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## PRIMITIVE SERMONS.

THE public addresses delivered by the pastors of the early churches were usually called Sermons or Oration; but they differed considerably, both in form and in structure, from the greater portion of modern pulpit discourses. Nearly all public Christian instruction consisted simply in the reading and the expounding of the scriptures. Before the pastor stood up to teach, a section of the divine Word embracing as much as two, three, or four of our modern capitular divisions, was read to the assembly. This was termed 'the lesson;' it was emphatically the instruction of the hour, and was regarded by pastor and people as 'the portion of meat,' to receive which the latter had assembled. The minister's duty, as a man appointed to 'feed' souls, consisted simply in apportioning and distributing this divine-prepared fare—in removing the exterior crusts which encased it, in separating its gentler from its more powerful parts, its 'milk for babes' from its 'strong meat for those who are of full age,' and in 'dividing, accordantly with the respective conditions of the various classes and individuals of his flock, 'to every man his portion of it in due season.' A pastor's discourse was, consequently, a simple exposition of

the section of scripture which had been read, interspersed or followed by suitable appeals to the characters and the hearts of his hearers. Origen, who wrote early in the third century, calls the sermons of ministers, 'Explanations of the Lessons;' and Justin Martyr, who wrote about the year 155, says, "The reader of the scriptures having ceased, the president (or pastor) made a sermon by way of giving instruction as to the excellent things which had been read, and of holding them up to imitation." Origen's own sermons, or homilies, which have come down to modern times, are all—as appears both from the excursiveness of their topics, and from several incidental intimations—discourses originally spoken in exposition of the routine or ordinary 'lessons.'

If Origen's may be regarded as a specimen, the primitive Sermons resembled very much, as to structure and method, the modern Expository Lecture. The preacher commenced with a short exordium; he then, verse by verse, or sentence by sentence, explained 'the lesson,' or text, first as to the import of its language, and next as to its mystical meaning and its moral lessons; and he concluded by a formal application of the truths