the ministry as ably and successfully as it is. No other liberal profession, it is safe to say, makes such exactions upon sheer brain-force and nervous energy. The legal and medical professions, with their high requirements in the conduct of cases and the diagnosis of disease, make no such claim. The highest journalistic work fails to do it, nor is there any sphere, save that of the higher education, in which absolute mental energy is so essential. To sermonize, as some half-educated and verbose teachers of the truth are wont to do, is one thing; to sermonize as Thomas Chalmers and Robert Hall and Robert South did, and as so many of our ablest clergy are now doing, is quite another thing, and is as much a mental process as solving a difficult problem or writing a technical treatise.

What mental comprehensiveness is needed to see the truth in all its phases and relations! What nice balancing of conflicting views! What mental patience, candor, and courage! What concentration of the mental powers to the specific work in hand! What a delicate adjustment of the sacred and the secular! In a word, how wholly must the sermonizer be master of his mind and of his essential self in order to construct a sermon that is a sermon! Especially in those branches of the Protestant Church in which the sermon is emphasized above all the other parts of worship must these mental conditions be met. There is a wide difference here, as to demand, between the Presbyterian and the prelatric forms.

We are told to think before we speak; so are we to think before we write and preach. Pure reflection is essential as an antecedent to successful sermon-writing—a looking with the eye of the mind directly and continuously into the face and heart of the truth.

What David calls "meditation" is a mental as well as a spiritual habit, and will express itself in sermons intellectually strong and rich and helpful. Too many ministers, as their sermons indicate, think