

theme is furnished by his patient. Editors are provided abundantly with subjects of discussion in the questions or the news of the day. But the preacher must exercise continually his own inventive powers. Within the limits of the same general theme he must continually produce particular subjects and appropriate methods of treatment. And this is no easy task. Many a young minister is discouraged greatly by this part of his work. How well I remember the look of distress upon the face of such a one, and the eagerness for help concentrated in his whole manner as he told me his trouble!

As years go on themes for preaching will multiply greatly, sometimes so much as to produce "the embarrassment of riches." Said a venerable clergyman: "The difficulty is not because there are not topics enough, but because there are so many that I am in a strait betwixt them." Yet all through his professional life, if not the invention, certainly the choice and development of an appropriate and interesting, and useful and instructive, and impressive theme will be one of the most difficult as well as important part of the preacher's work.

Now, can nothing be done by preparatory training to help and guide our ministers in this part of their work? There are, indeed, many limitations here. Some minds, like some soils, are far more fertile than others. And some brains, like some soils, are so barren that they never can be fertilized so as to be fruitful. By no training can you excite any suggestiveness in a mind that is utterly dull. And, undoubtedly, all training, all human helps are vain without the suggestion, without the active co-operation of the Holy Spirit. Every devout minister is soon taught this lesson. Many a preacher has been taught it by a delightful experience in the occasional compulsory choice of a theme that subsequently has been made effective by the Holy Spirit in the accomplishment of blessed results. In this matter of invention, as well as in every other part of his work, the preacher should affirm with all his heart and soul, and mind and strength, in the words of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

And yet, certainly, much can be done, much has been done, to train our ministers in the inventive process. They can be taught upon what themes never to preach. They can be taught, also, not to use, except for comparison, texts or subjects or plans that have been thought up and thought out, and arranged and published, by another preacher—a dead list that will be sure to deaden every power of invention that they themselves possess. Our young preachers can be so trained that, while they preach habitually upon living and not dead themes, they will not preach for the newspapers only, that they may attract the attention of the press, neglecting the spiritual wants of the people. They can be trained to find their themes in the Bible, being thoroughly convinced that thus the authority of the Word of God will