

There is a difference, however, between the "lecture" and the "sermon." The occasions, the topics, the audiences, the immediate objects, the controlling elements of the two, widely differ. There are, indeed, sermons which are simply lectures; and there are some lectures that need only the prefacing of a Scripture passage to render them sermons. But the sermon is always and of necessity more sacred in its spirit and character than the really acceptable lecture is likely to be. The former is the appeal of a quickened, eager, and anxious heart to the hearts of men. It has in it the element of persuasion. Dr. Austin Phelps defines the sermon as "an oral address to the popular mind upon religious truth contained in the Scriptures and elaborately treated *with a view to persuasion.*"* Being a form of discourse employed by the Christian ministry, it is always associated with the solemnities of divine worship. Indeed, we cannot too strenuously insist that the sermon is a part of public worship. We may so much accentuate the sermon as an entertainment as to forget the worship of which it is an important part. It is said that in these days we discriminate between them, and that one or the other is depreciated. But they belong together. The sermon stimulates the spirit of worship. The act of prayer prepares us to hear the declaration, the defence, and the application of the truth. In the sermon we are brought to understand the presence and character of God, the guilt and feebleness of man, the laws of the new life, and the blessedness of union and communion with the Father. The sermon creates the atmosphere where souls in divine respirations live in God. The sermon furnishes the arms of faith that enfold a soul when it seeks God in prayer. I repeat that the sermon, whether it be doctrinal, didactic, or experimental, is a part of worship. It helps the spiritual life in man. In it God's voice sounds through human lips; and all frivolity, all mere efforts at rhetorical or oratorical effects, all eccentricities, all studied devices for exciting mere curiosity or admiration, are violations of the true conception of the sermon as an earnest, dignified, and divine part of public worship.

The lecture is a public discourse of less sacred character. In it human art has freer play. It is designed to entertain and to instruct. The audience has been convened for these objects. They pay for it. They do not want too great seriousness. The lecture must not be too didactic. It is either recreative or educational, or both. It deals generally with secular topics. The personality of the lecturer is one of the important factors. He is more than a "voice." His travels, achievements, reputation, draw people to see him. He may be a master of humor. He may be a rhetorician. He may be an "authority"—the topic of the lecture embracing his speciality. In the lecture the personality and reputation of the speaker cannot be lost sight of.

Certainly a lecture may be a message from God, and it may command even reverent attention. John B. Gough's lectures were like sermons.

* "The Theory of Preaching," p. 21.