

to the whole mind in order that the understanding may be informed, the affections kindled, the will influenced. And Homiletics is beginning to be regarded, not as the trickery of the demagogue and mountebank, but the application of the principles of effective speech to the construction of pulpit discourse.

The three-fold subject of this paper is designed to cover the whole field of Homiletics, and its discussion is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. Important questions are, by the exigencies of space, left untouched. The questions raised seem to be all-important, and the principles stated fundamental.

First, then, comes the TEXT. But let it be noted that for the production of a good Gospel sermon a Text, as the word is commonly used, is not absolutely necessary. Custom has laid its hand on us here as elsewhere. Use and Wont have made a text a necessary part of a sermon. Preachers everywhere conform to custom, and prefix to their sermons a verse of Scripture; but immediately they resent the bondage and disregard the text and all its claims. This misuse of Scripture is to be deprecated. Making a text a point of departure, or a peg upon which to hang a discourse, is at once dishonouring to Scripture and unworthy of honest men. Scripture quotations do not make a sermon scriptural. Unless the tone and spirit be biblical, the prefixing of a text will not suffice. Indeed it may sometimes be advantageous, as it is reasonable and honest, to preach, as apostles did on more than one occasion, without a text at all.

But conforming to custom and taking a passage of Scripture for a text—and the custom has many and great advantages, as it gives the preacher his true position as a prophet of God, and gives the sermon its true authority as based on the very words of God—conforming to custom in this matter, What is the preacher to do with his text? How is he to use it? Is he to allow it to determine the structure of his sermon? to divide it mechanically and enforce its several doctrines and truths separately? Or, is he to master his text, catch its spirit, classify its separate parts, unite all in one organic living whole, and bring its one great dominating thought to bear on the hearts and consciences of men? If he is to produce a rhetorical discourse, that is, a sermon calculated to influence the will of his hearer, he must not do the former, and he must do the latter.